
Congress and Conference Tourism as a Catalyst for Tourism Development in Algeria: The Case of CIC Algiers

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Abstract:

This study examines the contribution of meetings and conference tourism to the development of the tourism sector in Algeria, with a particular focus on the International Conference Center (CIC) in Algiers. Adopting a case study approach, the research draws on both observation and structured interviews. The first section outlines the study's context and methodology, while the second presents and analyzes the collected data, underscoring the significance of meetings and conference tourism in diversifying Algeria's economy. The findings highlight this sector's potential to serve as an alternative to traditional revenue sources, such as oil, and emphasize the necessity of strategic investment to fully harness its benefits.

Keywords: meetings tourism; conference tourism; economic development; International Conference Center CIC Algiers; Algeria.

Jel Classification Codes : L83, Z32, R58, O55.

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1. Introduction:

Tourism in Algeria has traditionally focused on leisure and cultural heritage. However, recognizing the broader economic potential of the sector, Algeria incorporated business tourism into its national strategy via the Tourism Development Master Plan (SDAT) (Ministry of Spatial Planning, Environment and Tourism, 2008).

Although the SDAT refers to "urban and business tourism" without distinguishing between business and conference tourism, international visitor statistics reveal a growing interest in the latter. In 2015, approximately 358,785 visitors—21% of total foreign tourists—arrived for business purposes (Ministry of Spatial Planning, Tourism, and Handicrafts, 2017).

In recent years, Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism has emerged as an important driver of economic diversification. Within this context, the International Conference Center (CIC) in Algiers serves as a cornerstone, owing to its advanced infrastructure and strategic role in hosting major international events. This study investigates the contribution of conference tourism—particularly through the CIC—to the development of Algeria's tourism sector.

Problem Statement

Despite Algeria's modern infrastructure and growing investment in business tourism facilities—particularly the International Conference Center (CIC) in Algiers—the country continues to lag behind regional competitors in the MICE sector. This study seeks to assess the extent to which meetings and conference tourism contributes to the growth and diversification of tourism in Algeria.

The central research question is:

To what extent does congress and conference tourism contribute to the development of tourism in Algeria?

From this overarching question, several secondary questions arise :

- What are the different sectors that constitute the meetings industry ?
- Can congress and meeting tourism be considered an independent and viable form of business tourism ?
- Does the International Conference Center (CIC) possess the logistical infrastructure and human resources necessary to sustain and expand this type of tourism?

Hypotheses and Theoretical Framework:

The primary hypothesis guiding this study is that **congress and conference tourism makes a significant contribution to the development of tourism in Algeria.**

Supporting this main hypothesis, the following secondary hypotheses are proposed:

- The meetings industry encompasses several sectors, including fairs and exhibitions, conferences, congresses, seminars, and workshops.

- Meetings and conference tourism can be regarded as a distinct form of tourism, separate from general business tourism.
- The International Conference Center (CIC) in Algiers has the requisite logistical infrastructure and skilled human resources to support and enhance this type of tourism activity.

This research is anchored in four key theoretical perspectives that collectively inform the analysis of how congress and conference tourism can foster the development of tourism in Algeria.

1. **Alternative Tourism Theory**

Alternative tourism theory advocates for the diversification of tourism offerings beyond traditional mass tourism models. It emphasizes the development of tourism forms that are sustainable and culturally sensitive, such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, and creative tourism. These forms seek to integrate local communities and respect both natural and human environments, thereby providing more authentic and responsible tourism experiences. In the Algerian context, the promotion of congress and conference tourism aligns with this theory by offering an alternative to conventional tourism, attracting a distinct segment of tourists, and contributing to sustainable tourism development (Triarchi et Karamanis, 2017).

2. **Business Tourism Demand Model**

The business tourism demand model examines the factors influencing demand for business-related travel, including globalization, economic activity, and the availability of quality venues. As global business interactions expand, the need for travel associated with meetings, conferences, and exhibitions correspondingly increases. Algeria's investment in world-class facilities, such as the International Conference Center in Algiers, positions the country to meet this rising demand and enhance its competitiveness within the business tourism sector (Kulendran et Witt, 2003).

3. **Sustainable Tourism Development Theory**

Sustainable tourism development theory underscores the importance of developing tourism in a manner that meets current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It promotes tourism practices that are economically viable, environmentally friendly, and socially equitable. By focusing on congress and conference tourism, which typically has a lower environmental impact than mass tourism, Algeria can promote sustainable tourism practices that contribute to long-term economic growth and environmental preservation (Sharpley, 2020).

4. **Place-Based Development Theory:**

According to Hudson and Hawkins (2006), tourism development based on local assets—such as distinctive conference infrastructure— can foster for the emergence of regional clusters of innovation and economic activity. The CIC in Algiers can be considered as a pivotal node within such a cluster in North Africa.

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives support the hypothesis that MICE tourism, when strategically developed, contributes to diversified and sustainable tourism development, strengthen knowledge economies, and integrates local capacities into global networks.

Objectives and Significance of the Study:

The study seeks to :

- Assess the potential of the International Conference Center (CIC) as a hub for business tourism.
- Evaluate the contribution of conference tourism to national tourism indicators.
- Recommend strategies to strengthen Algeria's positioning within the MICE industry.
- Identify the various sectors comprising the meetings industry.
- Examine the characteristics and specificities of meetings and conference tourism in comparison to general business tourism.
- Analyze the processes involved in transitioning from general business tourism to specialized conference tourism.

The selection of this research topic was informed by both objective and personal motivations:

- The topic remains largely underexplored in Algerian academic literature, prompting scholarly interest.
- It enables an in-depth analysis of the distinctive features of conference tourism.
- It provides an opportunity to assess the sector's contribution to national tourism.
- It proposes a promising alternative to leisure tourism, in which Algeria faces strong competition from other Mediterranean countries.

Research Limitations

A. Temporal Scope: The research was conducted during the 2018–2019 academic year.

B. Spatial Scope: The study was undertaken in collaboration with the International Conference Center in Algiers.

Research Constraints

- a. Limited availability of documentation on meetings and conference tourism, given its recent emergence as an independent category distinct from general business tourism.
- b. A severe shortage—or even absence—of reliable statistical data on the sector in Algeria.
- c. Assessing the contribution of Meetings and Conference Tourism to tourism at the national level requires substantial financial, human, and temporal resources.

2. The International Conference Center of Algiers

For the practical component of this study, the International Conference Center (CIC) in Algiers was selected as the field of investigation, as it is emblematic of the meetings and congress industry in Algeria, particularly within the province of Algiers.

2.1. Presentation of the International Conference Center (CIC Algiers)

The International Conference Center is situated in the seaside resort of Club des Pins, approximately 25 km west of Algiers (Fabris & Partners Office buildings, 2019).

Inaugurated by President ABDELAZZIZ BOUTEFLIKA on September 8, 2016, the facility is ranked among the largest conference centers worldwide and offers world-class customer service. Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, its architectural design successfully merges tradition with modernity (Fabris & Partners Office buildings, 2019).

The CIC Algiers is the largest multi-purpose center in the Mediterranean and Africa, with an area of over 270,000 square meters (Algeria Focus, The new Congress Palace of Algiers, 2016) and ranks among the top 5 in the world (Fabris, Fantoni et Partners, 2019). It was specifically built to host conferences, meetings, exhibitions, and events of different types simultaneously at an international level within its various spaces. It is a place of high hospitality with very high-quality services in a secure environment that gives Algeria a global ranking (Fabris, Fantoni et Partners, 2019).

Flexibility was the guiding principle in the facility's design. The structure allows for modular and adaptable use over time, capable of meeting diverse requirements through the creation of autonomous zones both horizontally and vertically.

The exterior design was conceived to integrate harmoniously into the surrounding landscape, drawing inspiration from the natural dunes characteristic of the site (Fabris, Fantoni et Partners, 2019). The fluid roof structure, matched in color to the dunes, achieves visual coherence with the environment and blends seamlessly without encroachment. Despite its vast dimensions, the complex appears visually integrated—almost camouflaged—within its natural setting.

The interior design reflects the local tradition meets modern and technological style. The interiors of the public areas are inspired by modernity with clean but at the same time fluid lines, while the protocol areas evoke Sub-Saharan atmospheres through colors and shapes (Fabris, Fantoni et Partners, 2019).

The diamond-shaped main façade recalls the intricate lines of sculpted plaster arabesques, an element present in both modern contexts—where it creates a play of contrasts—and traditional settings, where similar motifs are echoed in floor, ceiling, and furniture designs.

Constructed to meet international standards and seismic regulations, the Centre—whose construction commenced in 2011—was designed to host high-level meetings of heads of state as well as other prestigious events (Algeria Focus, The new Congress Palace of Algiers, 2016).

Covering an area of 27 hectares, the facility offers a built-up space of 207,500 square meters distributed among a main block, a services block, and a technical block. The sober, Moorish-inspired style of the CIC is characterized

by harmonious colors (Algeria Focus, The new Congress Palace of Algiers, 2016), 14 geometric patterns contrasting with interior and exterior lighting, and arcades opening onto bay windows.

Blending tradition with modernity, arcades open onto the official hall, where the VIP area is located, consisting of several rooms with different functions. At the end of the corridor in the same space is the office of the President of the Republic. The corridor runs alongside several reception rooms and a meeting room.

The CIC features the Icosium Auditorium (the historical name of Algiers) high, with a capacity of 6,000 seats, the largest in Africa. The steel dome of the auditorium reaches a height of 25 meters and is equipped with a central screen 18 meters long and 10 meters high. The room represents the highest functionality and, with its acoustic characteristics and technological equipment, can meet the requirements and performance of the most diverse scenarios and events (Algeria Focus, The new Congress Palace of Algiers, 2016).

The second major hall, Djamila, has a seating capacity of 700. Its particularity lies in its movable grandstand, which can transform the space into a conference room with 270 seats or a banquet hall with 450 seats (Algeria Focus, The new Congress Palace of Algiers, 2016).

In addition to these two principal halls, the CIC houses six versatile commission rooms—each with a capacity of 300 seats, for seminars and banquets. They are equipped with data show and cameras (Algeria Focus, The new Congress Palace of Algiers, 2016). The centre also includes a large banquet hall with a capacity of 3,000 guests. The room can be transformed into three spaces thanks to movable walls and panels (Algeria Focus, The new Congress Palace of Algiers, 2016). The CIC also has a presidential area with an apartment for the head of state and two apartments for guests, as well as a reception hall for protocol receptions (Algeria Focus, The new Congress Palace of Algiers, 2016). In addition, there are 61 offices available to delegations and participants, served by 54 simultaneous translation booths.

The press facilities include a 110-seat conference room and two additional lounges with Internet access, along with restaurants and cafeterias. For broadcast media, the CIC offers 3 television studios and 4 radio studios to enable live coverage of hosted events.

Constructed by the Chinese company CSCEC Algeria and an Italian engineering firm, the Centre also includes a library, multimedia and reading rooms, as well as a prayer room. The center also has a medical clinic equipped with an operating room, radiology unit, and resuscitation room (Fabris, Fantoni et Partners, 2019).

In addition, the site is capable of hosting trade fairs and international exhibitions with two exhibition halls of 12,400 square meters with separate entrances. These exhibition spaces have been meticulously designed to facilitate commercial transactions, the exchange of ideas, and the presentation of products and services (Fabris, Fantoni et Partners, 2019).

The CIC provides parking for 2,100 vehicles, of which 1,450 spaces are located underground. The site's exits are equipped with various security systems, including scanners for vehicles and goods, as well as other electronic detection devices. Furthermore, 700 surveillance cameras are strategically distributed across the site and connected to a centralized control room (Fabris, Fantoni et Partners, 2019).

In addition to being diverse, the reception areas are flexible. By lifting the stands in a few minutes, the conference room can be transformed into a reception room.

This type of multifunctional facility presents numerous technical challenges, with acoustic management being one of the major challenges. Large reflective surfaces such as glass and marble, and the high occupancy of the venue, are parameters to be taken into account to obtain a pleasant sound atmosphere; therefore, Fabris & Partners (the construction company) collaborated with the Italian manufacturer Fantoni from the very early stages of the project to design different acoustic solutions. With its 135 years of experience and internal network of companies, the Fantoni group was able to implement its expertise in the development of agglomerated panels and sound absorption systems to create solutions adapted to each of the possibilities offered by the Algiers International Conference Center.

The main conference hall, which can also be configured as a reception venue, has been subjected to a double acoustic treatment that is suitable for both amphitheater and reception configurations. The panels used - custom perforated - thus allow for optimal acoustic comfort in both configurations. Fantoni supplied approximately 17,000 square meters of paneling for the entire complex, this technical approach is combined with the definition of an overall aesthetic (Fabris, Fantoni et Partners, 2019).

2.2. Organization and operation of the Algiers International Conference Center

To position itself among the leading conference centers worldwide, the establishment of this venue was carried out in compliance with international standards and regulations for organizing world-class conferences and congresses. KORA HOSPITALITY acts as the manager of the Algiers International Conference Center, and the Sahel State Residence as the official owner (CIC Alger, 2018).

Figure 1: Functioning of the International Conference Center



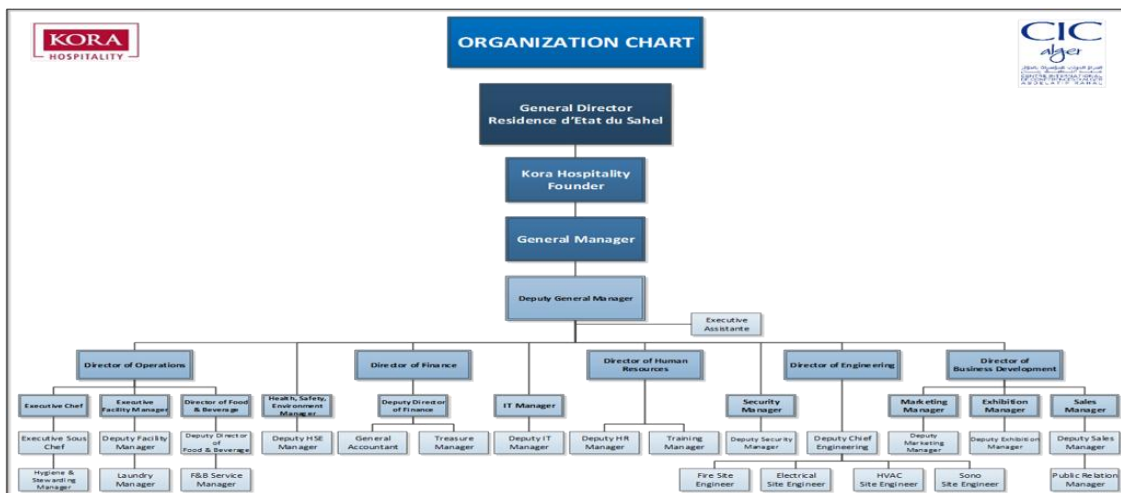
Source: Orientation Program of the CIC Alger, 03/07/2018

2.2.1. Organizational structure of the CIC Alger

The organizational structure of the CIC Alger consists of six departments, which are:

- General Management;
- Finance Department;
- Technical Department;
- Human Resources Department;
- Commercial Department;
- Operations Department And each department includes one or more sub-departments (CIC Alger, 2018).

Figure2: Organizational structure of the International Conference Center.



Source : programme d'orientation du CIC Alger, 07/03/2018.

a- General Management:

The General Management of the CIC comprises the following departments (CIC Alger, 2018):

- General Administration
- IT Department the IT Department is responsible for all information tools, networks, and the internet, telephone networks, etc.
- Security Department the Security Department is responsible for ensuring the protection and security of the site and all individuals present at the CIC (associates, partners, clients, guests, etc.)

b- Finance Management:

The Finance Management consists of (CIC Alger, 2018):

- Accounting Department It records expenses and revenues, debts or credits within the required deadlines with precision and according to Algerian standards (SCF).
- Treasury Department The team consolidates the work of accounting, determines purchase costs and products, and produces reports detailing the activity and financial state of the CIC. They also project into the future to anticipate risks.

- Purchasing Department, the purchasing team is responsible for acquiring all the needs of the CIC in terms of food, materials, equipment, contracts, and services, etc.
- Cost Control Department The cost controller establishes forecast costs, monitors commitments, and ensures their compliance. They analyze risks and variances and propose corrective solutions.
- Operations Supplies and Equipment Department (OS&E) It manages, maintains and controls the supplies and equipment necessary for the smooth operation of the company.

c- Technical Management:

The Technical Department provides support, including (CIC Alger, 2018):

- Logistics through the vehicle fleet
- Electricity
- Heating/air conditioning
- Hot/cold water
- All equipment to facilitate the work of associates
- Detection and firefighting systems
- Video surveillance

d- Human Resources Management:

The Human Resources Department comprises of (CIC Alger, 2018):

*Personnel and Payroll Department the Personnel and Payroll Department is responsible for supporting the associate from the day of recruitment:

- *Job offers and recruitment
- * Reception and updating of administrative files
- * Preparation of contracts, certificates of employment, and leave requests.
- *Implementation of the internal regulations and grooming
- * Preparation and elaboration of payroll
- * Distribution of pay slips

• Social Services Department the Social Services Department is mainly responsible for:

- *Personnel declarations
- * Deposition and monitoring of sick leave
- * Refund of prescriptions
- * Creation and activation of "CHIFA" cards
- * Family and maternity allowances
- * Work accidents
- *Preparation and submission of retirement files

• Training Department:

- * Reception of apprentices and trainees
- * Staff training
- *Canteen, Cafeteria, and Changing Room

- * Ensure the daily catering of associates during their service
- * Allocation of changing rooms for associates and ensuring the maintenance of premises.

e- Business Development Department:

The Business Development Department consists of (CIC Alger, 2018):

• **Sales Department:** The Sales Department is mainly responsible for managing the CIC's client portfolio. The sales representative is the point of contact between the client's needs and demands. The department is responsible for:

- * Handling client requests
- * Managing site reservations and visits
- * Organizing and coordinating with other departments
- * Preparing and implementing events
- * The Guest Relations Service is directly linked to the Sales Department. They are the direct contact with the client during events. The receptionists ensure that clients are greeted with a smile, conduct guided tours of the CIC and ensure their satisfaction throughout the duration of the event.
- **Exhibitions Department:** The Exhibitions Department is responsible for organizing fairs, exhibitions, and shows at the CIC. These events are held in the two exhibition halls, 1 and 2, as well as in the lobby. The Expo Project Manager handles client projects in the same way as the sales representative.

f- Operations Department:

The Operations Department consists of (CIC Alger, 2018):

• **Food & Beverage Department:** The Food & Beverage Department is responsible for managing the clients' food and beverages as well as setting up the rooms and restaurants during events. In order to maintain an international and impeccable standard, all associates working in the F&B department must:

- * Always be smiling and consider every client as being special
- * Maintain eye contact to show that they are present
- * Always maintain perfect hygiene and appearance

• **Housekeeping Department:** The Housekeeping Department consists of two services:

- * Housekeeping Service: Which is responsible for maintaining all private and public spaces within the CIC?
- * Laundry Service: Deals with the laundry, cleaning, ironing, and distribution of all linen and professional attire for the CIC.

• **Kitchen Department:** The Kitchen Department consists of three services:

- * Kitchen Service: Which is responsible for preparing all culinary orders (menu or meals) for associates as well as the CIC's clientele in accordance with hygiene standards and local regulations?

*Pastry Service: Deals with the preparation of all pastries, cakes, bread, and pastries.

*Stewarding Service: Cleans, transports, and stores the catering equipment used during the catering operations. It also maintains the kitchen and storage areas clean and organized.

3. Techniques and Methodology Choices

After identifying the problem of our research, formulating the research questions, and selecting the theoretical frameworks to address them, two main techniques were employed in this study: observation and structured interviews, both applied within the framework of a case study.

3.1. Case Study Methodology

The case study is the most widely used method in qualitative approaches due to its multiple objectives: testing, describing, and generating a theory. It is particularly suited to situations in which the researcher seeks to answer "how" and "why" questions about a contemporary phenomenon over which he has little or no control. This method will allow us to:

- Test a theory or model
- Reveal a previously inaccessible phenomenon
- Study a typical case
- Study a longitudinal case with at least two distinct periods (Langley et Royer, 2006).

In the context of our research, we are conducting a case study, and we have chosen the International Conference Center as the research and study field for several reasons, including:

1. The International Conference Center is the only institution specialized exclusively in the organization of meetings and conferences in Algeria.
2. CIC Alger is the largest conference center in Africa and the 5th in the world.
3. CIC Alger organizes over 250 events per year, including congresses, conferences, symposiums, workshops, etc.
4. The CIC Alger is the only structure in Algeria where it is possible to organize an event for 1000 to 10000 people.
5. The CIC Alger is located in Algiers, the capital of the country and the center of all types of activities and fields in Algeria.

3.2. Observation

To investigate the extent to which conference and congress tourism contributes to the development of tourism in Algeria, this study employed a "complete observer" methodology. This approach entailed the systematic collection of data without engaging in the activities being observed or interacting with the subjects. By maintaining this observational stance, the research aimed for an objective analysis of various dimensions of

conference tourism at the International Conference Center (CIC), focusing on client demographics, event scale and type, as well as logistical and economic factors.

Advantages of the Complete Observer Role The complete observer role facilitates a reduction in potential biases associated with researcher involvement. This methodological detachment allows for the collection of data that accurately reflects the phenomena under investigation, ensuring that findings are derived from authentic behaviors and conditions. Such an approach is particularly effective in assessing client demographics and event characteristics, as it yields an unmediated view of the context.

Mitigating Observer Bias Despite the inherent advantages of the complete observer role, the potential for biases in data interpretation remains a concern. To address this issue, several strategies are implemented:

Structured Observation Framework: A comprehensive framework consisting of predefined categories and metrics is established to guide the observation process. This structure ensures systematic data collection, thereby minimizing subjective interpretations.

Triangulation: The incorporation of multiple data sources or methodologies serves to enhance the reliability of the findings. For example, the combination of observational data with quantitative surveys can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the context, mitigating reliance on a singular perspective.

Reflexivity: The researcher engages in reflexive practices to critically assess personal biases and assumptions throughout the research process. This ongoing self-examination promotes transparency in data interpretation.

Peer Review: The involvement of colleagues or experts in reviewing the observational data allows for the introduction of alternative perspectives, challenging potential biases. This collaborative effort contributes to a more balanced interpretation of the findings.

By employing these strategies, the research effectively capitalizes on the advantages of the complete observer role while minimizing bias. This rigorous approach enhances the credibility and validity of the findings, thereby providing a more accurate assessment of the contributions of conference and congress tourism to the development of Algeria's tourism sector.

3.3. Interviews

Structured interviews were conducted with CIC managers and staff. The interview guide included themes such as:

- Types of events organized at the CIC.
- Targeted client segments.
- Tourism activities offered to clients outside the CIC.
- CIC's positioning relative to competitors.
- Contribution of CIC to local and national tourism.

4. Results and discussion

According to Client Profile and Sector Demand

- The pharmaceutical and medical sectors dominate conference organization.
- CIC’s most frequent clients also include government institutions, embassies, and international organizations.

International and Domestic Participation

- Over 80% of CIC events include international participants, qualifying them as tourists.
- All events also involve domestic participants from across Algeria's 48 provinces, making them national in reach.

Event Scale and Frequency

- CIC hosts large-scale events, accommodating up to 9,000 participants from 16 countries.
- Most events are held between September and May, indicating a peak season for business tourism.

Economic and Logistical Impact

- CIC collaborates with local hotels, creating strong synergies with the hospitality sector.
- Conference tourism drives job creation: over 350 direct jobs and numerous indirect opportunities.

Conceptual Awareness

- CIC managers were unfamiliar with the formal term "conference tourism."

4.1. Quantitative Analysis

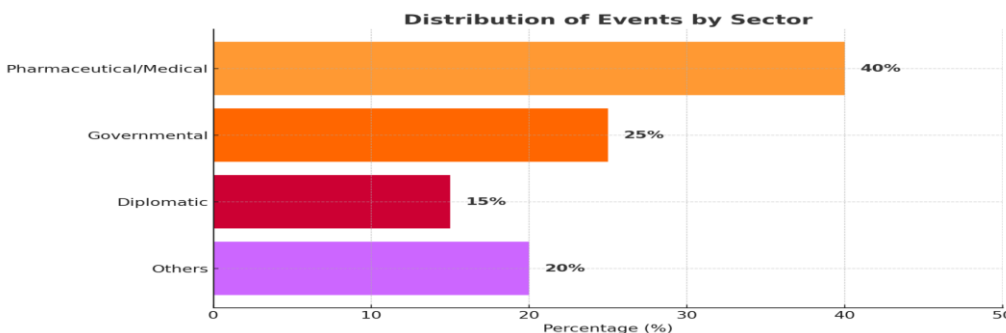
In this section, we will discuss the results of the Quantitative study obtained through the workfield.

Phase 1: Observation in the Food & Beverage Department (March–May 2018) During this period, direct observation enabled interaction with event participants and staff. It was found that the majority of events were:

- Conferences
- Product launches
- Seminars and workshops

The following visuals summarize key quantitative findings:

Figure3: Event Distribution by Sector



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the collected data

Analysis

The pie chart illustrates the distribution of events across four different sectors: Pharmaceutical/Medical, Governmental, Diplomatic, and Others.

Sector Distribution

- **Pharmaceutical/Medical Sector:** 40%
- **Governmental Sector:** 25%
- **Diplomatic Sector:** 15%
- **Others:** 20%

Visitor Origin

- **Domestic:** 70%
- **International:** 30%

Event Size

- **Medium:** 50%
- **Small:** 30%
- **Large:** 20%

a) Pharmaceutical/Medical Sector

This sector accounts for 40% of the total events. This significant portion indicates that the pharmaceutical and medical industries are major players in organizing events, likely due to the need for conferences, product launches, and educational seminars.

b) Governmental Sector

Comprising 25% of events, this sector reflects the importance of governmental bodies in organizing events. These may include public meetings, workshops, or conferences aimed at policy-making and public engagement.

c) Diplomatic Sector

Making up 15% of the events, the diplomatic sector represents a smaller but still notable share. This suggests that while diplomatic events are less frequent, they play a crucial role in international relations and cooperation.

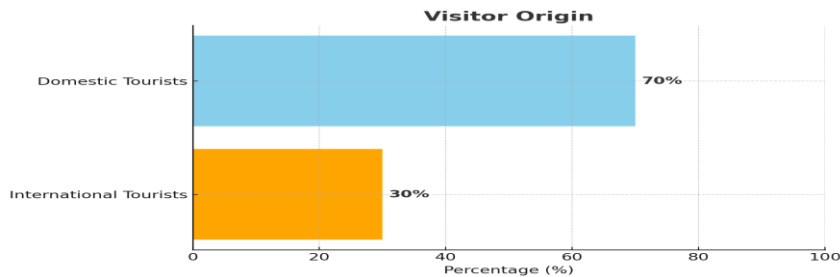
d) Others

The remaining 20% of events fall into the "Others" category. This includes various sectors not specifically categorized, indicating a diverse range of event types that do not fit neatly into the primary sectors. The chart highlights the dominance of the pharmaceutical/medical sector in event organization, followed by governmental events. The presence of the diplomatic sector, though smaller, signifies its importance in the broader context of event distribution. The "Others" category reflects the variety of events occurring across different sectors, suggesting opportunities for further exploration and analysis in those areas.

This distribution can inform stakeholders about where to focus resources and efforts in event planning and marketing, enhancing the effectiveness of future events

- Sector distribution: Pharmaceutical/medical (40%), government (25%), diplomatic (15%), others (20%).
- Visitor origin: Domestic (70%), international (30%).
- Event size: Medium (50%), small (30%), large (20%).

Figure4: Origin of visitors



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the collected data

Analysis

The distribution of visitor origin at events hosted by the **Centre International de Conférences (CIC)** provides a critical lens through which to understand the dynamics of participation and the broader socio-economic impact of the institution. The data divides attendees into two principal categories: **domestic tourists** (70%) and **international tourists** (30%).

1. Domestic Participants (70%)

The predominance of domestic attendees reflects the CIC's strong integration within the **national context of Algeria's event ecosystem**. This majority presence suggests that the CIC serves as a central platform for **local academic, governmental, medical, and cultural gatherings**. Domestic participants ensure a **stable attendance base**, which is vital for the sustainability of conferences and exhibitions. Moreover, this highlights the role of the CIC as a hub for **capacity building, professional networking, and knowledge exchange** within the country. From a policy perspective, the significant domestic turnout also indicates that the center contributes to national development by **reducing reliance on outbound conference travel** and keeping knowledge transfer localized.

2. International Participants (30%)

The presence of international attendees, though a smaller proportion, is strategically significant. Hosting **30% international participants** underlines the CIC's capacity to project Algeria's image as a **regional and global meeting point**. Such events attract policymakers, business leaders, academics, and cultural delegations from abroad, enhancing **cross-border collaboration**. International participation also signals the CIC's competitiveness in the global conference market, contributing to **Algeria's positioning as a diplomatic and**

economic hub in Africa and the Mediterranean region. Additionally, foreign visitors typically generate higher economic impact through extended stays, hospitality spending, and engagement with local industries.

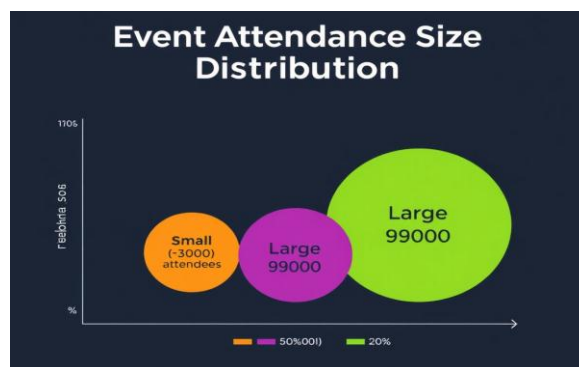
3. Strategic Implications for CIC

This distribution reflects a dual role for the CIC:

- **National Anchor:** By attracting a majority of domestic attendees, CIC solidifies its role as a premier national venue, fostering local academic discourse, governmental summits, and professional development activities.
- **International Gateway:** The consistent participation of international visitors demonstrates the CIC's potential to further integrate Algeria into global dialogue. Expanding international representation could be achieved through **strategic partnerships with global organizations, multilingual marketing efforts, and enhanced logistical support** for foreign participants.

We conclude, the balance between domestic and international participants at CIC events demonstrates both resilience and opportunity. Domestic attendees provide the foundation for consistent utilization of the venue, while international participants elevate its profile, ensuring broader diplomatic, cultural, and economic impact. If strategically leveraged, this composition positions the CIC not only as a national conference hub, but also as a developing entity in the domain of international event hosting.

Figure5: Event Attendance Size Distribution



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the collected data

Analysis:

The distribution of events by attendance size provides meaningful insights into organizational strategies, participant engagement, and the structural characteristics of the event industry. Events are categorized into small (<3000 attendees), medium (3000–6000 attendees), and large (6000–9000 attendees), each reflecting distinct dynamics within the broader ecosystem.

1. Medium-Sized Events (3000–6000 attendees) – 50%

Medium-sized events constitute the majority, accounting for half of all events. This predominance suggests that organizers perceive mid-sized gatherings as the optimal balance between scale and manageability. Such events are large enough to ensure visibility, attract sponsorship, and generate substantial impact, yet remain more feasible in terms of infrastructure, security, and logistics compared to large-scale gatherings.

Academically, this dominance aligns with the concept of resource optimization, where institutions seek to maximize engagement and outcomes while minimizing organizational risks. Furthermore, medium-sized events often allow for greater inclusivity, accommodating diverse participants while maintaining opportunities for meaningful interaction.

2. Small Events (<3000 attendees) – 30%

Small events account for nearly one-third of the total. While they attract fewer participants, their significance lies in their ability to cater to specialized or niche audiences. Examples include technical workshops, professional seminars, and focused cultural activities. From a developmental perspective, small events often serve as incubators of innovation and localized collaboration, providing opportunities for grassroots participation and tailored knowledge exchange. Their relatively lower share reflects the fact that, although valuable, they may have limited scalability and reduced financial returns compared to medium-sized events.

3. Large Events (6000–9000 attendees) – 20%

Large-scale events, while comprising the smallest share (20%), play an outsized role in terms of visibility and prestige. These events typically include international conferences, major exhibitions, or high-level summits. Their limited frequency is largely attributable to the high logistical demands, such as infrastructure capacity, crowd management, and elevated costs of organization. However, when successfully executed, they yield disproportionate benefits, including significant media coverage, international recognition, and substantial economic impact through tourism and business engagement.

4. Strategic and Practical Implications

The distribution reveals a structural tendency towards medium-sized events as the strategic norm, offering a balance between impact and feasibility. Small events continue to hold value in specialized knowledge creation and targeted engagement, while large events, though rare, remain critical for international visibility and symbolic influence.

For policymakers, venue managers, and stakeholders, this suggests a need for flexible infrastructure and scalable planning models that can accommodate varying event sizes. It also underscores the importance of aligning resources with expected returns, ensuring that each category of event is leveraged according to its strengths.

In sum, the event size distribution reflects a deliberate organizational preference toward mid-sized gatherings, supported by a complementary mix of small and large events. This configuration not only strengthens the

resilience of the event industry but also positions it to achieve both local relevance and international impact. By strategically balancing event sizes, stakeholders can enhance sustainability, optimize resource allocation, and maximize socio-economic benefits. **Table N°1: Major Events at CIC Algiers (2019–2022)**

| Year | Event Name | Date | Sector/Theme |
|------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 2019 | Dentex Algeria | March 20–23, 2019 | Dental Medicine |
| 2019 | Algeria Future Energy Summit | October 14–15, 2019 | Energy & Investment |
| 2020 | Plast Alger & Printpack Alger | March 9–11, 2020 | Plastics & Packaging |
| 2020 | Algeria Leather & Shoes | February 25–27, 2020 | Leather & Footwear |
| 2021 | SIEL-HORECA Expo | December 1–4, 2021 | Hospitality & Catering |
| 2021 | SIEE Pollutec Algeria | September 27–30, 2021 | Water & Environment |
| 2022 | Plast Alger & Printpack Alger | May 16–18, 2022 | Plastics & Packaging |
| 2022 | Dentex Algeria | June 1–4, 2022 | Dental Medicine |
| 2022 | SIEE Pollutec Algeria | June 20–23, 2022 | Water & Environment |
| 2022 | Smart City International Congress | June 21–23, 2022 | Smart Cities & Technology |
| 2022 | TEXSTYLE-EXPO | December 19–21, 2022 | Textiles & Fashion |
| 2022 | 31st Arab League Summit | November 1–2, 2022 | Politics & Diplomacy |

Source: <https://www.showsbee.com> & <https://10times.com> & <https://textstyleexpo.com> & <https://aps.dz>

Analysis:

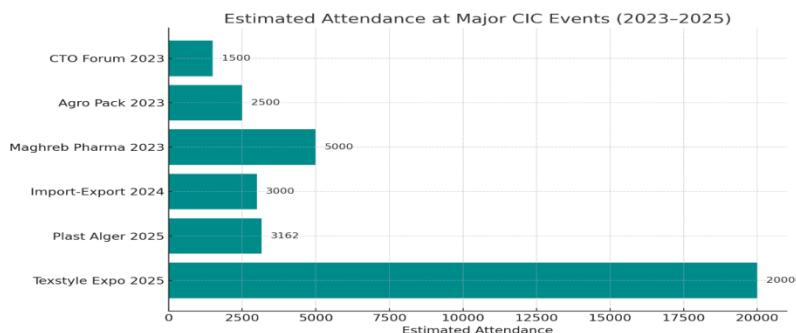
The CIC Algiers has demonstrated consistency and flexibility by hosting diverse events across multiple industries such as health, energy, environment, and fashion. Even during the COVID-19 period, the center maintained its relevance and continued attracting both national and international stakeholders. The Arab League Summit in 2022 further reinforced its political and strategic importance regionally.

Table N°2: Major Events at CIC Algiers (2023–2025)

| Year | Event Name | Date | Sector/Theme |
|------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 2023 | CTO Forum Algeria | May 8–10, 2023 | Information Technology |
| 2023 | Agro Pack Expo | February 20–23, 2023 | Agri-Food & Packaging |
| 2023 | Maghreb Pharma Expo | February 7–9, 2023 | Pharmaceutical Technology |
| 2024 | Inter-African Import-Export Fair | March 5–7, 2024 | Inter-African Trade |
| 2025 | Plast Alger | February 24–26, 2025 | Plastics & Composites |
| 2025 | Texstyle Expo | April 21–23, 2025 | Textile & Leather Industry |

Source: <https://aimtech-move.com> & <https://www.finelib.com> & <https://www.tradeindia.com> & <https://www.showsbee.com> & <https://10times.com>

Figure 6: Estimated attendance at major events hosted at CIC Algiers between 2023 and 2025.



Source : Prepared by the researcher based on the collected data

Analysis:

From 2023 to 2025, CIC Algiers has continued its role as a premier venue for regional and international exhibitions and forums. The diversity of themes, from information technology to pharmaceuticals and textiles, highlights the center's adaptability and growing appeal. Textstyle Expo and Plast Alger stand out due to their high visitor volumes and international participation. These events reinforce CIC's positioning as a strategic MICE hub in North Africa.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis

In this section, we will explore the findings from the analysis of the guided interviews conducted during the field study.

Directive Interviews Analysis

The field study took place between March to May 2018 in the Food and Beverage Department. This phase provided us with the opportunity to engage directly with customers during events, enabling us to better understand their preferences. Observations revealed that conferences and product launches are the most frequent events at CIC Algeria, primarily organized by pharmaceutical and medical companies.

A significant proportion of participants in these events were foreign visitors who had traveled for more than 24 hours, for either professional or non-professional reasons, thus qualifying them as tourists. Additionally, CIC Algeria has the capacity to organize large-scale events, a capability unmatched by any other institution in Algeria. For example, we attended a conference that brought together 9,000 people from 48 states and 16 countries.

The second phase of the field study occurred between May to June 2018 in the Business Development Department. During this phase, we reviewed all stages of organizing Tourism Research Center (CIC) events, from marketing calls to identifying potential clients, including companies, universities, and government agencies.

This research enabled us to identify the customer segment that the Tourism Research Center (CIC) serves most effectively, confirming that the pharmaceutical industry remains the largest market segment.

Obtain statistics and data related to sales, revenues, and the number of CIC events held in 2018, to assess the industry's contribution to regional tourism development. Engage in direct communication with clients organizing CIC-related events, enhancing our understanding of their expectations and needs.

Analysis of Directive Interviews

we conducted directive interviews with the managers of CIC Algeria in April 2019, which provided further insights:

- The government authorizes CIC Algeria to organize a wide range of professional events, including conferences, product launches, receptions, national holidays, congresses, symposiums, and workshops, as well as non-professional events with popular themes.

- CIC Algeria is the largest producer in in Algeria's meetings and congress sector, having organized over 228 events related to the Tourism Research Center (CIC) in 2018.
- Despite being a relatively new company, CIC Algeria achieved financial independence after three years of operation. While it does not yet contribute significantly to the national economy, it is on track to become profitable and support local growth in the near future.
- CIC Algeria's clients are classified into five main sectors: medical, pharmaceutical, governmental, embassies, and others. The pharmaceutical and medical sectors organize the majority of events throughout the year, representing a significant portion of the center's revenue.
- Approximately 80% of CIC Algeria's events include foreign participants, highlighting its potential for developing international tourism in Algeria. Furthermore, 100% of these events also feature Algerian guests from outside the capital, who are considered local tourists.
- Collaboration with several hotels in the region, including Sheraton Club des Pins and Holiday Inn, enhances the overall client experience, although CIC Algeria does not provide accommodation except for VIP clients.
- Many visitors take part in guided tours of local attractions, such as the Casbah and Martyrs' Monument, further enriching their experience.
- CIC Algeria stands out in terms of infrastructure and logistics, being the only venue capable of hosting CIC events with 1,000 to 10,000 participants.
- The peak season for the meetings and congress industry extends from September to May, with a slowdown in activity between June and August.
- The center contributes to local economic development by creating both direct and indirect job opportunities, employing over 350 staff and supporting various suppliers.

Notably, many interviewees were unfamiliar with the term "conference tourism," despite their active support for it. According to the insights gathered, CIC Algeria plays a significant role in the development of tourism in general and meetings and congress tourism in particular in Algeria.

Practical Recommendations :

1. Establish a National MICE Coordination Body

Reate a specialized national entity or inter-ministerial committee dedicated to overseeing the development, regulation, and promotion of the MICE sector in Algeria.

2. Develop Incentives for International Event Organizers

Offer financial or logistical incentives (such as tax reductions, venue discounts, or fast-track permits) to attract major international conference organizers.

3. **Build a National MICE Calendar**

Publish an annual calendar of confirmed and upcoming national and international events to enhance coordination and marketing efforts.

4. **Enhance Regional Connectivity**

Improve air, road, and transport connections to CIC Algiers and other potential MICE hubs to support tourist flow and participant logistics.

5. **Integrate MICE Packages with Cultural Tourism**

Encourage travel agencies to bundle MICE events with cultural tours (Casbah, Tipasa, Sahara, etc.), promoting longer stays and greater economic impact.

6. **Launch a “Meet in Algeria” Campaign**

Develop a global branding campaign positioning Algeria as an emerging MICE destination, targeting key sectors such as health, diplomacy, and education.

7. **Digital Transformation of CIC Services**

Implement online reservation, virtual tour platforms, event management systems, and multilingual customer support to enhance global accessibility and client experience.

8. **Create a MICE Training Academy**

Establish a public-private initiative to train professionals in event planning, protocol, hospitality, and MICE marketing—certified under international standards.

9. **Monitor and Publish Impact Reports**

Release annual impact reports detailing the economic, social, and tourism-related benefits of MICE events held in Algeria to guide policymaking and investment.

10. **Promote PPP Investment in Secondary Cities**

Encourage the development of smaller MICE facilities in Oran, Constantine, and Ghardaïa to decentralize conference tourism and stimulate local economies.

5. **Conclusion**

The case of the CIC Algiers illustrates that conference tourism is emerging as a key driver of sustainable economic diversification in Algeria. Its proven capacity to host major national and international events positions it as a strategic asset in enhancing Algeria’s presence in the global MICE industry.

Findings from this study indicate that, with adequate policy support, capacity building, and targeted investment, conference tourism can become an integral pillar of the country’s tourism strategy. The sector’s positive spillover effects on hospitality, transport, local crafts, and related industries further strengthen its contribution to inclusive

economic development. Prioritizing this form of tourism is consistent with Algeria's strategic objective to reduce its reliance on hydrocarbons and to advance toward a more resilient, competitive, and diversified economy.

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