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Staging New Conferences:

Positioning the MICE Industry and Entrepreneurs in the Stavanger Region

Conventions – bringing people together…

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Abstract

This thesis investigated the conference organizing process, people around it and factors influencing the success of similar events. During the recent years Stavanger conference industry has been developing rapidly. However, the MICE industry in Stavanger region is not well academically researched. In order to illustrate the conference industry in the region and to clarify relations between the business' actors, researcher will use the qualitative research design. By using purposive sampling, the concentration was placed on twelve respondents from Stavanger CVB, PCOs companies, conference hotels and the entrepreneurs. The research data was gathered using face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews. The researcher engaged coding and thematic analysis.

The findings showed that the entrepreneur's role is very important for the conference process. Because of their international network they are the key elements for the conference realization. Moreover, the research explained in detail the conference industry actors' relations and described the conference process from the first idea to its implementation. Additionally, the thesis described Stavanger region as a conference destination and have identified it's strength and weaknesses.

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1. Introduction

Conference industry receives attention from quite a few researchers. The main fields of consideration is marketing, customer satisfaction, consumer behavior, site selection issues, meeting planners and event administration (Yoo & Weber, 2005). However, there were no studies carried out on the process of organizing new conferences, where the main focus is placed on the interaction of professionals working in the MICE industry and the entrepreneur – conference organizer.

MICE industry

Summit, meeting, conference, assembly, convention, congress, briefing, training, incentive are just some words describing "the meeting industry". However, regardless of the title, all events are about bringing people together, communicating, sharing ideas and information, building networks, and encouraging for better performance (Rogers, 2008). But how important is this, when everything is available 24/7 and internationally accessible with a click of a mouse? Conferences build personal relationships and trust – the basis for every entrepreneurial success. They provide experience and ideas that bring better performance and enrich everyday life.

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world, which creates more than 258 million jobs worldwide and generates 9.1% of global GDP (WTTC, 2007). MICE industry has grown, developed and mirrored the changes of the overall hospitality industry (Montgomery & Strick, 1995; Rogers, 2008). It is a very important growing part of the tourism business, because corporate travelers bring great income for the host community, making the grater tourism industry share in the country's GDP. Before and after meeting days, business people contribute to the host community by using their hotels, restaurants, sightseeing, shopping, and participating in other various activities. Furthermore, being

selected as a conference host brings prestige and status for the host destination (Rogers, 2008).

Entrepreneurship

Conference industry is a complicated mechanism which consists of conference hosts, organizers, supplier businesses and other additional organizations that interact with each other (Rogers, 2008). This research will describe the connection between conference hosts, professional conference organizers and convention bureaus.

New conference requires enthusiasm, time, money and creativity. The leading board of potential conference organizers should contain all elements. Such people as entrepreneurs distinguish by their creativity, flexible thinking and rational decision making (Johnson, 2001). They usually have relevant network, are motivating and inspiring (Berglund & Johansson, 2007; Johnson, 2001). Moreover, entrepreneurs are different from other people in the way they see new opportunities (Baron, 1998).

The problem of this paper

The MICE industry in Stavanger region is not well researched; therefore there are a lot of unanswered questions.

First, for laying the base for further researches, it is important to position and describe the conference industry in the region. That is, to clarify their roles and relations.

Second, conferences bring benefits to the host community, host organizer and conference participants themselves. However, according to Stavanger Convention Bureau, there are many potential conference organizers, who hesitate to take responsibility and commit to organize a new conference. What factors have a positive influence to increase the number of conferences in the region?

Third, as it was mentioned earlier, visitors bring great revenue for the region, therefore the researcher was interested in the ways Stavanger region can be more attractive for international conferences. What do we need to improve, in order to win the bid and bring a conference to the country?

Research questions

How does the conference business in Stavanger region look like? What are the most important partners and how do they interact? What role is left for an individual entrepreneur in organizing conferences and meetings?

The importance of this study

First and foremost, hopefully, this kind of research will initiate more studies in the MICE industry's field in Stavanger region. Secondly, it will define the roles of conference business actors. Thirdly, this research will give conference professionals a better understanding of the factors influencing entrepreneurs' decision making.

Methodology for reaching the goal

Considering that were no similar research carried out up to date, to meet the goal the researcher used qualitative approach. This method was chosen so to achieve the in-depth and profound understanding of conference processes. The data was collected through semi-structured open-ended face-to-face and telephone interviews. Respondents were selected according to their knowledge in the field of study.

For data analysis, the researcher applied coding and thematic investigation. The entire data analysis process was based on the Mile's and Huberman's interactive model (1994). During the personal interviews conference professionals identified the process and personal experiences of getting a new conference. They shared the information about the ways of

discovering and inspiring potential conference organizers. Moreover, the research investigates entrepreneurs' personality, factors influencing one's decision making process, and personal network's importance for the implementations of the conference. And last but not least, participants indicated the strengths and weaknesses of Stavanger as a conference destination.

This project will be of high importance and value for convention bureaus, professional conference organizers and other people who are interested in convention business.

2. Literature review

2.1. MICE Industry

2.1.1 The development of the industry

Meetings exist as long as people. The need to communicate face to face has been the driving force behind the growth of the entire industry (Montgomery & Strick, 1995). In the early days of civilization people gathered to discus hunting plans, wars and peace negotiations. Increasing activities in civilized world led to the expansion and development of meetings. Each community had its own gathering places, that later on grew to important places of commerce (Montgomery & Strick, 1995). One of the oldest and most important events, probably the starting point for the MICE industry was the Congress of Vienna held from September 1814 to June 1815 (Rogers, 2008). It was organized after Napoleonic Wars in order to put in place the territorial borders of Europe.

The demand in the meeting industry grew together with the academic, hospitality and railway network development (Rogers, 2008). Generally, the meeting industry generated because of human need to meet and discuss rapid economic and technological development (Ford, 2008).

Modern conference industry took its first steps in North America (Ford, 2008; Rogers, 2008). At the end of the nineteenth century various associations and religious groups began to organize conventions to their members. The first convention bureau was established in 1896, when a group of businessmen hired a full-time salesperson and sent him on the road in order to convince and bring new conventions to Detroit city (Ford, 2008; Rogers, 2008). It was a great success. Business people started coming from hundreds of miles together bringing

money and fame for the city (Ford, 2008). The circle begun and other US cities followed the Detroit's example.

Europe discovered convention industry in the middle of the twentieth century (Rogers, 2008). The first conference industry association was founded in 1928 (International Association of Exhibition and Events). Since the 1960s investments into conference industry grew intensely. In the 1990s it has reached its peak and continued the process through the new century. Further on it spread to other continents (Sangpikul & Kim, 2009). Therefore, in comparison to other industries, meeting industry is relatively young.

According to Stuart, nowadays MICE business is one of the most successfully growing business (Rogers, 2008). There is a demand for more conferences and meetings than was ever thought it would be. It is a fast growing, young, international and dynamic industry with its origins in Europe and North America (Rogers, 2008).

Historically, the conference buyer was one person who was both the buyer and the organizer (Shone, 1998). The demand for conferences grew, the business expanded and developed into a complex industry. Most of the companies, that wish to host a conference, hire conference organizers (Shone, 1998). According to Wilson, each conference should have a person or a team with experience which would be able to co-ordinate and manage complicated planning process (Rogers, 2008).

During the times of fast internet development convention business reached uncertainty period (Rogers, 2008). Many people considered that internet will overwhelm MICE industry and it will slowly disappear. Such estimations were made, because communication via internet is considered to be more comfortable, cheaper and less time consuming. However, the hesitations did not confirm. The reason is simple, people need face-to-face communication and personal contact (Rogers, 2008). At the moment MICE industry is bigger and more important than it was ever expected.

Compared to other industries, MICE industry received little attention from researchers and academics, therefore the terminology varies within diverse nations.

2.1.2. Terminology

The term "conference" is often used as a generalizing word to describe different meeting and communication events (Rogers, 2008). On macro level the concept has various names: business tourism (Europe), business events (Australia), MICE (USA and Europe), MC&IT (Canada). On micro level the events can be named by conference, congress, convention, meeting, symposium, colloquium, assembly, conclave, summit etc.

As it was mentioned earlier, compared to other industries MICE industry is relatively young, therefore not enough researched and written about. As a consequence the reader can be confused with terminological discrepancy. In order to clarify the differences among various titles, it will be further presented a set of MICE industry-related terms and their explanations.

Conference – it is usually a short duration meeting for discussing relevant topics, solving problems or just consulting with the people working in the same field. Organizations arrange conferences in order to provide a platform and network for discussion, to take a closer look at their industry, to exchange views, convey important messages, debate critical questions or give publicity to some relevant area (Rogers, 2008). Conferences might be moved around different cities and countries (rotating conferences) or be arranged in the same destination (annual conferences).

Congress – constant meeting of a large group in order to discuss special subjects. It often lasts several days and has a few gatherings at the same time. The time of the congresses is usually known early in advance and it can be annual or pluri-annual (Rogers, 2008).

Convention – the primary reason of the gathering is to attend educational sessions, participate in meetings/discussions, socialize, or attend other organized events. Conventions has an exhibit component (Rogers, 2008).

Meeting – as in convention, attendees participate in educational sessions, meetings/discussions, socialize, or attend other organized events. However, the difference between convention and meeting is that meeting do not have exhibit component (Rogers, 2008).

Apart from the events mentioned above other components of business tourism are: exhibitions and trade fairs, incentive travel, corporate events or corporate hospitality and individual business travel.

Business tourist – is a traveller whose main purpose is to attend an activity or an event associated with his/her business or interests (Rogers, 2008).

Business extenders - cultural/leisure activities to extend the business travel and lengthen the stay.

Bid proposal – it is a formal invitation for the conference with full description of the destination (Rogers, 2008). International congers and convention association (ICCA) developed a wide-ranging online directory "Decision-making for International Association Congresses" (International Congress and Convention Association, n.d.). This publication was made to introduce international association community with the factors influencing bid process decision-making. When the potential conference organizer prepares the bid, ICCA requires such inclusion (International Congress and Convention Association, 2007):

1. Value for money - association's perspective, local hosts' perspective, delegate perspective (e.g. airfare and hotel rates), sponsors and other stakeholders.
2. Political support: national and local.

3. Details of the local team, both association members and meetings industry suppliers.

4. Track record of destination/venue regarding similar events.

5. Accessibility: international access and local ease of transport.

6. Capacity to attract delegates (tourist-type and association-specific reasons).

7. Opportunities to recruit new members for the association.

8. Opportunities for educational outreach to the association's business or scientific or social community in the bidding country.

9. Quality of meeting venue(s), social venue(s), and hotels.

10. Local input into scientific/educational program.

11. Local PCO's or DMC's involvement in the local team.

12. Networking potential.

13. Marketing support.

14. Creative input.

15. Draft budget, and clearly set out financial responsibilities.

16. Are dates held firmly, and do they avoid competing events and major holidays.

17. Insurance and risk assessment information.

18. Options for study visits as well as pre- and post-tourism.

In 2010 Stavanger CVB prepared number of official bids including the bids for conferences: Society in Europe for Applied Medicine 2012, Resaux IP Europeens 2013, European Poultry Congress 2014, and Handball VM 2015 (see the bid example in Appendix C).

2.1.3. The structure of MICE industry

The meeting industry consists of many partners working together. They have a common goal – transform the region to the famous conference destination. MICE industry consists of various businesses: buyers, suppliers, conference agencies, intermediaries and other related organizations (Rogers, 2008). Following chapter will be divided into description of agencies, buyers and suppliers.

The buyers

Roger (2008, p. 34) defines the buyers as "conference organizers and meeting planners who buy or, more accurately, hire conference venues and related services in order to stage their events". Corporate and association sectors are the biggest customers within the MICE industry followed by the public and entrepreneurial sectors.

The corporate sector describes conference organizers who work for corporate organizations (Rogers, 2008). The purpose of corporate organizations is to generate profit.

The association sector consists of professional or trade institutions, voluntary societies, charities, religious organizations, political parties and trade unions (Rogers, 2008). Most of them are non-profit organizations.

The public sector "has much in common with the association sector, covering organizations such as local authorities/municipalities, central government departments and agencies, educational bodies and health services" (Rogers, 2008, p. 52).

Although there is no particular definition of the entrepreneurial sector, Rogers (2008) distinguishes the sector by the profit element. Such kind of organizer builds the conference and tries to attract necessary amount of delegates in order to make it profitable. Usually these conferences are based on the most popular topics.

The suppliers

Suppliers are associated with the businesses which make available for the external hire the venues, destinations, accommodation, transport and other elements which are necessary for the MICE industry (Roger, 2008).

"Destination" is a general term for town, region or entire country. Location is the most important factor for conference organizer's site selection (Rogers, 2008). Good conference destination contains quality venues, facilities, attractions, support services and proper infrastructure.

Conference venue refers to the facility with a minimum of three meeting/conference rooms with a minimum seating capacity of 50 theatre-style in its largest room (Rogers, 2008).

UK's largest conference venue searching database has around 5,500 conference venues listed in the UK, and over 10,500 worldwide (Conferences Group, n.d.). A lot of investments are dedicated for rebuilding and establishing great venues.

Conference hotels comprise over half of all conference venues, therefore it is very important for the corporate sector (Rogers, 2008). Hotel chains make big investments for establishing and developing their conference facilities. Additionally, their services are standardized; therefore customer can expect to get the same product anywhere in the world. Best recognized hotel chains in the world are: Hilton, Accor, Six Continents, Marriott, Thistle, Sol Meliá, and Best Western.

Besides conference hotels there are specially designed conference and exhibition centres where they host bigger size events (Roger, 2008). Further on follow some examples of internationally famous purpose-build venues:

Description	Picture
USA **McCormick Place** It is the largest convention centre in the United States. 241, 600 m2 of exhibit halls. 173 meeting rooms (McCormick Place, n.d.).	
USA **The Orange County Convention Center** It is the second largest convention centre in the United States. 195,000 m2 of which is exhibit space. Total are: 650,000 m2. Solar panels on the roof of the South Concourse provide 1 MW of power (Orange County Convention Centre, n.d.).	
Puerto Rico **Puerto Rico Convention Center** It is the largest convention centre in the Caribbean and the most technologically advanced in Latin America. The area of 53,882 m2, including a 14,186 m2 exhibit hall. Additional 41,805 m2 exhibit area is planned for the expansion. Famous by its exceptional design (Puerto Rico Convention Center, n.d.).	
UK **Earls Court Exhibition Centre** It is located in Central London. Earls Court One and Two together with Olympia have a total of 97,000 m2 of event space. They can accommodate shows requiring 600 or 60,000 m2 of space (EC & O Venues, n.d.).	

UK **Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre** It specializes in events for between 40 and 1,300 delegates. It has 2,000 m2 of exhibition space. It has four main auditorium, seven conference rooms and many smaller rooms. Located in London (The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, n.d.).	
UK **SECC Scottish Exhibition Centre** **It has 22.355 m2 flexible space, all at ground level.** Retractable partition walls can shape halls to customer's exact requirements, making them as large - 19,265m 2 (SECC, 2010).	
Sweden **Swedish Exhibition & Congress Centre** Located in Gothenburg. It attracts around one million visitors every year. It has 145,000 m2 area. The premises include exhibition halls, conference and congress facilities, offices, restaurants and hotel buildings. A third tower rising 100 meters will be built and finished by 2014 (Swedish Exhibition and Congress Centre, n.d.).	
Denmark **Bella Centre** It offers an indoor area of 121.800 m² and has a capacity of 20,000 people. 4 auditoriums (for 310-930 persons) 63 flexible meeting rooms (from 2-400 persons) etc. (Bella Center, n.d.)	

Norway **Norway Convention Centre** 39,000 m2 on one level, divided between five halls. 30,000 m2 of outdoor exhibition space. 6,000-seat conference plenary hall. 6,000-seat banqueting hall. Hotel with 355 rooms directly linked to the exhibition centre (Norway Traid Fairs, n.d.).	
Germany **Messe Frankfurt** Totally: 578,000 m2. It has ten halls and adjoining Congress Centre. The central location is one of its main advantages from which congress participants as well as exhibition visitors benefit (Messe Frankfurt, n.d.).	
Russia **State Joint-Stock Company All-Russian Exhibition Centre** It is the largest Exhibition centre in Moscow. It occupies 2,375,000 m2 of which 266,000 m2 are used for indoor exhibits. The territory has approximately 400 buildings (All-Russian Exhibition Centre, n.d.).	
Spain **Barcelona International Convention Centre** Meeting Rooms:39 Largest Room Capacity:14,228 Total Exhibit Space: 11,340 m2 Booths Accommodated: 615 Nearby Hotel Rooms:4,887 (CCIB, n.d.).	

China **Olympic Green Convention Centre** It is a new convention centre located in the Olympic Green in Beijing. It covers an area of 270,000 m2. It was used for the 2008 Summer Olympics (CNCC, 2009).	
Australia **Adelaide Convention Centre** Totally: 10,500 m² of floor space. 3,500 delegates in full convention mode 2,500 in theatre comfort fashion spectaculars, concerts etc where additional staging is required 1,800 guests for a cabaret or a banquet. 2,500 for cocktails (Adelaide Convention Centre, n.d.)	

Table 1: International purpose-build venues

Besides the two previously mentioned conference institutions there are many underlined additional suppliers which are very important for the conference realization: audio-visual contractors, telecommunications companies, transport operators, interpreters and translators, specialty caterers, flora contractors, exposition contractors and special software development specialists (Rogers).

Agencies and mediators

The term "agencies" is used to describe various organizations which can be both, the buyers and suppliers (Rogers, 2008). The buyer's role is associated when they are working on behalf of their client. Additionally, when providing their services in planning and running the event they cover the mediators' function.

Agencies come in different types and sizes. Rogers (2008) characterizes few of them: professional conference organizers (PCOs), venue finding agencies, conference production companies, destination management companies (DMCs), corporate events companies, business travel agencies, exhibition organizers.

Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB) – primarily it is a destination marketing organization. It can have many different names: convention and visitors bureaus, visitors' bureaus, welcome centres, tourism bureaus, travel and tourism bureaus, information centres and more (Farlex, 2011; Rogers, 2008). Regardless of the name, these organizations offer many services to the travelling public. CVBs are non-profit organizations, working independently under the direction of a board of elected directors. Public sector (local, regional or national government) delivers the main funding.

One of CVB's roles is to promote the destination. According to Koutoulas (2005), the main CVBs' expenses (50% - 60%) go to marketing activities. They are directly responsible for marketing the destination brand through travel and tourism product (Farlex, 2011). It stimulates economic development of the region through increasing visits of tourists and business travellers. As for the destination it generates overnight lodging, visits to restaurants, and shopping revenues.

Additionally, CVB has an information provider's role. They have all information about destination's lodging, dining, attractions, events, museums, arts and culture, history and recreation (Farlex, 2011). They work with conference organizers to provide valuable information on their local area. One of the most important tasks is to make the conference attendees' meeting complete and enjoyable experience. In most of the countries they are in close contact with hotels, PCOs and other event planners.

Professional conference organizer (PCO) – it is a private company that specializes in organizing and administrating conferences. There is a wide range of services that the PCO can

offer (Rogers, 2008). Many offer a full service and administration for a meeting while some offer only partial services (Edinburgh Convention Bureau, 2008; Rogers, 2008).

Nowadays it is more time and cost efficient to outsource some tasks to PCOs rather than doing it in-house (Hye-Rin, McKercher, & Kim, 2009; Toh, Dekay, & Yates, 2005). They provide help, advice and consultancy based on much experience within the conference industry (Edinburgh Convention Bureau, 2008; Hye-Rin, et al., 2009). Most of PCOs business depends on their reputation (Toh, et al., 2005). Usually conference hosts are taking care of the meeting content and PCOs handle all other negotiation details (Toh, et al., 2005).

Some examples of services that PCOs offer are: recommending and finding suitable venues, negotiating contracts, helping to select speakers, compose conference and social program, marketing and promoting the event, handling accommodations, draw a budget and handle all conference finances, and even organizing local tours and transportation (Rogers, 2008; Toh, et al., 2005).

2.1.4. Decision making process in convention industry

Jago and Deery (2005) presented decision-making processes of key participants in the convention industry. The findings revealed that convention decision making process is based on close interaction between the international convention associations, PCOs and international delegates. Profound understanding of different actors' decision making process will help to discover and summarize information which further on will be used for creating supportive models and layouts for investigation.

According to Comas and Moscardo (2005), understanding the factors influencing conference hosts is essential for the industry's development. For instance, how planners choose the host destinations and what facilities or servicers they seek (Comas & Moscardo, 2005).

Associations were found to be the main clients of the conference business and are the key drivers for much of the decision making (Comas & Moscardo, 2005; Jago & Deery, 2005). Some associations were using CVB's and PCOs' services, while others were finding their own convention organizers within their company (Jago & Deery, 2005).

Decision to host a conference is influenced by number of factors: the type of host association, internal policies, environmental conditions, convention objectives, budget and time constrains as well as staff workload.
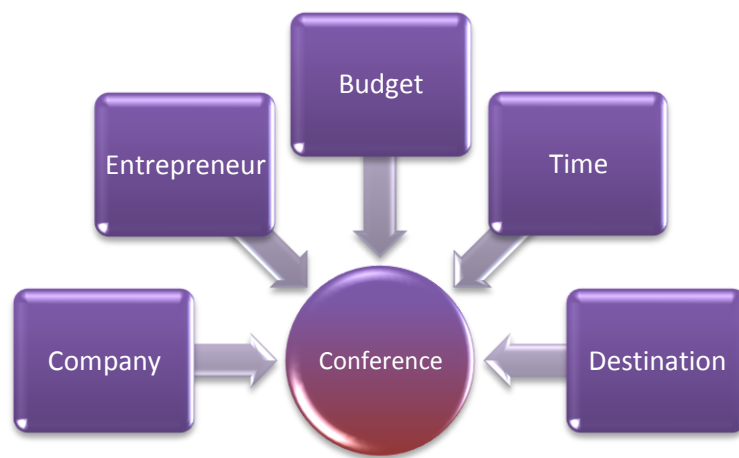
Figure 1: Framework of new conference (Comas & Moscardo, 2005)

According to Comas and Moscardo (2005), the main considerations in conference decision making process were venue selection, budget and time limit.

Destination is perceived as one of the most important factors for the conference. Location should be attractive by touristic sights and easy accessibility, as well as distinguished by good quality meeting rooms and accommodation facilities (Comas & Moscardo, 2005). Therefore the bid proposal is essential in the final stage of pre-planning the conference. It is the process where CVBs or PCOs suggest their help to accomplish a successful event. In the bid proposal CVBs or PCOs promote their destination, by giving the description of the region: facilities, accommodation, possible activities, touristic sights and prices (Rogers, 2008).

Decision making process of convention participants was initially researched by Oppermann and Chon (1997). Their model was used in most of the conference decision-making articles. The authors analyzed three main elements: association, destination and potential delegates. However, delegates were on the main focus.

Hosting a conference demands a big budged. Therefore, possibility of sponsorship is an important part for the decision to host a conference (Comas & Moscardo, 2005).

2.1.5. Event implementation process

According to Getz (2005), all events are going through a similar implementation process. The planning and decision making process involves various stakeholders. Even though "a specific type of plan is often the end product, the planning process itself is often more important" (Getz, 2005, p. 61). Further on there will be presented a model of the event planning key issues based on Getz's (2007) "Project Planning Process" for a one-time event.

EVENT PLANNING KEY ISSUES

CONCEPT
WIND-UP
FEASIBILITY
THE EVENT
NO
DECISION
YES
IMPLE-MENTATION
PRE-PLAN
THE BID
RESULT
DETAILED PLAN
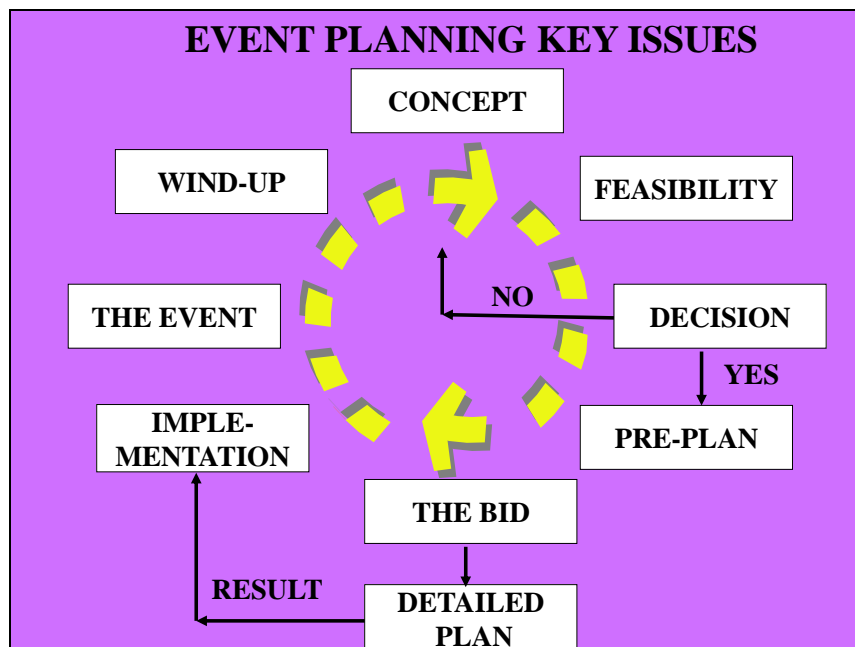
Figure 2: Event planning key issues (Getz, 2007)

Everything starts with an idea to present the conference for the region and the interest to "win" the event for the community. "Most "biddable" events are "owned" and the bidders must abide by specifications set in advance" (Getz, 2005, p. 63).

In the feasibility phase the event organizing committee makes their financial calculations, consider and evaluate the region's possibilities (venues' capacity, accessibility, accommodation and climatic consideration etc.) and none the less, evaluates the desirability and suitability of the event (Getz, 2005). After considering all pros and cons, conference enthusiasts decide whether to proceed or not with a particular event.

When the decision to proceed the event is chosen, organizing committee needs to create a preliminary plan. According to Getz (2005), pre-plan plan involves feasibility in terms of venues, target marks, cost and revenues, a workable budget, market plan, human resources, organization and management systems. A pre-plan is needed especially in the cases where the formal bid process is involved.

Over the time, event organizations develop conference procedure manuals. In order to win the event organization right, these manuals should be followed (the formal bid requirements are presented in the chapter 2.1.2.Terminology). When the request for hosting the event is sent out, the conference "owning" committee needs to decide whether the applicants can meet the specifications and add something unique.

After winning the right to organize the event, the organizing committee needs to prepare the thorough plan. For the detailed planning it is necessary to arrange a task analysis, a work plan, scheduling, and final budgeting of the event (Getz, 2005).

There are a lot of details that need to be fixed before the actual event (Getz, 2005). The event implementation plan includes: analysis of potential problems and the unexpected, consideration of emergency procedures, staff training and marketing activities. Further

follows the actual event and its closing procedures, for instance, paying the bills, auditing the accounts, evaluating the event – reports to authorities, terminating of the organization etc.

The following chapter will discuss the conference industry in Norway with a profound concentration on the market in Stavanger region.

2.2. MICE industry in Norway

Unfortunately, there were just few researches done concerning conference and convention business in Norway (Takle, 2006; Tysvær & Meling, 2009).The following theoretical information was collected from the official meeting websites, annual rapports and the industry's promotional publications. The MICE industry in Norway is viewed as an integrated part of the broader travel and tourism industry (Takle, 2006).The industry is regulated by the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and it is a state owned company Innovation Norway that in practice promote Norway as a tourist destination (Norway Convention Bureau, 2011).

Norway Convention Bureau (NCB) – is a member-based organization with 24 partners. It is the top organization in the Norwegian conference industry (Norway Convention Bureau, 2011). NCB is financed by its operations, member fees and project funds from Innovation Norway (Norway's national tourist board). In 2008 it began a collaboration with Innovation Norway with the joint aim of promoting the country as an international meetings, incentive and conference destination. It is affiliated with ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association) and UIA (Union of International Associations).

NCB provides free advice for members of international organizations, associations or society as well as meeting planners or organizers of meetings, events or conferences (Norway Convention Bureau, 2011).

NCB can help with sourcing the most suitable conference venue and hotel accommodation, facilitating the contact with local organizers. Moreover, they can make preliminary reservation of conference facilities and accommodation, organize site-inspection visits for key decision makers, create official invitation material/bid documents, provide promotional material, and provide information and advice on social events and spouse programs (Norway Convention Bureau, 2011).

An expanding MICE market brings benefits not just for various events' organizers but for the region as well. For instance, business tourism extends tourism season to all year round activity (Rogers, 2008). Guests that are coming to the MICE event usually are interested in exploring the city before or after the conference. That improves week days' tourism as well. Moreover, if corporate tourists liked the city they come back for leisure, bring their family and friends.

Positioning Norway according to ICCA and UIA rakings

The extent of the MICE industry worldwide is very well presented in the annual rapport of ICCA. ICCA is an international meeting association holding a database of profiles with information in the location and other characteristics of around 11000 international meetings (Rogers, 2008). In order to be included in international meeting statistics the event should meet the following requirements: be organized on a regular basis, rotate at least among three different countries and be attended by at least 50 delegates. It is important to note that ICCA rankings are based on the number of meetings which are appropriate for the organization's requirements, not their economic value.

In year 2009 Norway was ranked number 15 in ICCA's European rankings (see Table 2).

Rank	Country	# Meetings	
Europe rankings: Number of meetings per country			
Rank	Country	# Meetings	
1	Germany	542	
2	Spain	451	
3	United Kingdom	399	
4	France	371	
5	Italy	341	
6	Switzerland	244	
7	Netherlands	219	
8	Austria	212	
9	Portugal	194	
10	Sweden	192	
11	Belgium	164	
12	Turkey	160	
13	Finland	150	
14	Denmark	136	
15	Norway	125	
16	Hungary	124	
17	Greece	119	
18	Czech Republic	103	
19	Poland	98	
20	Ireland	83	
21	Croatia	50	
22	Russia	48	
23	Serbia	46	
24	Slovenia	44	
25	Estonia	43	
26	Romania	39	
27	Lithuania	38	
28	Latvia	28	
29	Iceland	27	
30	Slovak Republic	22	
31	Bulgaria	20	
	Malta	20	
33	Cyprus	17	
34	Luxembourg	14	
35	Form.Yugosl.Rep.Macedonia	7	
	Ukraine	7	
-	Other:	24	
	Total:	4,921	

Table 2: Europe rankings 2010, number of meetings per country (International Congress and Convention Association, 2010)

The Union of International Associations (UIA) differs from ICCA by more strict rules for inclusion account (Rogers, 2008). UIA Congress Department takes into consideration meetings which "are organized and/or sponsored by international organizations which appear in the UIA's "Year-book of International Organizations" and "International Congress Calendar" and whose detail are subject to systematic collection on an annual basis by the UIA" (Rogers, 2008, p. 13). Other international meetings included in UIA statistics should meet characteristics of minimum 300 participants, there should be at least 40 percent of foreign delegates, containing of minimum five different nationalities and last minimum 3

days. Further follows UIA statistical report on international meetings' alternation in the duration of year 2002 – 2009.

Number of International Meetings 2002 - 2009

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Norge	110	125	108	98	87	132	157	164	20	20	21
Sverige	164	232	166	170	176	183	126	257	19	23	14
Danmark	193	161	175	138	106	107	146	173	26	21	20
Finland	168	185	156	119	325	200	183	175	17	17	19

Positioning 2007 - 2009

Table 3: UIA Statistical report, 2009 (Norway Convention Bureau, 2009)

2.2.1. Economic value for the country

Conference industry's expansion is significant for local and national economies (Rogers, 2008). It is important to make investments and expand the development of the meeting industry, because conference tourism increases the country's revenue, stabilizes and stimulates the growth of the hospitality and tourism industry (Rogers, 2008; Sangpikul & Kim, 2009). Moreover it fosters business between and within countries (Cooper, 1999 as cited in Sangpikul & Kim, 2009). Personal and national benefits motivates host organizations to attract more meetings and events to their destination (Sangpikul & Kim, 2009).

Convention industry is reflecting the ups and downs of national and international economics. However, many events are planned long time in advance, therefore the convention business in not so sensitive to the economic changes. Over the last years the meeting sector has significantly contributed to the local and national economies of host destinations (Sangpikul & Kim, 2009). There is a big competition for winning the international congresses (Akselen & Løvfall, 2009). This is due to the fact that such conferences are beneficial for both the organizing team who carries out the event and the host destination.

According to Norway Convention Bureau's statistics, in 2008 there were organized 202 international conferences (Akselen & Løvfall, 2009). These conferences were visited by 64.035 participants. On average, guests stayed 4,9 days (without pre and post tours). The total consumption was NOK 1.1 billion which is NOK 3383 per day. The distribution is demonstrated in figure 3.
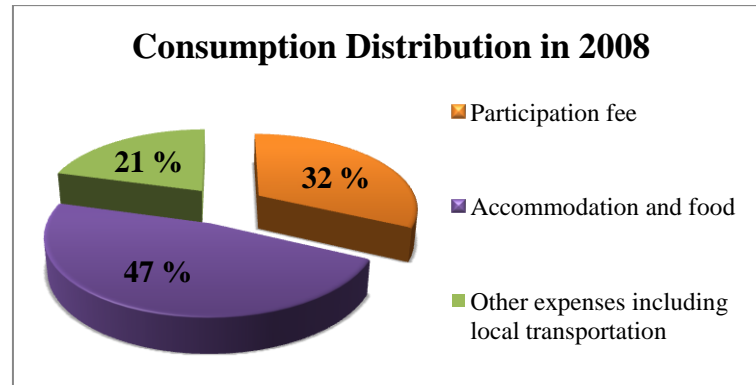
Figure 3: MICE participants' consumption distribution in 2008

(Akselen & Løvfall, 2009)

Participants spent NOK 353MM for participation fees, NOK 522 MM for the food and accommodation, and NOK 229 MM for the transportation and other expenses (Akselen & Løvfall, 2009). The industry is multifaceted, therefore the earnings are divided between many stakeholders. For example, convention venues, accommodation, catering, airlines, travel companies, service providers, intermediates, government and private organizations (Sangpikul & Kim, 2009). Moreover, hosting an event creates jobs and contributes the government with tax income (Sangpikul & Kim, 2009).

2.2.2. Advantages and disadvantage of conference industry

Along with the economic advantages, convention industry gives a lot of additional benefits, for instance, social and cultural benefits. Conventions bring businesses together,

where people can exchange ideas, the best practices, business contacts, and increase their

visibility (Davie, 2009; Sangpikul & Kim, 2009). Moreover, meeting industry improves

educational and professional development, technological innovation, and medical advance

"creates a big boost to local knowledge and skills in any imaginable discipline" (Davie, 2009;

Le Brun, 2010; Rogers, 2008). Moreover, activity in the region enhances the quality of

residents' life.

Business and leisure tourism operates on similar infrastructure, however since the

business tourism exploits higher quality and grater costs, in the end it brings greater

profitability to the market (Roger, 2008).

MICE tourism is perceived as "green" tourism. Although the numbers of business

tourists are much lower, they spend more money, if compared to leisure tourists, thus bringing

less negative impacts on the environment. Norway Convention Bureau's 2008 statistics

showed that compared to the volume of leisure tourism, conference tourism is modest

(Akselen & Løvfall, 2009; Tysvær & Meling, 2009). However, calculations showed that

expenditures per guest per day are 3 times higher than those of ordinary tourist.

MICE tourism is all-year-around activity; therefore it creates sustainable and permanent jobs, as well as brings activity during the low season of leisure tourism. Further is presented the statistical data of the hotels of the year 2010. Figure 4 demonstrates the distribution of business and leisure tourists based on hotel rooms' occupancy. It is evident that business tourism contains 67 percent of all hotels occupancy in year 2010.

Market segmentation based on room ocupancy in 2010

33 %   22 %   45 %

- Conference travelers
- Professional travelers
- Leisure travelers
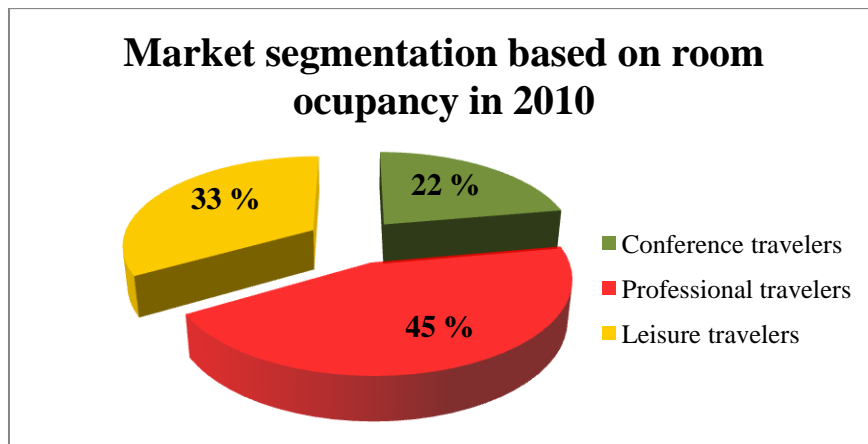
Figure 4: Hotels' market segmentation based on room occupancy in year 2010

(Horwath Consulting, 2011)

High quality conference leaves good impression and so stimulates further delegates' return as tourists (Davie, 2009; Rogers, 2008). To quote Davidson "a business visitor who leaves with a good impression of the conference, trade fair or incentive destination becomes and unpaid ambassador for that place…" (Rogers, 2008, p. 28). Fascinated delegates might return for the holiday together bringing their families and friends (Davie, 2009; Rogers, 2008; Sangpikul & Kim, 2009). "According to the 2005 National Business Events Study, "approximately 93% of respondents stated they would recommend the destination for future business events," thus providing additional benefits to the city" (Davie, 2009, p. 2). Therefore destinations should take good care of their image and marketing.

There are some shortcomings of the MICE industry (Rogers, 2008). The main ones are as follows: limited market intelligence (lack of statistic, research, and political attention), non-standardized terminology and underdeveloped educational framework.

2.2.3. MICE industry in Stavanger Region

Stavanger is an administrative centre in Rogaland County and the third largest city in Norway. Its importance and contribution to Norway is essential. In terms of culture and business the city is developing rapidly (Sand, 2011). The region not only has long traditions and profound knowledge, but also a strong engagement for growth. There is a lot of motivated actors, who are ambitions, respected and have wide international network.

Stavanger – conference destination

The region has a wide spectrum of professional conference facilities: 300 meeting rooms, more that 40 conference centres and hotels; the biggest can seat up to 5000 people. Most of the meeting facilities are in the heart of the town, by the airport or in scenic rural surroundings. Stavanger region has approximately 40 hotels (see Appendix D).

When it comes to international flights, Stavanger has the second largest airport in Norway (Stavanger Convention Bureau, 2008). Moreover, the region is famous for its rich nature with fjords, popular mountain walks (Kjerag and The Pulpit Rock), worldwide known beaches and waterfalls. Tourists can choose among various activities: salmon safari, surfing, canoeing, deep sea rafting, golf, fjord cruise, windsurfing, helicopter tours, and etc. "Everything within a reach" that is a motto of Stavanger region. People do not need to travel long distance in order to reach their favourable activities.

In 2008 Stavanger was the European Capital of Culture. Throughout the year the region holds more than 30 festivals of different size. Moreover, Rogaland is Norway's

culinary capital, with a gastronomic institute and professional forum for food and drink. Additionally, because of its location Stavanger is called the oil capital. It hosts one of the biggest energy conference "ONS".

Conference business structure

Stavanger region has a local Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB) which provides free assistance and advice for planning conferences in the region. Through its marketing CVB targets both the MICE market and the leisure travel market (Koutoulas, 2005).

Stavanger Convention and Visitor Bureau

Region Stavanger is a destination company for Stavanger, Sandnes and Jæren. It consists of 8 members: Randaberg, Sola, Stavanger, Sandnes, Gjesdal, Klepp, Time og Hå (Region Stavanger BA, 2010)

Stavanger Convention and Visitor Bureau is on the top of all conferences and conventions happening in the region (Stavanger Convention Bureau, 2008). Along with other biggest cities in Norway, Stavanger is a member of Norway Convention bureau. CVB divides its activities into meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions. However, conferences remain their main focus.

Region Stavanger has subsidiary destination company – Greater Stavanger (owned by 18 Counties) which deals with business development. Occasionally, these companies cooperate together and organize mutual conferences (eg. International Energy Conference – ONS).

By paying membership tax, individual businesses can become the CVB members. Region Stavanger collaborates with 180 commercial members, such as hotels, museums, restaurants, air companies, conference centres, shops etc.

Stavanger Convention bureau provides cost free consultation at any stage, gives information on relevant hotels and convention facilities for local committees and chapters, organizes FAM-trips, assisting and arranges site inspections of suitable venues, hotels and conference centres, finds suitable technical partners, writes and prints the official and complete BID on behalf of the organizing committee, and provides various promotional items (Stavanger Convention Bureau, 2008)**.**

Professional Conference Organizers

PCOs coordinate all activities before, during and after the event. They can function as advisors, collaborators and coordinator between the organizer and all other contractors involved in the event. PCOs services include: budget and finance (sponsors, delegate fees), project scheduling, PR and marketing activities, call for papers – abstracts and proceedings, and account and auditing of the event.   Conference hosts need to pay fees for all the PCOs provided services; they work for commercial purposes. There are four PCOs in Stavanger: Stavanger Forum, Via Travel Group & Meeting Stavanger, Gyro Stavanger and Døvre Event & Marketing AS.

Stavanger Forum is owned by Stavanger and Rogaland Region County (Stavanger Forum, n.d.). It is a unique PCO, because it has both facilities and the competence to plan and carry out the event (Stavanger Convention Bureau, 2008).

It is very advantageous to have own venues, it makes the work easier, faster and more secure. Stavanger Forum totally has 22.000 m2 exhibition areas with possibility of 25 meeting rooms. In the biggest location they can seat 1700 participants.

Figure 5: Stavanger Forum, Lindesnes hall (Stavanger Convention Bureau, 2008)

Via Travel Group & Meeting Stavanger specializes in professional organization and implementation of both large and small conferences and congresses. They arrange and participate in the projects. They coordinate details with suppliers, take care of logistics, ticket reservation, budget and registration "on site " (Stavanger Convention Bureau, 2008).

Gyro Stavanger designs and organizes large and small events, congresses and conferences. They take care of brand design, marketing activities and almost all forms of audiovisual expression. They focus on developing communication channels that are perceived as being both unique and taking into account each customer's requirements (Stavanger Convention Bureau, 2008).

Døvre Event & Marketing AS can take responsibility for: travel, logistics, hotel management, booking, entertainment, events, exhibitors, financing, marketing, accounting, performance and congress reports. They specialize in organizing teambuilding, incentive tours and combination of conferences with skiing tours abroad (Stavanger Convention Bureau, 2008).

Conference Hotels

Venues in hotels comprise around 70 % of all conference venues (see Appendix D). Hotels organize conferences themselves, though if a customer has a PCO the work is much easier. However, entrepreneurs do not want to higher PCO because of additional price for the service. Additionally, to the conferences that they stage themselves, hotels also benefit as housing providers for the major conferences. The biggest conference hotels in Stavanger are: Radisson Blu Atlantic, Radisson Blu Royal, Quality Airport Hotel Stavanger, Sola Strand Hotel, Clarion, Rica, Scandic Stavanger Forus, and Quality Hotel Residence in Sandnes.

2.2.4. Advantages for the region

Hosting an international conference adds numerous benefits to the host organization, the city and the country: networking with international colleagues, strengthens the organization and the local section, brings good publicity for the host organization and the destination, and stimulates business exchanges (Rogers, 2008). Moreover, due to la ong term planning and rotation patterns conferences are less likely to be affected by general economy.

The goal of Region Stavanger is to increase the quantity and quality of conferences in the region. Every year Region Stavanger and its partners set yearly goals in order to increase conference tourism traffic (Region Stavanger BA, 2010). In 2010 CVB contributed to 30 international conferences in Stavanger. All of these conferences fulfil ICCA requirements. The interest increased in annual conferences as well.

Conferences bring significant revenue for the city. According to CVB statistics (2010), in 2008 conference delegates spent NOK 3383 per day (excluding the air fare or other travel costs). On average one conference had 250 participants and lasted 3 days. From that follows that one conference generates NOK 2.525.250. Additionally, some conference delegates came

with their family and stayed in the region longer. Figure 6 demonstrates the conference participants' spending distribution in 2008.
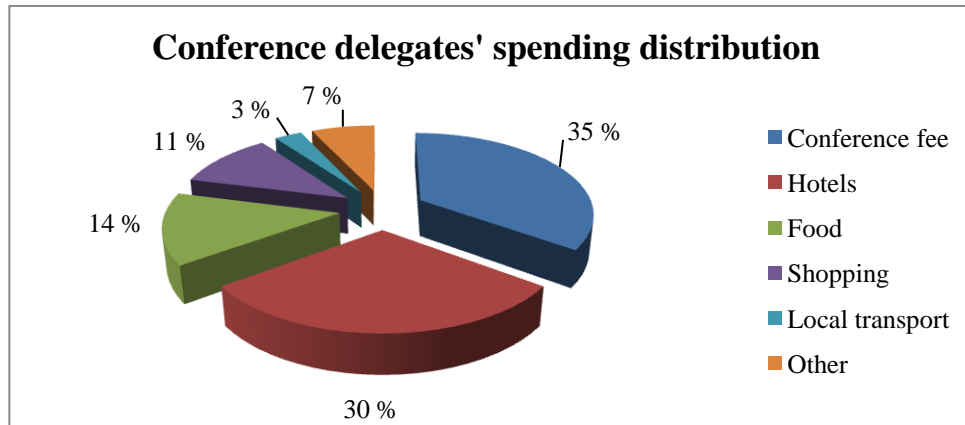
Figure 6: Conference delegates' spending distribution (Region Stavanger BA, 2010)

According to NCB statistics, in 2008 Stavanger was the second in the international congresses (Akselen & Løvfall, 2009). The number of participants in Stavanger was as much as 41% bugger than in Bergen. This may be explained by the Stavanger being the European Capital of Culture in 2008.

Congress city	Number of participants	Calculated spendings, mil NOK	Fraction, %
Oslo	24.937	430	38,9
Stavanger	13.566	234	21,2
Bergen	9.603	166	15,0
Trondheim	4.664	81	7,3
Tromsø	4.445	77	7,0
Other towns and places	6.820	116	10,5
Sum	64.035	1.104	100

Table 4: Consumption distribution in biggest conference cities in Norway

(Akselen & Løvfall, 2009)

2.2.5. Destination marketing

When talking about the marketing in general, customers' needs always remain the main focus. Before presenting the product it is important to understand the consumer, the business and the marketplace. It can be done by purposive research (Rogers, 2008).

According to Rogers (2008), the success formula for customers' return and reference for the future conferences remains in the knowledge and thorough understanding of customers' attitude, viewpoint and needs. These three elements should be essential for conference marketing and its further administration (Rogers, 2008). It means that the physical product should be well-chosen and the staff serving the conference should have full understanding and capability to meet customer's needs and requirements (Rogers, 2008).

Importance of destination image

The reputation of the destination as an excellent convention city is as important as the actual facilities and services provided by the community. The key to successful destination marketing relies upon the perceived image of the location. That is why CVBs must be very active in the development and promotion of destination image (Montgomery & Strick, 1995).

According to Roger's (2008) definition, one of CVB's roles is destination marketing. An important part of the marketing planning process is the identification of appropriate market segments. In 2010 CVB was visible in both national and international arena.

International marketing

According to CVB's rapport (2010), Region Stavanger together with Norway Convention Bureau participated in a number of international marketing activities: IMEX in Frankfurt and EIBTM in Barcelona. According to Roger (2008), the European Incentive and Business Travel and Meetings Exhibition (EIBMT) are one of the biggest events of the industry in the world. It is held every year in November in Barcelona. In the year 2005 95

countries were presented in this conference. Stavanger CVB promotes not only Norway in general, but also had their own stand where they present Stavanger region. Moreover, CVB participated in The 49th ICCA General Assembly, workshops in London, and Aberdeen. Additionally they had 15 promotion tours for tourism industry (DMCs).

The capacity of the region is always increasing; companies are buying new installations, adjust to new technologies and trends (Region Stavanger BA, 2010). CVB market the improvement nationally and internationally in order to show what the region has to offer.

National marketing

CVB emphasized that it essential to inform people about their services, especially in the FoU environments, which via their international networks have good opportunities to attract activities to Stavanger region (Region Stavanger BA, 2010). In 2010 CVB promoted and highlighted the opportunities for potential entrepreneurs, and motivated and stimulated local hosts.

CVB arranges network meetings for representatives from unions, clubs and businesses (Region Stavanger BA, 2010). Participants are updated on current projects, applications and future arrangements. CVB has monthly meetings and presentations with different market operators. In 2010 CVB organized professional meetings and thus reinforced cooperation with the environments at UiS, IRIS and SUS. CVB is aiming to promote and ensure that the region's strong academic environments are willing to invite congresses and conferences to Stavanger.

Additional promotional meetings: 1. Meeting for food industry was arranged in Bryne Kro & Motell with around 50 participants from local food industry and organizations in addition to public sector. 2. Congress forum three times a year with 30- 40 participants in each event. 3. "Stavanger Region in Oslo" - thirty exhibitors from Stavanger region presented

the region with youth themes and urban energy. 3. The University of Stavanger, International

Research Institute of Stavanger (IRIS) and Forskningens Hus have carried out 8 meetings, a

number of presentations and a breakfast gathering as a part of CVB's profiling work in

academic and research environments.

Stavanger Ambassador Program

Stavanger Convention Bureau administers Ambassador Program aimed to attract

professional people who have a major influence over their associations' choice of conference

destination (Edinburgh Convention Bureau, 2008; Stavanger Convention Bureau, 2008). This

program is very important for getting more association buyers to the region. Ambassadors

have previously organized successful conferences and are willing to continue with this

activity. Their leadership and expertise are essential when making a successful bid for a

conference.

In 2011 CVB has elected four ambassadors (Region Stavanger BA, 2010). Two of

them are well-known professors from the University of Stavanger: Reidar J. Mykletun and

Jan Frick.

Figure 7: Ambassadors, 2011

Ambassador program is mutually useful. On the one hand, the program gives support and help for the bid of the conference (takes care of the bid, finds venues, hotels, entertainment for delegates, and other relevant support) (Edinburgh Convention Bureau, 2008). On the other hand, CVB has reliable people, who help to attract international conferences.

Ambassadors are the best examples of engaged entrepreneurs who have the right knowledge, passion for organizing and gathering people. Further chapter will go deeper into examination of entrepreneur's personality.

2.3. Entrepreneurship

How does the creation of a new conference start? Primarily there is an initiative of a person, who takes the lead of the event (Getz, 2007). He can be motivated by a desire for profit or social good. On one hand, new conference gives number of benefits such as appreciation, recognition, knowledge, and broader network. On the other hand, organizing new conference is challenging, unfamiliar and novel activity which consumes peoples' time, endeavour and resources.

Hjort and Johannissons perceives entrepreneurship as a process of creation (as cited in Berglund & Johansson, 2007, p. 82). Person, who undertakes to organize a new conference, should be an entrepreneur in his mind and in his heart. He should see possibilities instead of risk (Casson & Giusta, 2007). Moreover, wide personal network is nonetheless important.

What is the meaning of the term "entrepreneurship"? Entrepreneurship is a catchphrase of the twenty-first century (Johnson, 2001). However, the phrase is complex and has many different meanings. Some people associate entrepreneurship with self-employment or owner-managed firms, however, the manager of fast growing company can be much more entrepreneur than small company's owner (Casson & Giusta, 2007).

2.3.1. Entrepreneur

Entrepreneurs can be found in all levels and positions (Baum, Frese, & Baron, 2007). Some people are born with the ability to create new businesses or events (Getz, 2007). First and foremost, entrepreneurs differ from other people in their ability to quickly recognize opportunity in situations where others see little potential (Berglund & Johansson, 2007; Getz, 2007; Palich & Bagby, 1995). They take a wider view of the world and potential situation (Casson & Giusta, 2007). They are both open minded and able to create novelty (Johnson, 2001). Furthermore, they are famous by their creativity and generation of new ideas.

Entrepreneurs easily cope with challenges of a new situation, its risk (Getz, 2007; Johnson, 2001), unpredictability and stress (Baron, 1998). This is because of their ability to see the whole situation "through to some indentified end-point, even when faced with obstacles and difficulties" (Johnson, 2001, p. 137). Moreover, entrepreneurs are hardworking people, who characterize by long working hours and strong commitment to their ideas (Baron, 1998).

Entrepreneur distinguishes by optimistic, positive, creative and flexible thinking (Berglund & Johansson, 2007; Johnson, 2001; Palich & Bagby, 1995). Establishment of new event definitely manifests person's innovation and creativity (Getz, 2007).

 Entrepreneur is an individual who makes things happen. He takes initiative and responsibility (Getz, 2007; Johnson, 2001). Moreover, entrepreneurs have a preference for motivating people to achieve new things (Baum, et al., 2007; Johnson, 2001).

Entrepreneurs are not blind risk takers; they have a capacious and judgmental mind (Casson & Giusta, 2007). A lot of useful information is floating around, though there are not so many people who are able properly apply it in practice. Entrepreneurs have this gift (Casson & Giusta, 2007). New information is very important to them, therefore wide personal network is essential. They use network for identification of new opportunities,

pulling resources (Getz, 2007), having high-trust relationship, belonging to the same interest group (Casson & Giusta, 2007).

2.3.2. Entrepreneurial network

"A real entrepreneur is a networker" (Berglund & Johansson, 2007, p. 84). "The term 'entrepreneurial network' refers to the personal network of information contacts and exchange relationships that an individual team of entrepreneurs can utilize for the purpose of creating and nurturing their venture" (Witt, Schroeter, & Merz, 2008).

Generally, network would be understood simply as a connection between elements (Casson & Giusta, 2007). Connections can be direct or indirect (through other members of the network). People can belong to different types of network: local business network, social network (which is based on communication between people), physical network (network of elements and goods, eg. roads, infrastructure) and global network.

People involved in social network interact with each other by face-to-face communication, share useful information and knowledge (Casson & Giusta, 2007). Two essential parts of network is communication and mutual trust.

Network success hypothesis

Witt et al. (2008) summarize that the most popular hypothesis among researchers was 'the network success hypothesis'. It frames the positive relationship between network possession and new business success. That means that social capital, wide and good quality network is essential in starting a new activity (Casson & Giusta, 2007; Ritter & Gemunden, 2003; Witt, et al., 2008).

Entrepreneur's networking activities

Network size and diversity

Benefits from the network

Start-up success
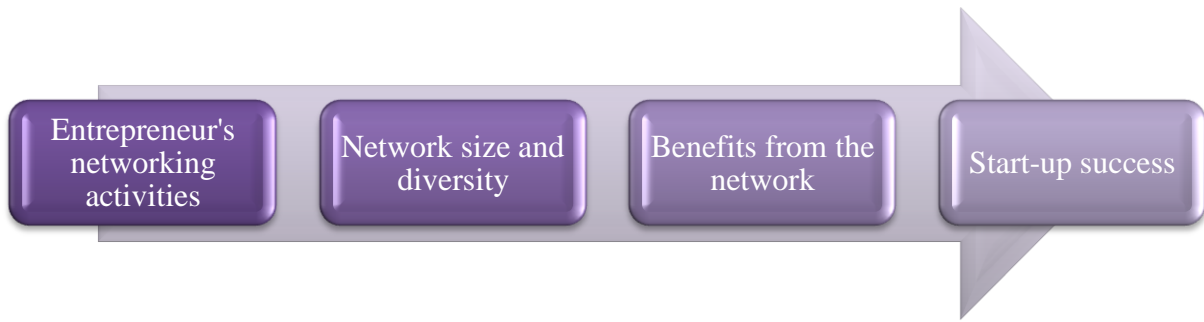
Figure 8: Network success hypothesis (Witt, et al., 2008)

Social network is important for entrepreneurship because it helps to seek for new opportunities, gather information about possibilities and ways of its accomplishment (Casson & Giusta, 2007). Moreover, it is useful for obtaining necessary resources and project realization (Casson & Giusta, 2007). It is more likely to get trustful people through social network.

Having a wide and trustful network, companies can get valuable benefits, such as knowledge, financial support, physical and personal contribution (Westhead, Wright, & Ucbasaran, 2004; Witt, et al., 2008). Moreover, strong social network helps the business in the long run (Premaratne, 2001).

Network and convention industry

A variety of networks are involved in the MICE industry. Geographical distance is one of the factors preventing fast network growth (Casson & Giusta, 2007). For the network development face-to-face communication is essential. It gives acceleration and enhances trust between people. After first meeting further development can be done by remote communication. According to Casson and Giusta (2007), the efficiency of network development can be enhanced by arranging a conference. In this way it is possible to meet many different people with the same interests coming from different places. It will enhance time and cost efficiency.

2.3.3. Entrepreneurs' decision-making

Decision making can be simply described as the choice from alternatives based on decision maker's preferences (Harris, 2009). The process starts from identifying possibilities and follows to analyzing benefits and weaknesses of each possible choice. The implication is that the most reasonable choice is made based on reducing doubt and uncertainty of alternatives (Harris, 2009).

Successful decision-making contains of: relevant information, good judgment, clear and rational mind (Baron, 1998; Ivanova & Gibcus, 2003)

Meeting uncertainty and risk

Harris (2009) emphasizes that during the decision making process uncertainty is only reduced, but not completely eliminated. Therefore nearly all decisions have a certain amount of risk. Building up a new event involves quite a bit of risk, because the organizer deals with consuming own and other people's money and time, as well as justifying one's reputation (Getz, 2007).

Two core aspects of entrepreneurship are the need for achievement and the attitude toward risk (Baron, 1998; Ivanova & Gibcus, 2003; Papadakis, Lioukas, & Chambers, 1998). Entrepreneurs tend to recognize new opportunities and embody new ideas; therefore they face uncertainty, unknown situations, emotion and time pressure more often than others. However, inconvenient situations are handled more efficiently, because of their ability to adjust, react fast and stay positive (Baron, 1998). Moreover, new and unknown activities require "careful constructive thought" (Baron, 1998, p. 283).

Wise judgment

In decision making, rational judgment is a capacity for making a successful decision even when no obviously correct model or decision rule is available or when reliable data is unreliable or incomplete (Ivanova & Gibcus, 2003).

The literature on entrepreneurial behaviour suggests that entrepreneurs are more likely to be optimistic and frequently make judgments based on subjective factors (McCarthy, Schoorman, & Cooper, 1993). People are not always thinking rationally or make rational decisions. They are frequently influenced of predetermined notion or possible failures (Baron, 1998).

Entrepreneurs' decision making is highly influenced by prior knowledge and beneficial opportunity's recognition (Miao & Liu, 2010). Opportunity recognition is the starting point of decision making. The decision making process is a difficult and complex process, which can be influenced by many internal and external factors (Ivanova & Gibcus, 2003).

Decision-making process

Strategic thinking, environment observation and entrepreneur's preferences are in constant interaction in decision-making process (Ivanova & Gibcus, 2003).

For understanding decision-making process in depth, further will be presented an integrative model. Decision-making process model (Ivanova & Gibcus, 2003) includes decision-specific, environmental and organizational factors. According to Ivanova and Gibcus (2003), many theories of decision-making process use the model presented in Figure 9.
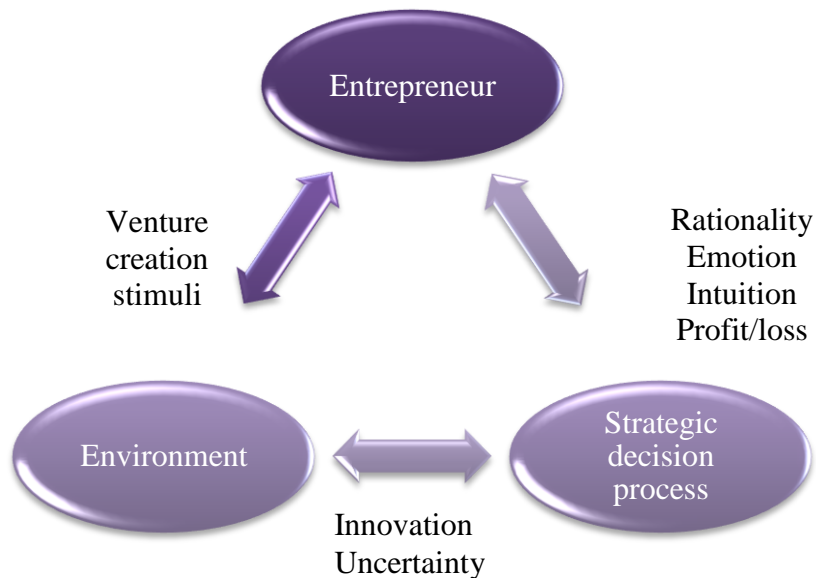
Figure 9: Decision-making process (Ivanova & Gibcus, 2003)

The entrepreneur will influence the parameters of the strategic decision process by the approach he is going to adopt (rational, emotional or intuitive) (Ivanova & Gibcus, 2003). Environment is constantly forwarding impulses of entrepreneurial actions (opportunities, threats, etc.). These environmental stimuli act as driving forces for the entrepreneur to make strategic decisions. Being highly turbulent, the environment brings uncertainty and probabilities of negative outcome, which shapes the decision process and most often reflect in satisfactory instead of optimal decision.

The cognitive process of a person usually is influenced by such negative factors as too much information in short time, unfamiliar situations, insecurity, intense emotions and time pressure (Baron, 1998). The most famous framework for an overview of the strategic situation is SWOT analysis (Palich & Bagby, 1995). This evaluation of the situation consist of : internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats (Palich & Bagby, 1995). It can be helpful for making a right and secure choice.

Additional factors influencing decision-making

Baron (1998) states that when people think about what possibly could have happened if they acted differently in one or another situation can influence their conclusion and behaviour for various events or outcomes, later decisions and behaviour. Moreover, it was researched that over short time people tend to regret what they have done wrong, but over long time period people tend to regret more things that they have not done. Missed opportunities have long lasting effect on people.

Another significant factor influencing decision making is person's current mood. As it was cited in Baron's (1998) research, even when person's mood is slightly bad, it can greatly influence his decision. Moreover, Forgas (1995, as cited in Baron, 1998) claims that one source of experience can highly influence other, even unrelated events. Current mood strongly influence our thoughts, judgments and decisions.

In conclusion there is a need to emphasize that despite the fact that the MICE industry is very complex, Stavanger's CVB is improving region's performance within the international market. Every year the number of international congresses increases and the region generates better revenue.

Because of the rich infrastructure Stavanger region has all possibilities of becoming one of the biggest conference cities in Norway. The further chapter will illustrate the research implementation process and the choices the researcher made for defining the conference business in Stavanger region.

3. Methodology

The research methodology part will illustrate the entire research process and will explain in depth the following practical issues of conducted research: design, sample, data collection methods, proceedings and data analysis. In order to clarify the choice of qualitative research method further the characteristics of both qualitative and quantitative research will be distinguished.

3.1. Research design

A research design is a framework for the data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2004). The preference for a particular research design reflects the researcher's reason for undertaking the research in the first place. For example connection between variables, generalization, understanding the behavior (Bryman, 2004).

3.1.1. Characteristic of quantitative and qualitative research

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research by concentrating on words rather than numbers (Bryman, 2004; Neuman, 2009). The research is more interpretive and flexible. The researcher uses personal communication or observations and can adjust according to the flow of the research. Alternatively, quantitative research is using measurements and emphasizes numeric and quantifiable data (Bryman, 2004; Neuman, 2009). The research is administrated by structured interviews and self-completion questionnaires. It is more structured and often is viewed as "presenting statistic image of social reality" (Bryman, 2004, p. 287).

Qualitative research employs an inductive approach where the researcher collects the data and then builds up the theory, whereas quantitative research often applies a deductive

approach to the relationship between theory and research. In the deductive approach the accent is placed on the testing of theories (Bryman, 2004). The researcher has a prime idea and then tests it by collecting data or explores a phenomenon by pre-structuring data.

Qualitative researchers seek to generalize their findings to the particular population. They use purposeful samples and have close contact with investigated people (Bryman, 2004). Quantitative research however usually has a much bigger sample than qualitative research, therefore data can be generalized to a larger population (Bryman, 2004; Neuman, 2009). Additionally, quantitative researchers are not involved with their participants so these researches concentrate on breadth instead of depth.

3.1.2. Research design for this study

The difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods is more complex than just using or not using measurements and quantifiable data. First and foremost, the qualitative research was chosen for this study because there was no previously constructed theory on conference entrepreneurs' decision making process. Therefore there is nothing that could be possible to test. One of the intentions was to lay background theory for the further investigations.

The purpose of this research was to achieve depth rather that breadth. The researcher was seeking a profound understanding of factors influencing conferences' decision makers. It was achieved through communication and personal contact with different actors in the Norwegian convention business, such as Stavanger CVB, PCOs, conference hotels' and conferences' entrepreneurs. The appropriate results could not be reached by quantitative research because it would be too perfunctory.

The stage of choosing research design and research method is very important for the outcome and quality of the whole investigation. Research method and research design are two

terms that are often confused, therefore clarification of the two terms will be given further on.

3.2. Sample

A sample is a small group chosen from population (Neuman, 2009). According to Bryman (2004) qualitative research is usually conducted using purposive sampling. This kind of sampling is strategic and tends to give a good correspondence between the research questions and the sample (Bryman, 2004).

In order to learn about conference decision making in the Stavanger region the researcher chose purposive sampling. The researcher identified respondents who are knowledgeable in the field of study. In order to develop better insight into the research questions the target characteristics were: the expertise in conference and convention business and practical experience in organizing conferences in Stavanger.

The sampling frame was thoroughly examined with the conference coordinator and advisor from Stavanger Convention Bureau. He has profound knowledge about all conferences and congresses happening in Stavanger. In addition to the close contact with people working in the conference business, he is in constant communication with entrepreneurs who organize or are planning to organize conferences in the Stavanger region.

The conference advisor evaluated his candidates and offered the contacts of the best matching people for the research project. The key parties in the study were:

People working in conference industry:

Professional conference organizers (PCO);

Conference hotels.

Entrepreneurs, who already took responsibility to organize a conference:

Successful conferences' organizers.

Entrepreneurs who are actively involved in the conference organizing process:

Potential conferences' organizers.

One of the most delicate questions is how many people should be interviewed before theoretical saturation is achieved (Bryman, 2004). The researcher continued to interview subjects as long as she got new information. When answers were repeated and the researcher did not learn new things, the interviewing was stopped. Altogether the researcher conducted twelve interviews.

3.3. Research method

A research method is simply a technique for collecting data (Bryman, 2004). For this particular research, data was collected through semi-structured open-ended face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews.

3.3.1. Interviewing

Traditionally qualitative data collection is based on open-ended observations, interviews, document analysis, e-mails or other similar interactions (Creswell, 2003). However, interviewing is one of the most popular data collection strategies in qualitative research (Bryman, 2004; Lambert & Loiselle, 2008).

According to several studies (Fielding, 1994; Speziale & Carpenter, 2003; Loiselle et al., 2007) face-to-face interviews gather accurate explanations of participants' thoughts, perspectives, impressions and knowledge concerning specified phenomenon (as cited in Lambert & Loiselle, 2008).

One of the advantages to face-to-face interviews is adaptability (Bryman, 2004). It means the interviewer can follow up on participant's ideas and respond to them (Bryman, 2004). The researcher also has some degree of control of the interview process. The

investigator can determine whether the interviewee understood the questions in the correct manner and can clarify unclear details (Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009).

Additionally, during the process, the researcher can be completely sure that the respondent is the right person for the research (Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009). Moreover, the researcher can be sure that the questions are answered by the person whom the questions were addressed to and not by somebody else (these mistakes can occur using surveys).

However, a few disadvantages can occur by using interviewing method. For example if there is great distance between researcher and participant then face-to-face interviews can be time and finance consuming.

During this particular research, two of the research participants were not living in the Stavanger. Therefore, in order to avoid wasting time travelling and monetary expense, the researcher conducted telephone interviews. The telephone interviews had the same qualities as face-to-face interviews; only the personal feeling was less present. Like the face-to-face interviews, the telephone interviews were audio recorded as well.

The interviews were prepared and structured according to the themes and topics that accurately reflected the research question. Moreover, categorized questions helped interviewees' to concentrate on precise topics and discuss them more profoundly. In order to avoid confusion the interview plan did not include any leading questions.

Interview plan

For different actors the researcher prepared four similar versions of the interview plan. The interview plan consisted of open-ended questions. Questions were arranged based on previously reviewed literature and discussions with conference business professionals as well as Professor Reidar J. Mykletun. During the data collection process, as the interviewer learned what to ask, the interview questions changed very slightly.

The interview plan was designed in a manner that would lead to better insight into the decision making process of the conferences' organization. Based on participants' personal experience they revealed facilitators and barriers to getting a new conference.

The main topics for the <u>professionals working in the conference business</u> were:

General information about the company and its unique features;

The process and experiences of getting a new conference;

The process of discovering and inspiring potential conference organizers;

Most common entrepreneurs' personality;

Stavanger as a conference destination – strengths, weaknesses and possible improvements.

The main topics for the <u>entrepreneurs</u> were:

Information about the conference (development of the idea; the decision making process; professional help)

The importance of personal networks;

Necessary personality qualities;

Advantages and disadvantages of Stavanger as a conference destination.

Contacting interviewees

Most of the participants were initially contacted by telephone and then followed up by e-mail. According to Myers-Briggs Type indicator (Hirsh, 1992) people who are more introverted feel more comfortable if they can prepare for their meetings beforehand. Therefore after arranging a mutually convenient time to meet, the researcher sent a letter containing the short presentation of the study and the interview plan.

Additionally, before interviews the researcher prepared herself by analyzing the companies whom the interviewees were working in. It helped for a general understanding of terms and themes the interviewees were using during the interaction.

Actual interview

Initially appointments were made with thirteen participants. However, due to personal issues two candidates did not participate in the research project. The research was not affected by missing participants. After conducting twelve interviews, the researcher observed that participants' answers started to repeat. Therefore the researcher decided that there was no need to arrange any more interviews, or to replace the two that had dropped out.

Qualitative research was preceded in the natural setting of the participant – work place (with one exception, when interviewee came to the researcher's location). In this way the researcher could be more highly involved in the overall experience of the participants' (Rossman & Rallis, 1998 as cited in Creswell, 2003).

Data collection began with the presentation of informed content and followed with 30 – 50 minutes of voice recorded face-to-face interview.

According to Opdenakker (2006) the interviewers tone of voice, intonation or body language can have some influence for individual interviews. In order to avoid bias, the interviewer engaged an examiner's role. The researcher avoided displaying any emotions or comments that could have an influence on a participant's answers. The interactions were conducted in a task-oriented manner.

In order to decrease personal influence it is recommended to increase awareness of interview protocol (Opdenakker, 2006). During the interview the researcher had the interview plan with a list of questions that had to be answered. However, the questions did not follow the exact succession. By engaging in active participation, the researcher asked questions and

responded to the interviewee in a natural manner. The interviews were not strictly framed, though in each interview questions were asked in very similar wording and construction.

The interviews were audio recorded with a good quality digital recorder. The digital recorder helped the researcher to follow the interview and naturally respond to the interviewees' answers. When the interview was done, the researcher used an additional 20 minutes for reflecting on the conducted interview and noting the main observations, impression and personal thoughts.

All the recorded data was thoroughly transcribed. This procedure was useful for both familiarizing with patterns and further thorough analysis of the data.

In cases of unclear answers the interviewees were contacted again and asked to clarify in order to avoid misunderstandings and measurement errors. Considering that all sections involved in the conference business were interviewed, it is believed that there is very little sampling error. In order to increase validity, answers were recorded without any interpretation.

3.3.2. Reliability and validity

The captions of reliability and validity have various meanings (Neuman, 2009). In the scientific research they reflect the eligible measurements. Reliability and validity is very important for the vindication of the research project (Bryman, 2004). Reliability is essential for attaining validity (Neuman, 2009). It is easier to gain reliability; however, accomplished reliability does not guarantee measurements' validity. Reliable and valid measurements effect truthfulness, credibility and believability.

Reliability

Reliability illustrates that measurements do not deviate because of the procedure the researcher used when measuring (Neuman, 2009). Reliability indicates that the instruments were used by the researcher to make measurements more consistent and dependable.

For the reliable qualitative study the time interval is important. Even though qualitative data is distinguished by its flexibility and adaptability, reliable data should be collected in sufficient time (Neuman, 2009). This particular research was completed within six months; therefore from a time aspect it is reliable as well.

"Reliable data should be measured in a thoughtful and consistent manner" (Neuman, 2009). The interviews were conducted according to the interview plan, were conducted in the same manner every time and thoroughly transcribed after each meeting.

One of the most important reliability issues is the research's reproduction (Neuman, 2009). In this case the same research (using the same instrument) would be conducted repeatedly and therefore the outcome should be the same. For achieving truthfulness and consistency the researcher saved all interview records, transcriptions and described all the taken steps accurately.

Validity

Generally, validity demonstrates if the researcher is measuring what she is claiming to measure (Bryman, 2004; Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009; Neuman, 2009). That is how the researcher is measuring matches up with the concepts she uses to understand that matter. Qualitative research should demonstrate that the data is collected and analyzed competently (Neuman, 2009; Walsh, 2003). In other words, the researcher should demonstrate trustworthiness and authenticity of the research (Bryman, 2004; Walsh, 2003).

Trustworthiness consists of credibility, transferability, dependability and

conformability (Bryman, 2004; Walsh, 2003).

Research *credibility* manifests by demonstrating that the research was performed according to good standards and that findings were accurate (Bryman, 2004; Walsh, 2003). In order to be sure that the interviews were translated and transcribed correctly, the researcher sent the transcribed interview material and personal observations for the relevant interview participants. In the valid research the content reflects the intended purpose (Neuman, 2009). It means that the items measure what they say they will measure.

For ensuring *transferability,* the researcher demonstrated findings' applicable to other groups or settings (Walsh, 2003). Since qualitative research is deep and not broad qualitative findings are unique in its context. In order to enhance transferability the researcher applied detailed presentation of measurements and procedures used in the research.

Dependability raises the concern if the study would be repeated once again, it the gotten results would be the same (Walsh, 2003). To enhance dependability, the researcher kept all records in an accessible manner: the problem formulation, notes about participants' selection, interview transcripts, data analysis procedures and other relevant documents.

In order to prove *conformability*, the researcher should not allow personal values to influence participant's viewpoint (Bryman, 2004; Walsh, 2003). To reduce any personal influence on the participants, the researcher read all the questions like they were written in the interview plan and did not interrupt interviewees with personal comments for the questions.

According to Neuman (2009) **authenticity** in qualitative research signifies a fair, honest and balanced version of social life from the perspective of the interviewee. The goal of the researcher was to investigate conference professionals and entrepreneurs as pure as possible. Therefore the researcher avoided intrusion rather engaging an examiner's position.

3.4. Data analysis

After conducting interviews and transcribing the data, the researcher applied coding and thematic analysis. For generating the interpretation of a qualitative project the researcher does it through a close examination of the data rather than an analysis (Roulston, 2010).

The entire data analysis process was based on the Mile's and Huberman's interactive model (1994). They suggested that data analysis should consist of three components: data reduction, data display and the drawing and verification of conclusion (see figure XX).
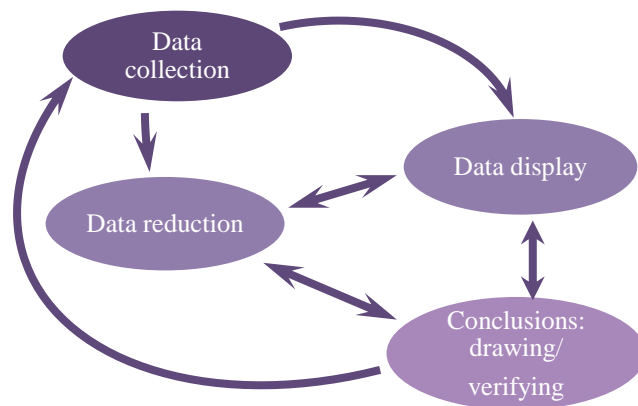
Figure 10: Components of data analysis: Interactive model

(Miles & Huberman, 1994)

Data collection and data analysis is an interactive process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data reduction (coding), data display (theme analysis) and conclusion drawing was in constant correlation during the whole process of the data collection.

The process of data analysis began already in the phase of data collection. During the interviews the researcher observed the participants and started to categorize them according to the roles they had in the entire conference industry (conference hotels, PCOs and entrepreneurs). She also drew the patterns of each category and composed a mental picture of possible results' design. However, the conclusions were considered roughly, maintaining openness and skepticism (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

After conducting each interview the researcher thoroughly transcribed the data. Each recorded interview and its transcription was accordingly named and saved (in case of additional verification).

Transcribed files were carefully read, examined and reflected on. During this process the researcher finally decided that the results' distribution would be divided into particular themes. Moreover, the researcher eliminated irrelevant data and assigned appropriate codes.

For the best prospect of the results the researcher engaged thematic analysis. According to Roulston (2010) qualitative researchers commonly use thematic analysis. This type of data examination embodies a flexible approach where themes can be introduced in many different ways. All transcribed interviews were divided into three categories:

1. Conference hotels,

2. PCOs and Destination Company,

3. Entrepreneurs.

Each category's interviews were summarized into one file and sorted according to interview questions. Thorough coding and irrelevant data reduction the coded data was classified according to a particular thematic group.

Finally, the data was interpreted and displayed into result and implementation rapport. The report was arranged in the following way: the researcher presented her observations and interpretation which was followed by the evidence from conducted interviews.

3.5. Ethical consideration

For qualitative researchers the awareness of ethical issues is very important (Donalek, 2005). All participants were informed about the researcher's background and the study's approval by the University of Stavanger. Moreover, they were familiarized with the purpose of the research and the procedures that would be taken during and after its completion.

The informed consent was given in the beginning of each interview's plan and twice over repeated before each interview. The research participants were assured that the recorded data would be used only for the research purpose.

The researcher transcribed the interviews directly and only then analyzed and interpreted the data. The transcribe data was send to interviewees for confirmation. It was made in order to avoid misinterpretation.

3. Implementations and results

The purpose of implementation and result section is to present the key findings of the conducted interviews. The findings will be presented according to the following sections:

1. The observation of the Region Stavanger Convention Bureau and professional conference organizers;

2. The observation of conference hotels;

3. The observation of entrepreneurs.

Due to confidentiality issues, research participants' names were encoded. In order to clarify the terms used in the following chapters here are presented the general titles of research participants:

CVB – Convention Bureau   Conference

PCO – Professional conference organizer.   Professionals

Hotel – Hotel department which is responsible for organizing conferences.

Conference organizer – The leading person of the conference or the entrepreneur.

The participants' quotations are written in *italics* with single spacing and placed quotation-mark around them. Excluded parts in the quotation are marked with parentheses containing three dots (…).

In the following chapter the researcher was investigating the origin of conferences and the management process, ascertaining the conceptualized image of entrepreneur and the factors preventing them from taking responsibility to organize new conference. Moreover, conference professionals expressed their opinion about the Stavanger region as a conference destination. They depicted the strengths and weaknesses of the area, and suggested ways for improvement as well.

3.1. Stavanger CVB's and PCO's perspective

3.1.1. The process of organizing a conference

The following quotation concisely portrays the most important conference sectors, the extent of the meeting industry and the process of implementing a new conference. It is a complex process and it takes up to three years before the work of the conference manager shows.

"For the next few years our biggest events are conferences within the medical, the agricultural and the energy sector. So, for instance, next September there will be a big medical meeting organized by Lærdal Medical, it is Stavanger based company. Lærdal has a membership in the international association and we knew this, so we asked them to try to get the conference to Norway and to Stavanger. So, after a few months of meetings they decided to bid for this meeting and the last year in May or June they had the confirmation that they won. And then it will be held next year. So our biggest events for size, will be 5 -6 conferences in the next couple of years. There are also some which are within the academic, university sector. Then there is of course, the annual oil exhibition, which is held every two years. But we did not get them, they were already here."

(CVB)

International conferences process

From the first idea to its actual implementation the conference process is very long and complicated. International or big size national conferences in Stavanger region usually start

with Stavanger CVB. Professionals do the initial work of discovering and inviting these

conferences to the region. First, they search for rotating national and international

conferences. Second, they try to find local entrepreneurs which could represent this

conference. And third, together with the entrepreneur, they try to invite the conference to

Stavanger region. Stavanger CVB does everything what is in its power to help and support the

entrepreneur.

> *"Getting a new international conference can take many years. It can be a long process where the CVB has an important role to get the idea, the original idea. And the normal model is that the CVB do research and, let's say, supervising of the local professors, key figures, scientists, researchers or people within international membership. And we try to motivate them to bring this international meetings home to Norway. So, very often is very long process, but the day the professor, the scientist is ready we will do what we need to, to make this thing happen. So, if he needs to see the guarantees we will try to find him the guarantees. If he needs to see the facilities, to organize inspections… we will guarantee for the amount of rooms and we will guarantee for his budgets. So we will meet his demands. Those demands are very often found in a manual, so he will bring to the CVB a manual and say I want to take this conference to Norway, to Stavanger, but I am not sure if I can meet the standards. We have a look at it and we say, well, you will meet these standards. We will help you."*

> *(CVB)*

If the entrepreneur wins the right to organize the conference, CVB's experts help him

with the initial organization and the choice of supporting companies: PCOs, hotels and other

suppliers. Depending on the needs of the conference organizer, hotels and PCOs give their

proposals and try to gain the conference.

> *"The process is mainly made by Region Stavanger (…). We are invited to give a proposal to each entrepreneur. Many entrepreneurs willing to have a conference in Stavanger, they are unsure what and how to do it. So it is really important that Region Stavanger helps them."*

> *(PCO 2)*

PCOs do not develop larger-scale conferences themselves because they do not have

both the background and the resources. Before the conference detailed planning (Getz, 2005)

entrepreneurs select their supporting team. The candidates are usually recommended by

Stavanger CVB, because they know every the specifics of every supplier.

" (...)We are in no place in developing new conferences, because we don't have the background for establishing a conference. We work a lot with Region Stavanger and also the Norwegian Convention Bureau. And they often give us leads and we follow them up. They try to fit us, the hotels and all the other event planners, and they try to fit all where is normal to place them. Of course, it helps, because they are a lot out in more exhibitions and congresses that we are, so it is very important for us to get leads from them."

(PCO 1)

Despite the fact that conference professionals usually proceed to already decided

conferences, occasionally PCOs make exceptions and take initiative themselves.

"(...) It is very rare that we initiate a conference. I have an example now. We are working with a local hospital, they have very strong research department within the eye (optic) science\surgery. And the doctors who are working with this are very well internationally known, so we initiated that they should make a national or Scandinavian congress within their type of research. However, it is not something we normally do. Cause we usually find the already established conference. And we try to find a local comity and we try to get them here. And that's the way we normally do it."

(PCO 1)

Ways of observing new conferences

For discovering new conferences and potential entrepreneurs the industry's

professionals use various methods. It can vary from daily search in local newspapers, internet

to participating in big conferences. In addition to the previous methods, managers might use

ICCA database.

"To discover them we do basic research. From internet, newspapers, we look for possible entrepreneurs who have international networks, membership, positions that make it possible. We also try to be present in the arenas of these people. That might be far from our daily life. That means going to oil exhibitions, conferences where they meet to look for them. We have to be very hands on. And then sometimes we can use ICCA database.

We can do searching in the database and try to find out if there is a Norwegian or local contact person. And in some cases there are. But database will never be up to date, cause these things change all the time. So it is up to the CVB to be most hands on. "

(CVB)

"We search for new entrepreneurs, but we don't initiate new conferences. We work with ICCA database. We are going to meetings with ICCA members and exchange leads. As well as we work with academic environment in the university, because they know a lot about changing things, and if we hear something, we try to snap it up."

(PCO 1)

Regularly, Stavanger CVB discovers the entrepreneurs. However, sometimes the initiative is made by the entrepreneur himself. They might come up with the idea of inviting their favourite conference to Stavanger which will follow to inquire for the CVB's assistance.

"Sometimes the entrepreneur comes to us. He already decided, he says, listen, I want to bring this conference to Stavanger, you need to help me. But most of the cases it's the CVB. We come knocking on his door and say, listen, we know that you have the possibility if you want to. How can we convince you that it is worth for you to host this meeting. So I would say, 70/30 percentage. Most people are aware that they can get assistance of certain kind, but they don't know always where to go. They might start in the city council, they might ask someone in the hotel, and sooner or later they come knocking on our door. And sometimes they contact the convention bureau, cause they know that we'll assist them and will help them.

(CVB)

3.1.2. Entrepreneurs' image

For the successful conference's accomplishment, it is not enough to have the right tools and good supervising. The cornerstone of every conference is the entrepreneur, the expert or the key person in the field of conferences. He should want this conference.

PCOs' and CVB managers were asked to describe the type of person who usually takes the responsibility for organizing a conference. Entrepreneurs were perceived as patriotic people…

"I would say the typical entrepreneur is a patriot. He is proud of where he comes from. It doesn't mean that he has to be Norwegian living in Stavanger but he has to have an

element of patriotism, he wants to show where he lives to his international colleagues.(…)"

<div align="right">(CVB)</div>

…people on the top of their career, knowledgeable, secure, and proactive…

"It is often men, at the height of their career, often few years before they will retire, because they want something to show after they are finished with the work. They are apparently, typically initiate takers of the conferences. It you think about the type of character, you need to be "go getter", persuasive, many of them know exactly what they want and they have a clear idea how they want their event to run out."

<div align="right">(PCO 1)</div>

…leader and expert in his field …

"And then he is a strong believer in his field of expertise. If it is medicine, if it is any scientific field, he is very often a leading figure."

<div align="right">(CVB)</div>

…as well as having good understanding of financial issues…

"They should be highly settled in their scientific are, kind of leading person. And it is important for them understanding of economy and financing of the event."

<div align="right">(PCO 2)</div>

3.1.3. Entrepreneurs' limitations

The industry's professionals named a number of factors preventing the entrepreneurs from taking the step to organize the conference. Financial concerns, responsibility and extra workload were named as the main conference obstacles.

"As well they thing that conference will be extra work load for the person, so extra work load in addition to daily cost. That is what stops them. But I think it is important for them to know that they can get qualified assistance to stage their conferences. The main thing that they need to take care of is the subject, the program. And as well it is important that they have relevant network for the marketing the event.(…) I think mostly financial issues. Before they start to organize the conference, they don't know where and how to seek financial support."

<div align="right">(PCO 2)</div>

"In many case I think it is time. They are afraid that it will take too much time to organize the conference from their primary work or their research. Of course, it is time demanding, but we often try to convince that if they will make us in charge of the PCO services, then that will take away a lot what takes time, you know. It is the time and it's also in many cases financial risk, of course, especially if they don't have like the university, or city council in their back. Then it is risk they have to take so and stopper for involving new conferences."

<div align="right">

(PCO 1)

</div>

In order to reduce such kind of closure, entrepreneurs are familiarized with all possibilities of the professional help, the support they can get from their network and municipality.

"Its often his fear of too much work. Too much work and too much responsibility. But then we try to convince him, that with the professional help this will be an easy job. There will be a PCO, there will be suppliers, hotels, and of course, this is from the convention bureau, guaranteeing him, that it is possible."

<div align="right">

(CVB)

</div>

3.1.4. Destination choice

When conference organizers are choosing their conference destination there are several factors that influence this decision. Conference hosts are seeking for trustworthy destination with good quality venues and beautiful nature for the activities outside the conference.

"It feels safe. And when we try to get new conferences here, we try to take conference organizers for a tour. We show our beautiful nature and surroundings, because we try to emphasize our nature, of course. We can take them for a ride on a chopper, to the beaches, Prekestolen. When they choose to come to Stavanger, then it comes to the venue of course, do we have everything they require. When it comes to technical equipment, and food, logistics and everything…"

<div align="right">

(PCO 1)

</div>

When Stavanger CVB prepares a bid for the international conference, they focus on the unique elements that the region has to offer: the nature, the city, good accessibility and general safety of the region.

We focus on every bid on our icons, which is the fjords of Norway, the Pulpit rock and the city center of Stavanger, the medieval town of Stavanger. The fact that the destination is safe, and well connected for airline traffic. And that the city is good place to hold the conference because it is not too big. But we have all the facilities, the hotels and infrastructure to host the big international meetings.

(CVB)

An attractive conference region should be rich by its infrastructure, facilities and originality. The conference delegates should leave the destination with a feeling that they got their money's worth and they were taken good care of.

"They have to be able to offer the infrastructure, the tools and the other factors to carry the conference through. First it is important to be able to run the conference or the meeting, but other than that, they have to maybe present the delegates something exotic, something interesting, arenas for networking, social events, maybe a gala dinner we have to put them a little extra to be a good host."

(CVB)

In order to find out the qualities of good conference destination, participants were asked to describe the perfect conference destination and how Stavanger matches to this ideal picture. The main criteria were: visibility in the city, effective distances and cities hospitality.

"A perfect conference destination is where the conference is visible in the city center. So it shouldn't be too big of a city. Which is great because in our case if the delegates live in the city in the hotels, they see that they come to a town that welcomes them, where they are easily oriented, they don't spent too much time from the hotel to the conference venue, they might be able to walk to the conference gala dinner or to the city walks and feel that even after half a day they know the city center. And this is the challenge for the big cites. Because the delegates spent too much time in traffic on buss from the meeting or back to the hotel after the meeting."

(CVB)

"But I think what makes the conference destination successful is that the city and the local environment is happy to see that the delegates are coming and they are warm and welcome, that hotels are welcome, that the local environment is involved in a way. Like an ONS... The whole city is on their head. People like to feel included."

(PCO 1)

In Stavanger all realistic participants' expectations can be met successfully…

"Well, I think, if they have a realistic picture of what Stavanger is we can meet all of their expectations.(…)."

(PCO 1)

…so depending on the nature of the conference and the standards that are kept by

conference organizer, Stavanger can be perfect conference destination.

"(...) Stavanger can be perfect for some conferences, but not for all of course. For instance in 2006 we had a resuscitation conference here. For Stavanger it was a perfect conference, because we have a very strong academic environment when it comes to resuscitation and this type of work. And we also have a biggest supplier of resuscitation dolls here in Stavanger, so, you know, that type of conference was perfect for Stavanger, in size and type of event if fitted perfectly. But of course, not all conference would be perfect for Stavanger."

(PCO 1)

Advantages

Like every place in the world, Stavanger has some advantages and disadvantages. The

location is advantageous for its good connectivity with the biggest European cities.

"Actually, we have many direct flights to the biggest cities. And also everything is within a reach here in Stavanger, because you have the fjords, you have the mountains, beaches and the city. Everything is in the small area."

(PCO 1)

Generally, foreign delegates perceive the country as safe, clean, advanced and exotic.

"For the strength I would stay, Stavanger and Norway is clean, safe and very exotic destination for most delegates. (...)We will meet the expectations with modern and good facilities. Which means that hotels, meeting facilities, exhibition centers, they are at international high level."

(CVB)

Among particular industries, Stavanger is internationally famous city.

"Stavanger is looked as an energy capital. So when it comes to attracting energy people, Stavanger is very known city. And it is also local food. Stavanger is looked as

culinary center of Norway. We have the culinary institute, where biggest chefs in Norway are situated. (…)"

<div align="right">(PCO 1)</div>

Due to the fact that Stavanger is relatively small, most of the events happening in the city are appreciable and worthy.

"We have a lot of festivals, which helps to attract people, like "Glad mat". And also many organizers like that their conference will play a part in the city picture. And Stavanger is such a small city, so every mid size or big size event, make a difference to the city. People are aware that they are here and that they feel very welcome. And many delegates think that it is grate that the hotels and restaurants and everybody know that this conference is happening and they all like this a lot."

<div align="right">*(PCO 1)*</div>

Disadvantages

Sometimes it is difficult to compete with bigger or lower cost cities. The main obstacles can be the price…

"Well, the price level in the mid-week is high, but when you compare to major cities in the world, then it is not too bad. But of course, you cannot really compare Stavanger to for example Tokyo. So it is an expensive city, and especially if the delegates pay for hotel rooms themselves, of course, that is an issue for them. The alcohol and tobacco prices are an issue as well. Norway is perceived as very expensive country."

<div align="right">*(PCO 1)*</div>

"And the weakness there would be the Norwegian price level. That's what makes it challenging. Many people wanna go to Norway, to Stavanger, but they fear the high prices. And it is our job to make it possible, even though certain things in Scandinavia are more expensive".

<div align="right">*(CVB)*</div>

…too small hotel capacity…

"(…) For the large events it is a matter of hotel capacity. (…) Yes, hotel rooms are an issue, especially mid-week, because so much business going on with a business people from oil companies and so on. Everything is sold out, so it is a challenge to find hotel rooms for our guests. Hotels are not willing to give us the amount of rooms that we need."

<div align="right">*(PCO 1)*</div>

…and uncomfortable weather.

Difficult for Scandinavia's case, to present beautiful weather, of course. Our season would be the spring time to September. Which is the comfortable time to bring a big group of people to our city. And also, difficult can be with price level. It is hard for Scandinavian city to compete with low cost destinations, where the competition is hard, and maybe where the access is good. There are no low cost airlines flying in to Stavanger. We have the safe, but more expensive ones."

(CVB)

3.2. Conference hotels' perspective

The following chapter will recapitulate the interview results with conference hotels'

sales managers. When research participants were asked to describe their most important

events, most of them could not exclude one event in front of other.

"That varies from year to year. But I can't say that one is more important than other. We can take 140 people in the biggest meeting room (…)."

(Hotel 1)

However, if the customers fill up the biggest venues, and additionally use the hotel

rooms, then the event is perceived as more valuable.

"When we fill our biggest conference room (which takes 200 people with only chairs and 140 with only class room) these events are really important for us. Most of the time there are oil companies that are renting this room. There are a lot of courses here. People book rooms for all week. Most of them are oil industry people as well. They usually need a lot of equipment, which they rent from additional suppliers (…)."

(Hotel 2)

"The most important events we have in our hotel are courses and conferences combined with bed & breakfast. These can come from already existing customers who already know our hotel (…)."

(Hotel 3)

3.2.1. The process of organizing a conference

International conferences – planning and research

First and foremost it is important to note that if there were no active promotion of Stavanger region there would be fewer international conferences. All research participants had a common perception that for getting more international conferences, companies need to be unanimous – first promote the region, and only then their company. Rather often conference hotels collaborate with Stavanger CVB and participate in international exhibitions, where the team promotes the region (Region Stavanger BA, 2010).

> *"As well I was working a lot internationally and participated in exhibitions in Barcelona and Frankfurt. So it is quite difficult to get these big events. They don't know Norway, they don't know Stavanger. So you need to start from selling Norway, then Stavanger and only then our hotel. So if you get these international conferences, they are very important."*
>
> *(Hotel 3)*

> *"We go away with Region Stavanger, when they have events, say we went to Aberdeen last year, for workshops and stuff like that. And we stand there as one unit, and we sell the region. And then, hopefully they will come to me when they come here. We are too small alone, so we have to go together and be bigger like that. And there is very friendly competition. Although at the end of the day we are competitors."*
>
> *(Hotel 1)*

The researcher investigated the general situation of how various conference hotels get new conferences and attract entrepreneurs to use their services. Conference professionals do not make this initiative by themselves simply because of too massive scale of the event compared to the resources owned by the company.

> *"Local wing (entrepreneur) has to put an application into a national office, to sort of say, ok I am the leader of the Stavanger wing and I would like to invite everyone for a national meeting is in 2015, say. So you need to hand in the application. There is a lot of work in handing the application in, up until the event and also during the event. Though some people are reluctant to be the one to invite, cause it is not an easy thing to do. It involves a lot of work. And again, that is why don't speak to such kind of people,*

cause it is a lot of work. That is why I would go to Per Morten and say, could you contact them, cause you need to get in, cause it is at that early stage. They put together a package for them for handing it in. that makes it easy. And they will guide you along the way, of course, if you get it. I think it is very important, otherwise, even fewer would do it. I think that is the biggest hurtle, really. And that is what they are doing, trying to break down that wall for people to come."

(Hotel 1)

For the bigger conference, hotels start with Stavanger's CVB given leads. They do not initiate the process themselves, because establishing a new international conference is a very time-consuming, complex and costly process.

"(...) As a hotel, we are one small part of the whole process. People are not gonna come here just because of the hotel, they gonna first see the region or other things, and then if they have decided to come to Stavanger, then they gonna start looking at hotels. So for me to phone up someone, who haven't been decided where they gonna have the conference and say, would you like as a local, sort of wing of the organization, would you like to invite the national meeting next year to Stavanger? I can't really do that. It is a bit too big for us, because it involves so many things in it, and because we are just small hotel, a part of the puzzle. So what I do, I phone to them after they have chosen Stavanger. And again, that is why Region Stavanger's work is such an important for us. We need them to do this ground work first, and then hopefully will come to us. Or at least come to the region. And that is good for us regardless. It is a big job and it takes time and resources. We are dependent on their work."

(Hotel 1)

Local conferences – individual initiative

As it was presented in the previous chapter, big scale or international conferences are initiated by Region Stavanger and further distributed to most suitable candidate. This chapter will discuss the smaller scale conferences, manageable by a single professional. In order to attract more conferences to their company the initiative is made by conference hotels.

Depending on the size of the hotel, the employment rate at the company and the popularity of the season, professionals adequately devote their time for doing relevant research and looking for new conferences. Responsible sales managers use different databases, newspapers, social media, exhibitions and many other sources. As it is visible further on, the whole process demands skills, time and resources.

We find potential customers from different web sides, already existing network. We travel a lot to Oslo and visit our customers. We collaborate with other Choice chain hotels. For example, if there was a conference in the hotel in Oslo, and we know that next year they are going to have a conference in the other city, then we try to invite in to Stavanger. Those conferences are moving from city to city every year. (...)We have customer inspiration meetings and events. In these events customers can observe how we are arranging the events. Usually these are 3 times a year and some additional things in between.

(Hotel 3)

"By one of the following ones: either they contact us directly, which is obviously, the easy way. Or we also go out selling. So I go out and do research on what events are coming up in various companies etc. and then contact them beforehand and try to get them here. We also go on fairs in various places: Oslo, Aberdeen, Haugesund. So we get a lot of contacts there. (...)For me, obviously, read newspapers, have leads from different things. Like I am driving and I see a company that I haven't seen before, and then I am one their website and then, oh, they will have their 50 year anniversary next year. And sometimes they don't even know. (...) And then, let's make it a party. So, everything really. But I think after having done it for a while you pick up things everywhere. You speak to people, you have your network. You speak to people and you might hear something in the conversation. As well use internet a lot. And there is some people, who you contacted for a while, but they chose other city, and I have a program showing that now there is a time when they are choosing the place for next year. So if they choose Stavanger, I need to make them come to us. So, basically, everything. Because there are leads everywhere, if you just work. And as soon as you are a bit sales oriented, you start looking everywhere as well."

(Hotel 1)

Some of the hotels, in addition to usual research and calling for the customers, are

working with event companies such as Kulturkompaniet, Høydepunkt, Conventor etc.

"We are closely working with event bureaus. We arranged them tours, in order to familiarize with the hotel. (...) They are coming with their existing customers and usually are participating during the event (...). It is much easier to work with people who already know who we are and what they can expect from us. In order to get new customers we have "call days". Based on different sources we prepare lists of people that we need to get in touch with. We need to call them and ask if they are planning to come to Stavanger. When we get positive answer, we send the offer, arrange presentation tours."

(Hotel 3)

All conference hotels in Stavanger are quite well established and have permanent customers. When they need a conference room customers call directly.

"As you hear, it is ringing a lot. We have many guest who have been here before and calling straight to the sales department to book a new conference. I think 80 – 85 % of conference booking is made through a secretary. I guess they have a list and all the hotels, as well as whom they have to call to get a meeting room booked very quickly. Of course we have our sales department as well. They are doing outgoing sales as well. They are visiting companies, see if there are interesting people to attract, interesting conferences to get to the hotel. I am not really calling out. It happens really rarely. Only people who are sending an email through a web site that they are interested in a meeting here, those I can phone myself. And hear if I can help them."

(Hotel 2)

When conference organizers are calling to their potential customers and accidently come through to a big conference, they give all the contacts and proceedings to Region Stavanger CVB.

"If we get the event which is bigger than we can handle, then we involve Region Stavanger. And then they are working together and presenting Stavanger region. Because the hotel is not the most important part, but also region, what you can do and see apart from the conference."

(Hotel 3)

Chain hotels have special research departments; however, independent hotels do not have that. Everything is done by sales managers.

"But of course, because we are bigger chain hotel, we have advantage of that as well. There is a lot of cooperation between all the hotels. We have a special person working for all the Rica hotels here in Stavanger and that is of course a big advantage."

(Hotel 2)

"Yes, our main office in Oslo has a special sales department. We get a lot of tips and advices from them. They just give us some projects. But we do a great part of the work as well. Like these "call days" where we just sit and call for different people."

(Hotel 3)

"We are an independent hotel, we are not part of a chain (we are part of the historic hotels and restaurants) so we don't have special research office. So, basically, me and my colleague, we sit and do these things. We are doing everything that is connected

with marketing and sales. Being a small hotel we don't have that much resources. There should be a person doing just that, because we don't have so much time to do just that. This is why Region Stavanger's job is very important for us and other hotels."

<div align="right">*(Hotel 1)*</div>

3.2.2. Entrepreneur's image

After clarifying the process of achieving a new conference, the researcher started ascertaining managers' perception of the entrepreneur. First, conference professionals recognize that in most of the cases conference leader's role is attributed naturally.

"I think it is usually pre-decided due to their role in the organization or their company. It is usually what falls up on you, because it is your job."

<div align="right">*(Hotel 1)*</div>

Research participants were asked to describe the typical personality traits of the leading person of the conference – the entrepreneur. Generally, in their behaviour conference leaders reflect their field of interest.

"Oh, it depends on what is the person interested in, or working with. For example those who are working with finance will be more interested in price, but others can be more interested in quality. So, personal qualities will very much depend on their job style (...)."

<div align="right">*(Hotel 3)*</div>

However, there are some typical traits attributed to a conference leader. The entrepreneur is perceived as a networker, ambitious, perceptive, experienced…

"What type of person… well, they need to be a lot of things… they need to be wanting, and they need to be seeing opportunities and they need to be task and solution oriented. It is good if they have a good network. Obviously it is good if they have some experiences within organizing conferences. And if they know the area that they are doing it in, then that would help as well."

<div align="right">*(Hotel 1)*</div>

…self confident, decisive and organized person.

"Eeem… well… of course, when you take such a responsibility for organizing a bigger event, it says something about the person who is doing it. They all are very self confident, they have been preparing a conference mostly for over a month, they are very good prepared when they come here, they are very well organized people. They know what they want, there is only one way they want it, they are very strict. I like to work with such people. You know how they want to have it and you know in advance what you can expect. And if you do it they will be happy. Those are people who have been traveling around the world a lot, they know how it has to be, they demand high level of service, so of course you have to make sure that they get that. But I think those people are very strict and well planned. We can learn a lot from those people. It is always exciting to talk to them and see what they are doing to bring the day."

(Hotel 2)

3.2.3. Entrepreneurs' limitations

Conference hotels were asked to express their opinion on the factors prohibiting entrepreneurs from taking the responsibility to organize a conference. Participants came up with various suggestions.

Extra workload and additional daily cost.

"The work that is behind it. Because there is a lot of it. And often when there is a larger organization, sort of nonprofit, your work will be free work, you will not get paid for it. It is like you doing it for the organization. I think that stops a lot of people. All the work behind it. Which again I think why the work that Region Stavanger is doing is really important, because that's where they need that push and help to get started."

(Hotel 1)

Financial worries and lack of professional help.

"I would say, financial worries. They are dependent from financial support. Moreover, some of them need somebody who could help with practical work. I say so, because they are into their own things, like research and they need practical help, advice or assistance from Region Stavanger. I believe it is not so important for them which hotel to choose, if you know what I mean."

(Hotel 3)

Risk and low attendance concerns.

"Well then it is mostly lack of people participating in the conference. There are many entrepreneurs that they have set the date, they have booked the meeting room and after that they have to find participants for the course. Those people often have special agreement with the hotel as well. Then we have seen that they cancel some days before

the conference, because of lack of participants. Not enough people sign for the conference."

3.2.4. Destination choice

When choosing Stavanger as a destination conference hosts are seeking for good accessibility,…

"In general, accessibility. It needs to be accessible for a lot of people from everywhere. So in that way we have quite a good situation, but it can be more direct routes from around the world. So, easy accessible is number one."

…venue with good and new equipment as well as good quality hotels, which would be situated in a short distance to their main attraction point…

"If there are academics, so they are more interested in hotels facilities. If there is association conference that is coming here in the weekend, so then they want extra activities as well. That we arrange as well. We have some partners which we are working with. So depending on the group, they have different wishes and needs. It is very individual. On group can be very pleased with the hotel and with all arrangements, while others can be slightly disappointed. So it depends on personality and the way people perceive things."

"Of course the situation of the hotel.(…) And other reasons, like for example technical equipment, people want good quality equipment. People don't want old stuff, they want the newest of the newest. And of course, nowadays it is important to have good quality, healthy food. We are using local products. Of course it is more expensive."

…and additional activities…

"And I think it is good to be able to do various things, activities. You should be able to do a lot of various things in these couple of days."

"Stavanger. I think because of our close distances and possibilities that you can experience here, Stavanger is a perfect destination nationally and internationally."

(Hotel 3)

Advantages

Conference hotels were asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Stavanger as a conference destination. The opinion was based on conference organizers' personal experiences and communication with their clients.

All participants perceive Stavanger as perfect conference destination, because of the size of the region. Rogaland is viewed as small in distance yet very rich in content.

"There are no weaknesses. And I mean that. Stavanger is a big city but with small cities charm. Everything is close. You have so many different activities that you can choose from: old town, we are close to beaches, it is 15 minutes to the airport, you can walk or take a boat to the Prekestolen, Kjerag, you can go for salmon safari. (...) You don't have to travel far to get what you want. The city center in small but it is very cozy, with a lot of restaurants and pubs. As well as in the airport, just in few minutes you can reach the beach. There are not many cities that have that. (...)The distances in our destination are like Alfa and Omega. As well if you want to do some skiing, its 1,5 hour to the skiing slopes. Many festivals and events, like "Maijazz", "Gladmat", Beach volleyball. I see just many strengths."

(Hotel 3)

"I think, and I truly believe this, that we have everything. We have the city and then we have the nature. We have festivals and we have great hotels, great venues. We have sort of everything on our door step: from city life to walking a pulpit rock. Whatever suits your conference best, I think we got most what you need."

(Hotel 1)

Moreover, good activities can be correlated with professionalism.

"And of course, there are beautiful surroundings here. It doesn't take long before you are in the mountains; you have the beautiful fjords, sea. I think a lot of people try to combine those 2 as well. While they are staying here for business, they can have look at the surroundings."

(Hotel 2)

"Well, of course, all the businesses are going on here. You have everything here. And the oil is the main reason people are coming here, absolutely."

(Hotel 3)

Disadvantages

Despite the fact that conference organizers wanted to see Stavanger only as positive destination, they mentioned some shortcomings which should be improved. The most common ones were hotel capacity, high prices, and internationally unknown name.

Hotel capacity.

"I know that we have an issue with rooms. But that should be fine now, when we will open more rooms and new Scandic Hotel is opening soon."

(Hotel 1)

High price level.

"If we are talking about national companies and conferences, then the main consideration is price. Especially for different associations and sports teams. And it is very difficult to get more conferences during weekends. And these people who are coming during weekends, they are very concerned about the price."

(Hotel 3)

"Weakness: that must be the price, definitely. In my opinion, cities like Oslo, are lower priced. So if you have a possibility to choose of having your conference here, or in Oslo, I mean if the same amount of people have to travel for the conference and it doesn't matter, then I can imagine that people are taking the hotel in Gardemon in Oslo instead of coming here. I think in shops here is a bit more expensive as well, then in other places in Norway."

(Hotel 2)

Internationally unknown name.

"We could probably work as a team more, in order to get more people to the region. But at the end we are competitors. (...) We have to make people believe, or let people know what we do have. I don't think Stavanger is necessarily the first choice for a lot of people. But I think the reason why it is not, it is because they don't know enough. So if they had all the details, or just basically knew more, then it would be an easier choice. And I think we all including myself, working in hospitality industry in Stavanger need to do a better job, to make sure that the world knows about us. I think, still, it is a lot of easier for example Bergen, because the brand is much more known. So we still have a job to do there. I think we are starting to get there. During the late years Region Stavanger has done a good job. I think we are getting there."

(Hotel 1)

Better connectivity. Stavanger is perceived as a destination with good flight connectivity, but in order to get even more conferences and business tourism happening in Stavanger the airport should get even more direct flights.

"When we are talking about international conferences, the most common consideration is related to direct international flights and their frequency. Fluency of coming to Stavanger compared to e.g. Paris."

(Hotel 3)

"I think more direct fly routes. It is getting better year by year, but still, I think Sola airport needs more direct routes to make it easier, accessible. Because accessibility is a key when you bring conferences."

(Hotel 1)

Quality differences. One of the hotels mentioned that generally in Norway people cannot get luxury services.

"Norway is on the lower level of service compared to many other developed countries in the world. When you travel a lot, you experience other hotels in the world, of course, your view is totally different if you only have been here in Norway. We don't have extra good quality hotels. (...)"

(Hotel 3)

3.3. Entrepreneurs' perspective

This chapter will review the results derived from face-to-face interviews with the conference entrepreneurs. Some participants have already organized successful conferences while others are in the detailed planning phase. Their conference is coming in the nearest future. The following section will investigate the conference process, entrepreneurs' personality and qualities of Stavanger region from entrepreneurs' point of view.

3.3.1. The process of organizing a conference

The conference planning and organizing process is equal to the process of organizing most of the events (Rogers, 2008). Already established, constant conferences usually are held in the same manner, with only minor changes or improvements. However, if the conference is organized for the first time, there are no rules of proceeding the event, everything should be planned from beginning to the end (Rogers, 2008).

There are many different ways of how international rotating conferences are invited to Stavanger. The process of inviting the conference can start with entrepreneur regularly attending his favourite conferences and building up own desire to invite it to his home town. Contrary, it can be simply a part of company's development process. Rather often the process starts by Region Stavanger finding the most suitable and competent person for particular conference and suggesting him to invite this conference to Stavanger on behalf of his name. Occasionally, some companies include conference organization in their companies' development plan.

When the conference has an enthusiastic leader, then it is a matter of preparing most suitable bid and presenting it for the committee of the conference. The committee considers all the received bids and selects the most suitable host for the next conference.

"I was attending this conference for many years and decided to invite it to Stavanger. When I was introduced to Region Stavanger and services they can provide, I decided that together we can invite this conference to Stavanger. You can deliver a bid to chancellor and the chancellor meeting decides where will be the upcoming congress."

(Conference organizer 5)

Sometimes an entrepreneur shows the initiative to invite the conference to Stavanger himself. Usually this is because he was participating in these conferences and came to the state of mind where he wants to present his region to his international colleagues and vice versa.

"(...) When I was in this meeting the first time I saw that, well, this is something that is very important. And I also think it is important to get this conference to my home town, to show off my company, to show off my town. And also to get the region more established as an IT region."

(Conference organizer 1)

The conference detail planning process is very long (Comas & Moscardo, 2005).

"Generally we start planning our conference 1, 5 year before the actual event. We start with sponsors' and idée committee gathering where we discuss ideas about the upcoming program and financial part of the conference."

(Conference organizer 3)

It is not just a long process; it takes commitment from both entrepreneurs and their organization. No matter if the leader was assigned, elected or emerged himself, a person should have his company or organization's approval and support.

"(...) So, we applied to host this conference in 2010. There was a voting in the general assembly in conference 2010 and happily we were selected. So we are hosting the conference in Stavanger in 2012. (...) On the board meeting, first of all we had to agree that this is the conference that we all are committed to work on and decide if we are going to apply at all. That time company was planning 3 year strategy plan. We decided that the conference will be a nice part for overall strategy."

(Conference organizer 2)

"And once I started talking internally in my company, I got the necessary response: wow that is great, let's try to do that. So my company is actually backing this up 100 % and we are targeted to be the host of this conference, so that was the most important factor. And more or less personal interest, of trying to do something."

(Conference organizer 1)

Strategic decision making

During the conference planning process "most decisions are made by moving back and forth between the set of criteria and the identification of alternatives" (Ivanova & Gibcus, 2003, p. 26). Strategic decisions are made by the interaction between top leaders and other members of the organization (Brouthers, Andriessen, & Nicolaes, 1998). Several companies

perceive organization of the conference as good strategic step for the company's

development.

> *"It was strategic decision for Company X's development. To make 3 partners to work together towards this goal (conference) will make more ownership in company X and in the foundation. It will bring better collaboration between partners – that is our main goal. It will be good for our research strategy. We are working on several specific projects, and it will be very good that it will be announced at this conference."*

> *(Conference organizer 2)*

> *"Yes, it is the strategic decision for company's development. It is one of the important things for this organization. Both for expanding their business to other communities and recruiting new members. If people see that the conference is a success, then maybe they decide that they want to be members of this association. The main thing is that this organization wants to create the way of sharing competence and networking. It is a very important way of doing the networking."*

> *(Conference organizer 4)*

Eliminating risk

According to Ivanova and Gibcus (2003), the decision making process always include

some level of uncertainty. However, entrepreneurs always tend to see more opportunities than

obstacles. If the conference is rotating and conference host are taking this responsibility for

the first time, then the organizers perceive it as a financial risk taking activity.

> *"Economy wise - of course. When you plan the conference, you need to settle quite a lot of things before you can go out and invite people. (...) Before we committed ourselves, we actually needed to get financial support, which we actually did through sponsorships. And luckily, we have a theme which makes people enthusiastic. So, we quite easily got the amount of sponsorship we needed. You need to know that you have a good theme that the people actually want to come and to listen to. And it also needs to be in the area where you expect people to come. (...)."*

> *(Conference organizer 1)*

The most important task while making decisions is to reduce uncertainty (Harris,

2009). It is almost impossible to reduce uncertainty to zero, therefore most of the actions

include some kind of risk. According to Harris (2009), an ideal way for reducing risk is

collecting as much accurate information as possible and considering possible alternatives. The

risk in organizing a conference can be reduced by having control over the amount of people

visiting the conference…

"It is of course, risk taking activity. Having people to pay and register few months before the conference reduces the risk significantly. And also having the network, knowing that most of the people from the group are coming let you know that there will be the international profile of the conference. There is a lot of uncertainty with budget and people helping. When you start to ask to help with the concrete task, some people can say that they do not have time."

(Conference organizer 6)

…as well as measuring the economical balance of the conference. Settling the budget

is important for the arrangement of every event (Rogers, 2008).

"Yes economically, we did some measurements, a plan in order to check if this conference will not be a fiasco. In this project expenditures will be equal to income. We are not going to earn a lot of money. It is more for broader society, bigger network, and contacts. This will be beneficial later in our working processes. (...)"

(Conference organizer 2)

Organizing successful conference

Organizing a successful conference can improve the overall business performance.

Therefore the conference should be only successful. The organizer should collect all possible

information already in the pre-planning process (Rogers, 2008). That is: analyzing the

potential participants, drafting conference program, timing, venue and format. Moreover,

financial issues should be taken into consideration. Being a long and complex process,

conference planning and organization requires collaboration of many people within the host

company. Working together towards a common goal enhances nearness.

"It is very important. I think not just the conference itself is important. The process of getting the conference is very important itself, it is connecting people. The conference it is just a part of the main goal of our strategy."

(Conference organizer 2)

"During all these conferences we are building up a solid network, which is useful for future business success."

(Conference organizer 3)

Moreover, organizing a good conference improves the overall picture of the host

company, therefore hosts put all their efforts to make it successful.

"Sure. That is why we are heading to the best conference ever! Not only social program, but also the scientific program is very very important. To be perceived seriously.(…)"

(Conference organizer 2)

"Definitely. You can say that one has no luxury for failing. The conference should be only successful (…)."

(Conference organizer 3)

Entrepreneurs, especially those who take responsibility for the first time, are

concerned over not getting enough participants for their conference. However, if the organizer

has full support from his colleagues, he is enthusiastic and has a strong belief in the

conference topic – the success can be felt already in the planning process of the conference.

"I think it will be successful, because in the planning part we have done so far, we have notice that the enthusiasm that we have, the guys who work with this have easily been spread around. And others say: oh yes, we need to do this!! And we have been waiting for showing this for a long time, so we have a lot of sponsors. We have a lot of people who have said that they gonna enlist for the conference. So we have an estimate of getting 200 people. And in the venue we have room for 400."

(Conference organizer 1)

Moreover, it is very important to be proud of one's region and believe that participants

will be excited too. It is important to feel the support of the whole region.

"I didn't have a doubt for one second. We have facilities. The city's heart is quite small but big at the same time. Because you have many facilities and hotels in walking distance. There is a lot of action around it. All the unique things are reachable by hand: sea, mountains, fjords, the city. People as well, everybody are so kind and nice. Everything!!! We have short distance to everything."

(Conference organizer 5)

Failing to get enough participants would be devastating for both the host location and

conference organizer (Zhang, Leung, & Qu, 2007). It is very important to understand the

potential conference participants and have good communication with them. Even experienced organizers always keep constant contact with their participants. This is one of the ways for feeling safe and secure.

"The communication with potential participants before the conference. It is one thing that will show the success. As well, after the conference, we are usually asking people their opinion about the conference and how can we improve. Also it is a way to create communication. We ask them: what do you want to have as main themes, main topics in next year's conference? (...) we ask potential participants to send the abstract and to say how they want to have their lecture. And then the committee are reviewing all abstract ant then put together a program. So in that way we develop several steps in the communication. People very positively response to this process and it says to me that we hit the right button."

(Conference organizer 4)

The highest level of feeling secure and guaranteeing the success of the conference is to get participants to sign and get the payment fee early in advance. Other advantage of receiving entrance money early in advance is the possibility to adjust the conference according to the amount of participants, maximize the efficiency rate.

"Big advantage of this conference is that everybody, who wants to present their paper at the conference, need to send it in advance and then they need to pay the fee. So, everybody with the paper, it will be approximately 200 people, need to pay conference fee in July, and then we have the most of the costs coming in September. That means that we are able to adjust the level of the cost depending on how many participants are coming."

(Conference organizer 6)

3.3.2. Network's importance

Conference implementation is not possible without local and professional network. It takes a long time to build it up. In the planning phase professional network is important for getting relevant approval, advices and securing potential participants.

"Oh, it is the most important thing. That is actually the prime reason why I go to these conferences. One thing is to listen to all the planarians', speeches and all these things, but it is more important to meet that kind of people you are working with in the same arena, if you might say. Knowing the correct people, get introduced and stuff like that. I

would not be able to do this if I haven't been acquainted with the conference people (…) It is important to being able to talk to them openly about this and actually get the respect and get listened to (…)."

<div align="right">

(Conference organizer 1)

</div>

"It is the most important thing. We began to build it long time ago. We asked people what they think about having the congress in Stavanger, what years should we have it and so on."

<div align="right">

(Conference organizer 5)

</div>

"I think the personal network is very important. Previous conferences I had in different society. Offshore community is new for me, so I needed to work very hard to develop relevant network. Developing this network was very challenging. I needed to find the right people and also to develop new contacts. I think we have succeeded quite well. It is so important to talk to people and not only by social media, but face to face as well. It is important to get out to other conference for example."

<div align="right">

(Conference organizer 4)

</div>

Local network (professional conference organizers, event bureaus, hotels, restaurants etc.) is very important as well.

"And the local network here in Stavanger is important as well, getting to know the right people. (…) Without them I would never be able to do this, because they have the necessary connections to make this happen. So for me being able to get this conference to Stavanger… I couldn't have done it without Region Stavanger. It actually would be too resourceful. I have to do my everyday job, and within the company we don't have special resources to do the bidding and planning."

<div align="right">

(Conference organizer 1)

</div>

In order to have successful conference, the organizer needs to know that he has support from relevant hospitality companies.

"Local network is very important as well. If we don't have all Stavanger's network with us, the congress is not going to succeed. If they don't believe this idea that we will get the world's congress here, so we can forget it. It people working in hospitality industry don't want to work together for that reason, we cannot succeed. Transport, hotels, tourism companies, restaurants…"

<div align="right">

(Conference organizer 5)

</div>

"It is very much a matter of establishing, having and utilizing a local network. For instance, when we got the mayor to approve that the municipality will pay for the reception on Sunday… Stavanger Region shared the knowledge of how to proceed the application and we also double-checked with the mayor's wife who works here if we are

doing everything in a right way. And we got acceptance. So, it is a matter of establishing, having and utilizing network of people you know from projects, from collaborations, different kind of knowledge or friendships or whatever you might call it."

(Conference organizer 6)

3.3.3. Entrepreneur's personality

The following chapter will present personal qualities that are associated with the successful conference organizer. In addition there will be discussed the main factors influencing the person's decision to organize the conference.

The participants of the research were asked to answer two main questions concerning good personality qualities of the conference organizer. First question was about general personality qualities that good conference chairman should have. In the second question participants were asked to describe their own personality.

The interview results were coded. In order to get a better general insight into the results the researcher designed figure 11. The results are presented in the following histogram in alphabetic order.
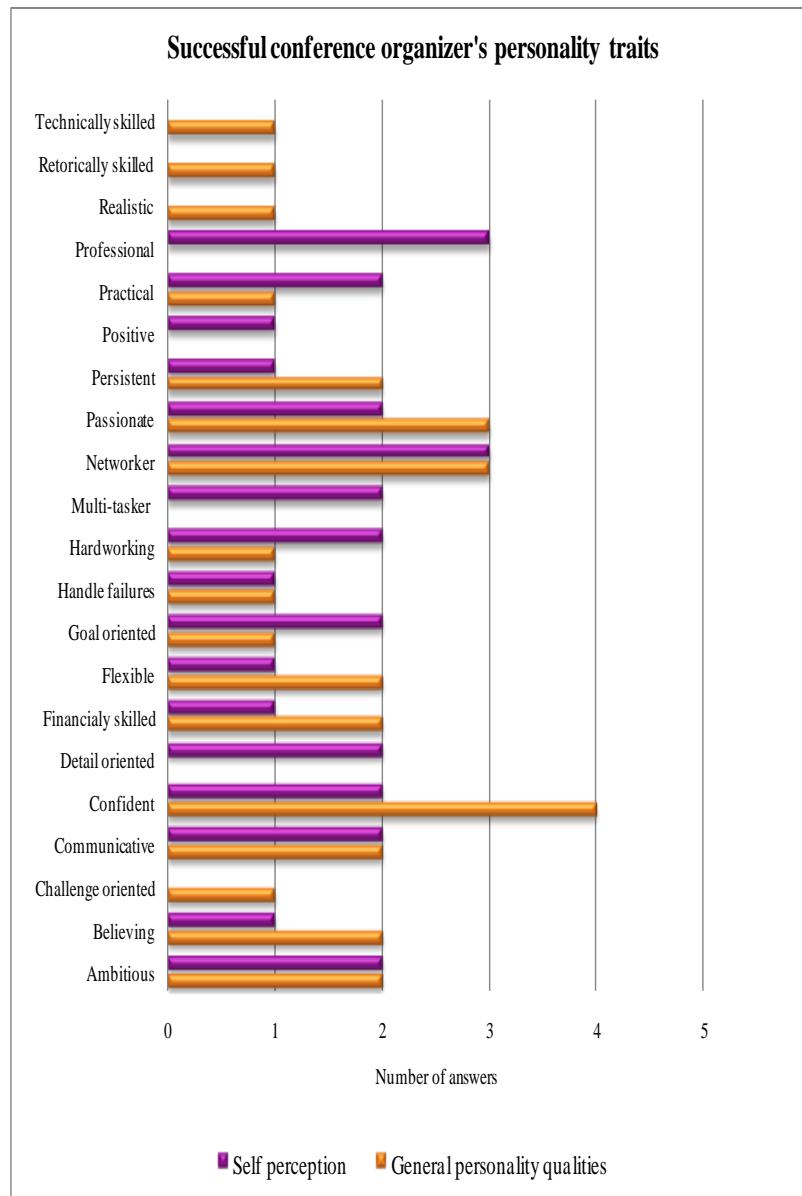
Figure 11: Successful conference organizer's personality traits

According to figure 11 a successful conference entrepreneur should be a good networker, confident and passionate in what he is doing. Additionally, entrepreneurs perceive themselves as good networkers and true professionals in their field.

Further on, it follows a detailed explanation of the mentioned personality traits. In order to succeed in the conference implementation process, conference chairman should be a good networker, hardworking, flexible, detail and financially oriented, organized, persistent, and expressive person.

"A good network is very important as well. You should have wide network. So ability to build up the network is very important. As well I think it is important to have the ability to express your needs. And which needs conference's delegates have.(...) I am very detail oriented, extremely focused on expenses, I like to have control of the budget and the whole process. I like to plan. He must be persistent. This work is not 8 hour work, you need to be on it all the time. Moreover, it is important to get sufficient financial base before you start everything. I mean to get your sponsors."

(Conference organizer 3)

Additionally, the leader should be a multitasked, creative, rhetorically and financially skilled.

"You should have personal network, ability to organize things. You should know how to announce things, how to schedule, how to set up a budget and calculate. (...) Normally I have a lot of things going in parallel. I like to create and make things happen. I have some ideas and ending up with few of them. I am tutoring, having some bachelor thesis, few master thesis and 3 PhD students, 2 of them are from Alexandria and Egypt. Another thing, by the way, in 1985 one friend and I have established Stavanger Mackintosh user group. And I am still running it and am in charge of it. That is also some kind of networking, because people are coming from different groups of ages from 15 – 80. It helped me to know a lot of people. We have another project called "International Manufacturing Strategies Awake". We have members from 20 different countries. It is easy to send invitations. And a big part of people will say yes, because they know me."

(Conference organizer 6)

Good communication and technical skills are nonetheless important.

"I think good communication skills and good skills in new tools like the social media. (...) I have a master in conflict resolution in mediation and negotiation. So I think my background is very suitable in working with conferences and developing organizations. I like to communicate and I think I have a very good network. That helps me a lot in my work. I things these are main factors."

(Conference organizer 4)

Conference leader is supposed to be enthusiastic, passionate, confident, secure, goal oriented, ambitious and believing.

"Enthusiasm, believing what the theme is about, believe in one self, get the correct people around you to help you, get support from your employee, family, companies surrounding you. Get the enthusiasm around you, to actually also believe in this (...)When I first came into job interview to this position, my boss asked: what is your goal in life? I said: my goal in life is to do something important and get my name

known. And I settled that one year ago, when I started doing this. I find my goal not necessary in the conference. The conference is the product of the enthusiasm, the knowledge and the social arena I am working in. It is showing off internally, that I get a lot of good feedback from colleagues, my bosses, the CEO."

(Conference organizer 1)

In addition to the previously mentioned qualities, the conference organizer should be hardworking and goal-oriented...

"If you actually feel that you are not alone. It is very important to have common goal and believe in it, you need to have someone with you, who believes in it as well. You need to believe that it is going to be the best conference ever!!! (...) I work a lot and I like to work when I see results. And that is running my motivation. And it is always pleasant to work in a group with people that you know you work well with. I am polite and I do all the tasks needed to reach the goal."

(Conference organizer 2)

… realistic, positive, and ambitious.

"First and foremost you must have a good network. Person must be able to communicate with others. You must be a person who never gives up, who can handle and like challenges. At the same time you need to be a person who is realistic. The person should be able handle failures. Have time. Have a desire to make it happen. You must burn for it. (...)I am positive person, never give up, (...) I like to work with things that I am working with. I have my own optic. I am practical person. I like to sell. I like to talk to people. My brother tells that I am mother Therese. I like to support people, support my family. I will be tour operator, I play golf. Sometimes I have problem that I take a bit too much. I always busy with something besides my work."

(Conference organizer 5)

To sum up, conference entrepreneur should be a leading person, who knows how to handle practical organizing processes, including planning, multitasking, handling finances and controlling the situation; and to manage the social side of it – utilizing existing network, inspiring relevant people, and communicating with potential delegates.

Figure 12 presents the main reasons why interviewees became conference chairmen.

Reasons for becoming a chairman
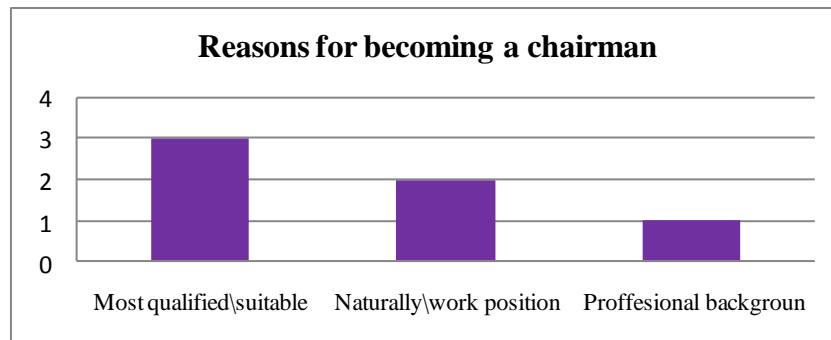
Figure 12: The reason for taking conference responsibility

Most of the participants accepted the conference organizer's position because they were the most suitable for this role – they were the leading persons of the association in Stavanger which hosts the conference.

"Not long time ago I retired on a pension, so now I have the time to organize this congress. If not, I couldn't do that. I am the president of the organization. Others thought that I was the right type of person to take this responsibility and myself, I was thinking that it was really exciting."

(Conference organizer 5)

Two participants were naturally assigned for this post because of their work position in the host company.

"Because I am a managing director here, so it came naturally. Especially in the beginning, when I was the only one working here full time. And personally, I believe that Company X as a foundation can benefit from this conference. It will be very nice part of the strategy further on."

(Conference organizer 2)

One participant organized the conference because of his professional background and previous experience.

"One of the things is that I had English as my working language now for 5 -6 years, so I am very used to use English as a working language. The other thing is my background. I have organized several conferences before. As well as my professional background."

(Conference organizer 4)

3.3.4. Professional assistance

Most entrepreneurs need some kind of professional help or advice, especially those entrepreneurs who organize their conference for the first time. In the planning state all participants were guided by Region Stavanger Convention Bureau.

"People working Region Stavanger are extremely clever. They are very professional; they really know their job and have many good ideas. As well they are very pleasant to work with. When you are there, you will always get relevant help. Without them I couldn't do that. You know, I have never organized the conference before. I am grown up lady, but still I don't know what things I can or can't do. It is really important to get support and help from professionals."

(Conference organizer 5)

All participants identified Region Stavanger just positively. They provide cost-free help and advice for everyone who decides to invite the conference to Stavanger region. They guide entrepreneurs through the whole planning process of the conference.

"Region Stavanger was really important for the conference. I am very pleased with them. I also say the same about visit Oslo. They were very helpful too. I think it is very important to know CVB's role. They are your partner in developing things, but you have to have responsibility and take action. That's up to you. They help you and then you have to do the work."

(Conference organizer 4)

"I get some relevant help from Region Stavanger. It was about the hotels, financing, tours, and many other advices how to do different things. So it is very relevant. For presenting Stavanger city, I have used video and pictures made by Region Stavanger. There are a lot of details what they cannot do, but they are not expensive and they deliver good quality."

(Conference organizer 6)

"We have got a lot of good advices and help from Region Stavanger. They contacted us in the phase where we were planning to deliver our application. The Region Stavanger was very helpful. They gave us a lot of good advices how to manage PCO process. It was a difficult choice to make because all PCOs were professional and seemed to give good advices. So the choice of PCO was a big process."

(Conference organizer 2)

Most of the investigated conferences use PCO services. Some of them use it constantly and are very pleased with the service they get.

"We have very good experience of using Stavanger Forum. They are very flexible, well trained organization and they know what their customers want. For other conferences we have used Via Travel group, and we have good experience with them too."

(Conference organizer 3)

These entrepreneurs, who have organized multiple conferences, use PCO's help mostly for practical issues of the conference.

"Region Stavanger and Stavanger Forum. Our need for PCO is just for participant registration and implementation of the conference."

(Conference organizer 3)

"We are planning to have our conference in Stavanger Forum, because of their possibility to have many people in the venue (…)."

(Conference organizer 1)

However, not everybody is equally satisfied. The usage of the PCOs services depends on previous experience of the entrepreneur and his perception on value for money.

"No, I didn't use any PCOs in Stavanger, I have several experiences with different PCOs and I cannot say anything good about that. With my experience that is much easier to go to the people that I want to approach directly, without PCO in-between. I haven't seen so much added-value. It could be help if it is a big conference and you need some help to organize the hotels and so on, but in other things I am not sure if it is worth it. Because they are going to have money for their work, and for me the added value is not good enough. But that is for me. Maybe for inexperienced person it would be helpful, but for me it is not."

(Conference organizer 4)

"I was also checking out (…) PCO, and for me it looks like they offered packages with a lot of things we didn't need and could do ourselves. And many things you really need, you need to pay extra for (…)."

(Conference organizer 6)

In conclusion, there are no canons of using or not using PCOs. It absolutely depends on the host's experience, time availability, value for money and personal attitude towards the process of the organization.

3.3.5. Conference challenges

Participants were asked to name the main challenges they have met during the organization process. The main challenges were the following: the procedure of inviting the actual conference to the city, getting enough organizational help, and dealing with the high priced hotels. When the entrepreneur decides to invite the conference to the region it is a matter of communicating with the right people and getting their approval.

"When I decided to invite this conference to Stavanger, the main challenge was to get the right people to listen to me. I needed to socialize a lot more."

(Conference organizer 1)

"The main challenge was to get approval from deciding commission."

(Conference organizer 5)

It is important to get the right support from the professionals working in the conference business.

"In addition I needed to have somebody here to be able to help me. And that's what region Stavanger was doing."

(Conference organizer 1)

The venue for the conference should be ordered in the early stage of planning (Rogers, 2008). There are many factors to be considered when choosing the venue: the surroundings, the accessibility, size, distance from the hotel, and etc.

"For now the main challenge was to find the site where to arrange the conference."

(Conference organizer 2)

After getting the conference to the region, another potential challenge is internal help. The organizer may have not enough people internally who would help with an actual organization of the conference.

"You never know what kind of support you can get from local network. Some of the places you have a group of researchers working together in organizing committee. Here very few topics have a group of people, so people are very much alone, which means that you can get other people to participate, but it is not fixed group. Very often you have to set it up from people that you have helped before. We have different people from all over Stavanger, who have promised to help to run the event."

(Conference organizer 6)

Another obstacle connected to the conference planning is finding the right communication channels with potential delegates.

"The main challenges we have today is to develop communication toward potential participants. There are so many conferences that people can participate in. The competition in between different conferences is very large. It is important to find ways of communicating, for example, to use all the new social media. In a way to reach new groups and younger part of conference participants. It is a big challenge."

(Conference organizer 4)

The last important obstacle is the price. Depending on the group that is invited to the conference, additional price of transportation, restaurant and accommodation can be the major breaking point for the participating in the conference.

"The price is very important as well. You can lose the game because of too high price."

(Conference organizer 5)

"Having academics from all over the world, like people coming from Kaliningrad, other east European countries as well, you do not offer them 1700 Norwegian kroner per night. Paying 500 Euros for the conference itself it is high cost anyhow. It clearly a limit what academics from different countries can pay."

(Conference organizer 6)

"Actually we didn't have many obstacles for this conference. The biggest one we face today - hotel rooms. Most of the hotels require quite long cancelation time. There are hotels which have 8-12 weeks cancelation policy. But there are around 5 % of participants who signs so long time in advance. (...) I would say there is way too little competition among hotels in Stavanger."

(Conference organizer 3)

3.3.6. Conference benefits

New conferences bring activity and international recognition to the city (Zhang, et al., 2007). By spending their money for food, hotels, transportation and other activities, participants promote region's economy. According to Volkshandel (1984, as cited in Zhang, et al., 2007, p. 1123), convention participants "are normally opinion leaders who are in a very good position to influence others about a country or region and its offerings". Conference is a good tool for promoting the region as a tourism destination.

"The main reason of organizing this conference is to show off Stavanger region. The participants of this conference will be people from tourism industry; this is great opportunity to show Stavanger and its possibilities. Later on they will send more people back to Stavanger. Pre and post tours, everything that comes with the conference. All these things came together and made me think, yes, we should demonstrate what we have in Stavanger."

(Conference organizer 5)

Additionally, conferences bring more knowledge, new ideas, research and useful international networks.

"My conference brings a lot of people from different countries' universities working with industrial development. So, people from local companies who will attend the conference they will hear a lot of topics, different ways of thinking of the industry. They will create international network. If they want to establish business for example in Japan, they can meet Japanese people and so on. It gives possibility for networking, for establishing contacts. Also opening the door for getting new ideas. For the university it brings activity and international recognition. It opens windows for students as well."

(Conference organizer 6)

When tourism business is in the low season, conferences bring additional activity for hospitality companies (Zhang, et al., 2007). One of the most important factors of having more conferences in Stavanger is activity and large revenue.

"(…) For Stavanger as a region, we bring revenue. We bring work for hotels, restaurants and conference businesses. Moreover, for us it is very important to sell the region as a future travel destination. So we try to present and show what our region can offer best."

(Conference organizer 3)

3.3.7. Stavanger - conference destination

Stavanger is a very special destination which has beautiful surroundings and short distances to breathtaking sights. The main interview highlights were about a beautiful city which is unique and international with friendly people who can speak English. Summing up the participants' comments – it is a small area with a big area qualities.

"Norway is perceived as an exotic country. Conferences with most attendance were in Tromsø, which is even less known city than Stavanger. It is a matter of arranging something unique. Not copying others. (…) We show the presentation video with the sea and a lot of nature. (…) I am going to arrange the gala dinner in "Byrkjedalstunet" with Gloppehallen which is in a hole in the mountain. That is going up in between the mountains and inside the cave. It is a kind of contrast to the last conference when we had a dinner in an old opera building. So let's not try to copy the south European, but do something that is really different and unique. The region is very nice because we have a lot of different possibilities for tourism, for hiking, for museums, nature experiences are quite close. (…) But anyhow, the region has a lot of industry here, a lot of things locally to show for people from different industries like petroleum, pro manufactory industry, Lærdal medical. The region is internationally oriented, so you can find many people who are quite good at speaking English, use it in everyday as a working language. And of course it is an advantage that we have very good connections by plane. Thinking about the location, people should want to come because it is some kind of unique location, or they want to make sure that they meet people in the network they want to meet and that there is something interesting regarding the topics of the conference. So having the conference in the center of a big city doesn't make big sense."

(Conference organizer 6)

Entrepreneurs perceive Stavanger as a professionally oriented city with good quality food and services.

"(...) as well they have a very much business attitude in Stavanger, which I appreciate very much."

(Conference organizer 2)

"One of the advantages of organizing the conference in Stavanger is that they are used to organizing different size conferences here. As well as the quality of food is very good here. Better than in most of Norway. There are many professional hotels and PCOs. There is great city and the beautiful nature."

(Conference organizer 3)

Entrepreneurs collectively remarked upon three main challenges:

venue…

"Disadvantages: Stavanger could have a bit larger venue and a bigger hotel close to the venue. That could be a disadvantage, because if you have a conference at our size, you fill up the hotel and people have to leave town and Stavanger city."

(Conference organizer 4)

"The disadvantage for bigger social conferences is that the venue is a bit offset."

(Conference organizer 1)

…hotels…

"The biggest minuses for organizing the conference here are hotels. There are too few hotels and too small competition. If one would say to pick one reason why I don't want to organize my conference in Stavanger, I would say - hotels."

(Conference organizer 3)

…and price.

"Compared to other European countries, here it is very expensive. I mean, the hotels, eating and drinking in the restaurants."

(Conference organizer 2)

Suggestions for improvement

For the final question research participants were asked how convention bureaus can make better influence on potential companies and organizations to take a step and organize more conferences.

To get more of new conference to Stavanger, CVB has to be more visible for people who did not participate in conferences in the region and they are not familiar with conference business structure.

> *"It is just to take contact. I think Heidi Jeanette Nygård called me when we were in application face. Then I didn't know who she or Region Stavanger was. But she called me and arranged a meeting with me. I got a lot of relevant advice. I got even more excited about the conference, because we have Region Stavanger in our team. I think it is very important that she made that call to me in that phase, because it was very motivating."*

> *(Conference organizer 2)*

One of the challenges is to reach all people who have good ideas.

> *"I think Region Stavanger should give more information about their services and what they can do. Because I bet, that there are many guys like me out there which have some kind of idea, which they know will be successful, but they don't know where to look. It was my problem as well, until I met my classmate which introduced me to Region Stavanger. If she hadn't told me about them, I still would be stuck. Because I didn't know that Region Stavanger does this. So I am not sure if they should go out trying to find conferences. Maybe they should go out trying to find people who have the right idea and the right enthusiasm to do this. I think it is important to advertise themselves in the right way."*

> *(Conference organizer 1)*

Participants suggested that lowering the price of accommodation, or having more various priced accommodation would help to attract more conference enthusiasts.

> *"Cheaper accommodation. Adjust the level between the cost and the quality of the accommodation. Expensive taxi. It is at least double price as downtown in Germany. We have price level and quality level problem in the region. It is incredible mismatch of expectation and possibilities compare with the capacity.*

If they want to attract more conferences to Stavanger they need to have more low cost accommodation, more transportation efforts. If you want to increase, you should understand that it should be not at the level of petroleum industry level (…)."

(Conference organizer 6)

5. Discussion

In this section the researcher will bring together research questions, findings, and work from the literature review. All sections will be correlated and conclusions concerning the research problem will be derived. After thorough discussion of the findings, the researcher will depict the strengths and the weaknesses of the research as well as will raise the broader implications and business issues.

At the beginning of the project the researcher depicted three matters in question: how does the conference business in Stavanger region look like? What are the most important players and how do they interact? What role is left for the individual entrepreneur in organizing conferences and meetings?

The discussion will be developed in the following manner: 1. positioning the conference industry in the region, presenting the connections between industry's partners; 2. discussing entrepreneur's role and its importance; 3. illustrating Stavanger as a conference destination.

5.1. Conference industry in Stavanger region

5.1.1. Industry's structure and relation

Conference industry in Norway is a complex and developing market. Based on general interview experience, the researcher presumes that conference business is very busy and diverse. In work like this every day is different and full of surprises. Therefore, a person

engaged in this environment should be very organized, creative and flexible. According to

international statistics, the number of conferences is growing every year (Akselen & Løvfall,

2009; International Congress and Convention Association, 2010; Norway Convention Bureau,

2009). During the same time interval conference tourists spend more money than leisure

tourists, therefore the industry's value is increasing.

The MICE industry includes many partners who are working together in order to

develop, generate and improve conference industry in their region. MICE industry consists of

various businesses: buyers, suppliers, conference agencies, intermediaries and other

applicable organizations (Rogers, 2008).

During the results analysis, the researcher developed a model for Norwegian

conference and convention industry. The MICE industry's structure is presented in figure 13.

Depending on the extent for the overall convention industry, businesses are arranged in

descending order.

Norway Convention Bureau

The Local Convention Bureau

The Entrepreneur

Professional Conference
Organizers

Conference Hotels

Other Suppliers
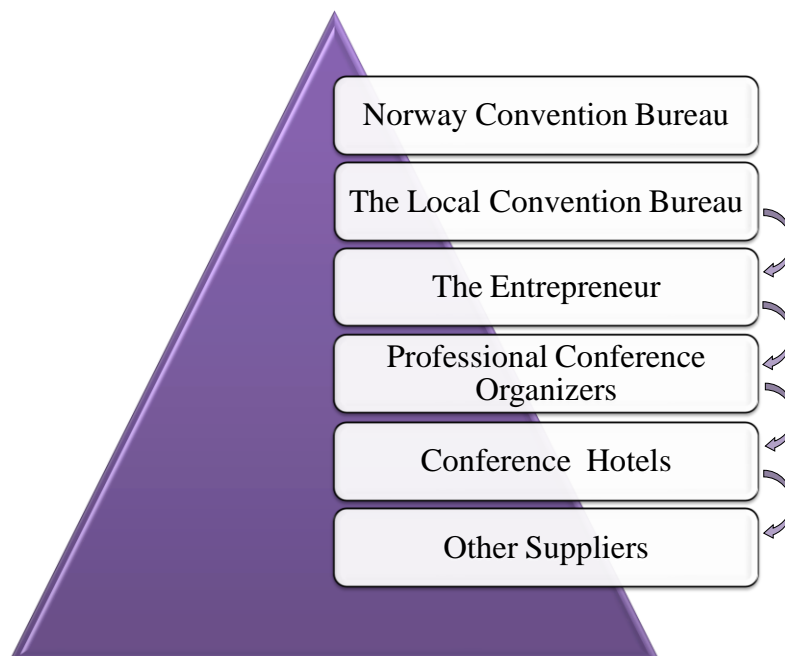
Figure 13: Norwegian conference and convention industry's structure

Based on profound discussion with research participants, it is possible to conclude that NCB functions as an umbrella organization for the Norwegian MICE industry. NCB professionals are investigating the market of potential international conferences (mainly by using ICCA database) and present further leads to their partners the convention bureaus in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Stavanger, Tromsø and others. However, one should not generalize the relationship between Norway Convention Bureau and the other CVBs, because the business exchange is rather complex. The degree of NCB's involvement in the regions' MICE industry depends on the cities' advancement in the industry. If the region has highly developed or well functioning CVB (like Region Stavanger Convention Bureau) then NCB's involvement in the region's convention market is very little. On the other hand, if the region has a barely functioning CVB or, in some cases, does not have it at all, then NCB's involvement is relatively big. In that case, the conferences happening in this region will be implemented with the help of NCB.

Regional Convention and Visitor Bureaus (CVB) operate in the similar manner as the National Convention Bureau (NVB), but the main focus is placed on promoting conferences and congresses in their region. For hosting successful conference in the region, the importance of local bureaus is tremendous (Jago & Deery, 2005). People working in convention and visitor bureaus have profound knowledge of their area, local businesses, annual conferences, potential conference organizers and upcoming conferences.

Figure 14 presents the actors' distribution in the Stavanger convention industry. The model of Norwegian conference and convention industry is applied for the local scale; therefore the further discussion will be based on the MICE industry in Stavanger region.
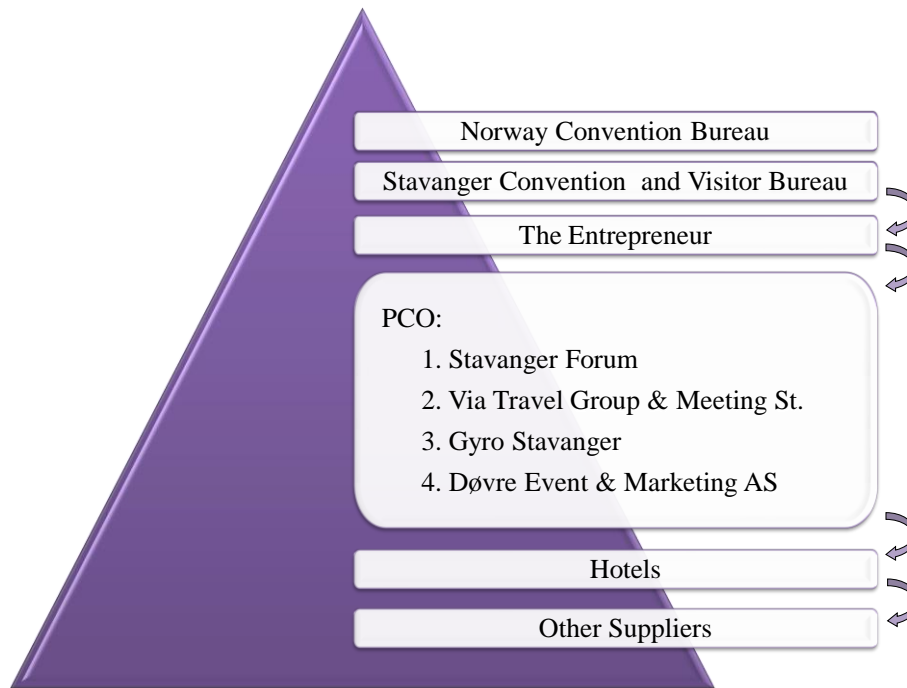
Figure 14: The structure of Stavanger conference and convention industry

Industry's relation in Stavanger region

All research participants (conference professionals and entrepreneurs) could not imagine conference business without the help of Region Stavanger Convention Bureau. Stavanger CVB typically does the prime work of discovering and inviting national and international conferences.

Methods for discovering potential conferences:

1. Daily research of possible entrepreneurs. The CVB observes the main person in the industry (the entrepreneur) who would have the relevant and extensive national and international contacts and network. The CVB contacts the person and informs about opportunities and benefits of new conference.

2. ICCA database (not as important in stimulation phase, but it is possible to find important potential names of key players and contact information)

3. NCB – national bureau, which is working for all convention bureaus in Norway. Norway Convention Bureau has its main office in Oslo. The company consists of 6

employees who are making research concerning MICE industry in Norway. They are

trying to find international conferences, which can be brought to Norway. The

research information is shared with regional CVBs. Regional CVBs are taking further

actions. NCB is focused on national scale; therefore they do not know each region in

depth.

Every conference needs to have a central person – conference organizer who is

knowledgeable in the conference field, and has relevant network and status to invite the

conference to his destination. CVB finds, encourages and leads the entrepreneur throughout

the conference planning process. The bureau adviser working for the CVB usually gives

suggestions and advices concerning the choice of the professional organizer, venue, hotels,

activities etc.

The local entrepreneur in most cases has to fulfil a bid manual to a higher national or

international office in the planning process. Therefore Stavanger CVB together with the

entrepreneur prepare the bid (completion package – offer, see Appendix C) and present it to

the decision making body. There is a lot of work in handing the application in, prior to the

main event and also during the event itself (Rogers, 2008). If the entrepreneur "wins" the right

to host the conference in Stavanger region, the experts of the Convention Bureau help the

chairman of the organizing committee with initial organization and the choice of supporting

companies: PCOs, hotels and other suppliers.

Other components in the Norwegian conference industry are professional conference

organizers (PCOs). Normally, they do not invite international conferences themselves. They

do not build this process simply because of too massive load of work to be done compared to

the resources they have. After the decision to organize the conference in particular region,

PCOs are invited by the CVB to give their proposal to the conference organizer. Depending

on the needs of the conference organizer, the hotels and the PCOs give their proposals and try to gain the conference. The most suitable candidate wins the matchup.

The hotels are engaged in the same process as the PCOs; however, according to the hotel's capacity, they are typically hosting smaller scale events. Most of the hotels emphasized that people would not come to the region just for the hotel. Therefore, they perceive themselves as a smaller part of the whole process. Only after Stavanger is being chosen as a host destination, hotels come into the picture. Sales managers might call to the conference organizing committee themselves, or the PCO can be recommended by the Stavanger CVB.

As for the smaller scale conferences, manageable by a single professional, the initiative might be taken by conference hotels and PCOs.

Conference hotels' and PCOs' sales managers are doing daily research and looking for new conferences. To discover new clients, experts use various databases, newspapers, social media, already existing network, exhibitions and many other sources. Bigger chain hotels might get additional leads from other hotels within corporate or the head office research department. The entire process demands skills, time and resources, except for the cases when organizers are contacted by already existing customers.

At last but not least, there are additional suppliers and relevant companies. It can be everything from event companies, technical equipment suppliers, transport companies, to catering or guide companies. Generally, conference venues in Stavanger are modern and well equipped; however, customers often have special requirements. In order to meet their needs, the venue needs to hire additional equipment from companies like Conventor or Woldcam. Moreover, in order to complete the conference, professionals need to collaborate with entertainment business, guide or catering companies such as ISS, Wilberg, Matsalen,

Ostehuset, GuideCompaniet, UpWind, Høydepunkt and transportation companies Tide Buss and Rogaland Taxi.

5.1.2. Conference implementation process

Conference implementation is a multistage process. Figure 15 presents a series of actions for achieving the event. The process starts with researching for possible conferences and entrepreneurs and builds up to the event.
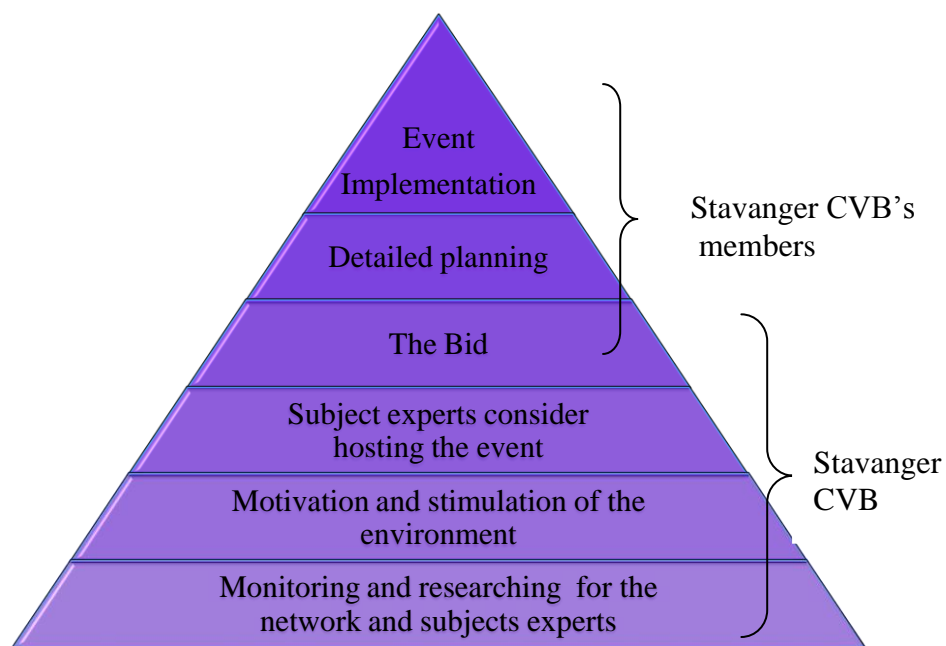
Figure 15: Conference implementation process (Region Stavanger BA, 2010)

As figure 15 indicates, in the first half of the planning process the entrepreneur is guided and the conference is developed with Region Stavanger Convention Bureau; in the second half, the CVB steps back. The control is given to selected CVB's members (PCOs, hotels, and additional suppliers). The process itself is very similar to "the project planning process for a one-time event" presented by Getz (2007). Everything starts from the idea to invite a conference to the region. The idea is then followed by a feasibility phase where the event organizers make their approximate calculations, consider and evaluate the region's

possibilities. According to Harris (2009), the decision making process starts from identifying possibilities and follows to analyzing benefits and weaknesses of each possible choice. The implication is that the most reasonable choice is made based on reducing doubt and uncertainty of alternatives. After considering all pros and cons, entrepreneur evaluates whether to organize the conference, or not.

When a decision is made, the conference committee prepares the preliminary plan of the event, and follows the bidding procedures. When the final decision to organize the conference in the region is made, conference organizers prepare a detailed plan which leads to the further conference implementation.

Further on, the main concentration will be placed on proceedings which are typical for Stavanger region. The special focus is set on four areas which are already well developed in Stavanger region: energy industry, food industry, research at University of Stavanger and Stavanger University hospital. The people working in there have international network and so the ability to invite international conferences. By doing research the Stavanger CVB's finds particular conferences which can be invited to Stavanger region. The advisors working in the CVB are monitoring and researching for the network and conference subject experts. The second phase consists of motivation and stimulation of the environment. The entrepreneurs who are considering the possibility to invite the conference for the first time are quite unsure about the procedures, and entire planning process. Therefore Stavanger CVB arranges meetings where they inform and encourage potential conference organizers.

In the third phase, the organizing committee makes their calculations, consider their possibilities and weigh their desirability for the event (Getz, 2005). When the entrepreneur finally decides to invite the conference, the Stavanger CVB uses all their means to make the conference successful. They help to organize inspection tours, introduce to facilities, make tentative hotel bookings to guarantee the required amount of hotel rooms and advice with the

budget. Stavanger CVB helps to meet all typical demands of the conference which very often can be found in the conference manual. The CVB helps to prepare the bid proposal and then present it to "the conference "owning" committee "(Getz, 2005, p 64).

After the entrepreneur wins the right to organize the conference, the CVB's advisors help him with the prime organization and the choice of supporting companies: PCOs, hotels and other suppliers. Depending on the needs of the conference organizer, hotels and PCOs give their proposals and try to win the right to help with organizing this particular conference. After the matchup is made, Stavanger CVB steps back and the further process will be implemented based on the collaboration between the entrepreneur and the PCO.

The organizing committee needs to prepare a thorough plan (Getz, 2005). Together with his supporting team the entrepreneurs prepare a detailed plan. This process can be very long; sometimes it takes up to several years. The committee analyzes potential participants, conference format, program, and timing, takes care of accommodation, venue and additional activities, nonetheless, considers finances and possible sponsors. Moreover, most conferences present scientific papers, and therefore these papers need to be gathered ("call for papers") and evaluated long before the conference. Most entrepreneurs need some kind of professional help or advice. Entrepreneurs who organize the conference for the first time, use PCO services more than the experienced ones.

The conducted research proves that the essential factor for the birth of a new conference is an enthusiastic and powerful entrepreneur who has a wide professional and international network, relevant theme, and patriotic enthusiasm. The following chapter will present the role of the entrepreneur – his initiative, contribution and relation with the conference professionals.

5.2. Positioning entrepreneur

For the successful accomplishment of the conference, it is not enough to have good destination and conference infrastructure. The entrepreneur's role is very important, because every conference needs to have a central person – conference organizer who is knowledgeable in the conference field, has a relevant network and status to invite the conference to his destination. Getz (2007) titles the entrepreneur as the initial conference initiator. The entrepreneur has a conference leader's and representative's role.

5.2.1. Entrepreneur's personality

The cornerstone of every conference is the entrepreneur, the expert in the field of the conference. In most cases, conference leader's role is attributed naturally. They are the leading persons of the association which invites the conference to Stavanger.

Generally, the behaviour of conference leader in the planning process depends on the person's interests and his profession specifics. Harris (2009) describes decision making as the choice from alternatives based on decision maker's preferences. Entrepreneurs who had a business background were very much concentrated on the practical issues of the conference: budget, profitability, detailed planning. On the other hand, entrepreneurs with social background were more interested in the actual conference process, delegates' satisfaction and the feedback on the region. Entrepreneurs are found in every level of a organization (Baum, et al., 2007).

The majority of conference professionals identified conference chairman as a person at the top of his career. This unexpected finding was explained by the entrepreneur's wish to show what they have achieved in their professional life after they have retired. According to

Baron (1998), over a short period of time people tend to regret what they have done wrong, however, over long time period people tend to regret for the missed opportunities.

After all, there were found some typical entrepreneur's traits. The conference professionals perceive entrepreneur as a good networker, ambitious, perceptive, decisive, knowledgeable and strong believer in his field of interest. Entrepreneurs are well prepared and have a clear idea how they want their event to be run.

Entrepreneurs named several personal characteristics which they think had an influence to their success within the conference organization process. They were passionate for both the professional field and the region they are living in. They want to show their region for their international colleagues. Being knowledgeable in the professional area and having good communication skills helped to get approval, relevant support and to build the necessary network. "A real entrepreneur is a networker" (Berglund & Johansson, 2007, p. 84).

In the implementation process the chairman is usually working without fixed hours. It is important to be flexible and hardworking. Various literature described entrepreneurs as persons with optimistic, positive, creative and flexible thinking (Berglund & Johansson, 2007; Johnson, 2001; Palich & Bagby, 1995). Entrepreneurs defined themselves as multitasking people who are always engaged in many activities.

To sum up, conference entrepreneur should be a self confident, leading person. He knows how to handle practical organizing processes, including planning, decision making, multitasking, handling finances and controlling the situation. Additionally, the chairman should be able to manage the social side of it – utilizing existing network, inspiring relevant people, and communicating with potential delegates.

5.2.2. The importance of personal network

A wide and international network is one of the main factors which CVB's advisors takes into consideration when searching for the potential entrepreneurs. In order to organize a successful conference, it is important to have local and international network. However, it is evident that it takes long time to build a proper network. According to the interviewees, it was hard to develop relevant network. It takes devotion, patience and face-to-face contact. For the network development, face-to-face communication is essential as it gives acceleration and enhances trust among people. After the first meeting, further development can be done by remote communication.

All research participants had a strong opinion about the personal network's importance for the conference implementation and success. According to the "network success hypothesis" there is a positive relationship between a wide network and new business success (Witt, et al., 2008).

In the preplanning process, participants who had a wide professional network were able to consult with potential conference delegates about the ways they want to have the conference. Social network helps to gather information about possibilities and ways of its accomplishment (Casson & Giusta, 2007). Moreover, entrepreneurs highlighted the network's importance in getting relevant approval, advices and securing participants. Casson and Giusta (2007) confirm that it is useful for obtaining necessary resources and project realization.

Interviewees found the local network equally important. Knowing the right people was helpful during the implementation process. The trustful network brings valuable benefits such as knowledge, financial support, physical and personal contribution (Westhead, et al., 2004; Witt, et al., 2008).

5.2.3. Entrepreneur's decision making

Occasionally, the initiative to organize the conference is made by the entrepreneur himself. Usually, the idea is born because the entrepreneur participates in his favourite conference and decides to invite it to his region. However, typically (with approximate ratio 70/30) the entrepreneurs are contacted by the CVB and suggested to invite the conference to Stavanger.

In both occasions the final decision is influenced by the degree of help they get from the Stavanger CVB. Most entrepreneurs need professional help and advice, especially entrepreneurs who organize their conference for the first time. In the planning state all participants were guided by Region Stavanger Convention Bureau.

Most of the respondents associate the conference with financial risk. Experienced entrepreneurs eliminate risk by making accurate financial measurements: settling the sponsorship and drawing the budget in advance. Additionally, risk can be minimized by early participants' assignment and well established communication with potential delegates. Even experienced conference organizers keep constant communication with conference delegates.

Occasionally, some organizations include conference organization in their companies' development plan. Several companies perceive organization of the conference as good strategic step for company's development. Strategic thinking, environment observation and entrepreneur's preferences are in constant interaction in decision-making process (Ivanova & Gibcus, 2003). Through the successful conference the respondents were seeking to create the way of sharing competence and networking.

5.2.4. Entrepreneurs' limitations

In order to find ways for improvement, conference industry professionals and entrepreneurs were asked to name the main factors preventing people from taking the

responsibility to become conference leaders. Extra workload, big responsibility and financial concerns were the major issues. Getz (2005) emphasized that the financing of big size events can be a sensitive issue.

If the entrepreneur has no larger scale association as a partner, like a university or the city council, then the organization is more often perceived as the risky activity. Entrepreneurs are dependent on financial support and help with practical issues. Many entrepreneurs, who are willing to have a conference in Stavanger, were unsure about conference procedures and possibilities. Therefore the respondents emphasized the importance of getting qualified assistance from Stavanger CVB. Positive thinking is usually influenced by such negative factors as too much information in short time, unfamiliar situations, insecurity, intense emotional and time pressure (Baron, 1998).

Entrepreneurs were confronted with the procedure of inviting the actual conference to the city, getting enough organizational help, and dealing with hotel rates, often too high for the preliminary budget.

Another consideration was low attendance concerns. In order to get high attendance rates, entrepreneurs needed to socialize more than usual and build stronger bridges with international colleagues. The main challenge was to find the right communication channels with potential delegates. The emphasis was placed on finding new delegates.

To sum up, a successful conference requires a central person, who is passionate, knowledgeable and respected in his field of specialty. As mentioned above, it is vital to have a wide and trustful network which can be used for the conference planning process and conference attendance assurance. Still, in the planning process entrepreneurs meet a number of obstacles. However, the challenges can be minimized with the help of CVB or PCO.

The following chapter will synthesize the image of Stavanger as a conference destination. Moreover, the advantages and disadvantages will be presented.

5.3. Stavanger – Conference destination

5.3.1. Choice of destination

When conference organizers are choosing their conference destination there are several factors which have an influence on this decision. Conference hosts are seeking for trustworthy destination with good quality venues, good accessibility with major cities and beautiful nature for the activities outside the conference.

The standards for the venue are approximately the same everywhere, therefore, association conference organizers are concentrating on the choice of destination (Rogers, 2008). For international rotating conferences, besides the conference content it is important to have new and unique experiences. In all marketing activities Stavanger CVB focuses on unique elements that the region has to offer: the nature, the city, good accessibility and general safety of the region. Additional element for promoting the region is the size of the city. There are all the facilities to host big international meetings; however, the distance between points of interest is short.

5.3.2. Strengths and weaknesses of Stavanger region

Stavanger is perceived as safe, clean, advanced and exotic destination. The city has modern and good quality conference facilities, good standard accommodation, exceptional local food, worldwide known nature attractions. Additionally, there is good and rapidly developing connectivity with international cities.

The region has strong scientific community, especially in the energy, food, and certain medical industries. Entrepreneurs perceive Stavanger as international and professionally oriented city. Summing up the participants' comments – it is a small area with qualities corresponding to a much bigger city.

However, because of tremendous benefits that conferences bring to the host community the competition between destinations is massive. The biggest obstacle is a higher price level than in other European cities, limited hotel capacity (especially when there are additional activities in the city), and lack of larger venues.

Destination marketing

All companies which belong to the Stavanger MICE business seem to have widespread understanding about the importance of Stavanger region promotion. All conference professionals had an attitude of first promoting the region, and only then their company. Rather often conference professionals collaborate with Stavanger CVB and participate in international exhibitions, where the team promotes the region. CVBs are promoting the destination and offering it as a simple and attractive package for conference organizers (Rogers, 2008).

In conclusion, Stavanger is all-purpose destination with good potential for growth. Despite minor disadvantages, which can be improved together with the city's expansion, Stavanger has all the qualities that good conference destination needs.

5.4. Broader implications and business issues

From a profound literature review it follows that there was no research done on conference planning process where the main focus was placed on entrepreneur's role. From results of this work, it can be suggested there is a need for more research.

Additional research on the entrepreneur's personality, motivation and organizational context and his decision making is necessary in order to understand better how the number of conferences may be increased in the future. Such research data will be helpful for conference

professionals with regard to understanding entrepreneur's way of thinking. In addition it would make it easier to attract more international conferences.

Another type of research essential to be done in the future is within big associations. In the same company, some departments are organizing more conferences than others. What factors are affecting that and how the total number of conferences can be increased still needs to be clarified.

Finally, it is the CVBs which have the main responsibility to attract more conferences to their regions. From the results of this work, it is obvious that the visibility of CVBs has to be increased. A magazine or a public brochure available for everyone's use could keep entrepreneurs informed. This brochure could include a description of conference organizing process, a list of services that can be provided by the local CVB, typical obstacles met in the process and suggestions on how to cope with them. Such publication should be updated once in a while.

Based on entrepreneurs' opinions described earlier, it is clear that the price may be too high and the room availability is not sufficient. Further research on how much each type of conferences is willing to pay. Academic or voluntary organizations will never be able to use the amounts of money that are normal for big energy conferences. Factors which are controlling the upper limit for conference price should be identified and well understood in order to maximize the profit.

5. 5. Limitations

The conducted research experienced a number of predicted limitations; however, they did not influence the outcome of the undertaken study dramatically. The main consideration before conducting personal interviews was the language barrier. Due to the fact that all research participants were native Norwegians, the researcher was prepared to conduct all

interviews in Norwegian. However, most of the entrepreneurs use English language as working language therefore they agreed to conduct interviews in English. Three participants felt more comfortable speaking Norwegian, therefore these interviews were conducted in their native language and translated with a help of Norwegian person.

Due to the fact that the conference business is very dynamic and busy, the researcher found it difficult to arrange meetings with some of conference professionals and entrepreneurs. For this reason two planned interviews were cancelled. However, this fact did not have a big influence on research results, because all required aspects were covered by present participants.

It is obvious, that the internet is not the most reliable source for the research paper; the information can vary from trustworthy to trustless. The best choice would be to apply only peer-reviewed journal articles. However, in this particular case, concerning the conference industry in Stavanger there has been no peer-reviewed articles written. Therefore, in some situations the internet was the only option. However, all information concerning the conference industry in Stavanger was verified with Region Stavanger Convention Bureau.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The conference industry in Norway is a very complex marked which is under continuous development. There are many partners co-working on each conference. For a better overview, a universal model has been developed to describe the conference and convention industry structure. It can be concluded that the CVB is on the top of all conferences arranged in the Stavanger region. PCOs, hotels and entrepreneurs are highly dependent on CVB's given directions.

The main tasks of the CVB include the establishment of the big international conferences, promotion of the Stavanger region, further follow-up of the organization process, and providing entrepreneurs with the information and guidance.

Entrepreneurs are vitally important in inviting new, international conferences. Their network and professional skills play an important role. In addition, personal qualities such as position, experience and status in their field of specialty can be equally central. The study shows that the person engaged in the business environment should be very organized, creative and flexible. Big workload, high responsibility and financial concerns were identified as the main hindrances for the entrepreneurs. Their decision making is strongly affected by the degree of support gained from the CVB.

Stavanger has to offer all the facilities to host big international events. High quality hotels, modern conference facilities and exotic nature can be used as the main advantages when inviting new conferences. Stavanger region has a strong academic environment which is attractive for many international guests. The city is expanding and there is an increasing number of direct flights to major European cities every year. The research results show that the Stavanger CVB is doing a good promotional work of the region.

Hindrances for the conference industry expansion in Stavanger region were identified as high price level and hotel and venue capacity at certain times.

For the future strategy and the industry development, a better collaboration between the conference organizers and the hotel revenue managers is necessary. Such partnership could lead to a higher efficiency of hotel occupancy and therefore price reduction.

Entrepreneurs need to have a better knowledge about services provided by the CVB to maximize the effectiveness of their role. A brochure with relevant information for entrepreneurs could be published to make CVB's services more visible.

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Appendix A

Staging New Conferences: Positioning the MICE Industry and Entrepreneurs in the Stavanger Region
- Conference professionals -

Introduction of master thesis

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the process of new conference's birth as well as to find out about its main facilitators and barriers. This paper will help for better understanding of the process regarding organization of new conference. By understanding decision mechanisms, hopefully, this paper will bring more international conferences to Stavanger region. (The interview will be anonymous and your personal data will be kept confidentially)

About Hotel
1. What are your most important\biggest events? How did you get them?
2. What are your unique features compared to other conference hotels/PCOs in Stavanger?

Conference process
3. Can you describe the process and experiences of getting a new conference?
4. What are the most common problems with getting a new conference?
5. How does the idea of a new conference start? Who initiates it more often, you or entrepreneurs?

Organizer
6. What methods do you use for discovering and inspiring entrepreneurs?
7. Do you have a head office doing this kind of research?
8. What stops entrepreneurs from taking the step to organize the conference?
9. What type of person and why takes the responsibility for organizing the conference?

Destination
10. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Stavanger as a conference destination?
11. When choosing Stavanger as a destination for their conference, what are the most important factors or details conference hosts are seeking for?
12. Which expectations can be successfully met and which of them are more difficult or impossible ones?
13. Can you describe a perfect conference destination and Stavanger's match to this ideal picture?

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Thank you for your contribution!

Appendix B

Staging New Conferences: Positioning the MICE Industry and Entrepreneurs in the Stavanger Region
- **Entrepreneurs -**

Introduction of master thesis

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the process of new conference's birth as well as to find out about its main facilitators and barriers. This paper will help for better understanding of the process regarding organization of new conference. By understanding decision mechanisms, hopefully, this paper will bring more international conferences to Stavanger region. (The interview will be anonymous and your personal data will be kept confidentially)

Information about the conference
1. Please, tell about your conference and the process of producing this conference?
2. What made you sure that that the conference will be successful?
3. What were the main challenges and obstacles of your conference?
4. Do you get any professional help, advice about your conference?
5. What is your opinion about convention bureau and different PCOs in Stavanger?

Decision making
6. What factors are most important for your decision making process?
7. Do you perceive new conference as a strategic decision?
8. What do you think about personal network's importance for the conference?

Personality
9. Why do you think it was you who took the responsibility for the conference, but not any other company from your industry?
10. How would you describe your personality?
11. Thinking about new conferences in general, what qualities should person has in order to organize a successful conference?
12. What main factors can influence him to take action and organize a conference?

Destination
13. What are advantages and disadvantages of organizing conference in Stavanger?
14. How can convention bureaus influence potential companies and organizations to organize the conference?
15. What did your conference bring to Stavanger region?

Information about the company
16. How important are conferences for the organization or company's business success?
17. Is good conference improving the overall picture of the host company?

University of Stavanger

Thank you for your contribution!

Appendix C

An Example of Official Bid

Bid Document for the RIPE Meeting, spring 2013

RIPE
NCC

Norway
– powered by nature

IKT ● NORGE

RIPE NCC
c/o the Conference coordinator

vår dato
01.11.2010
deres dato

vår referanse
deres referanse

vår saksbehandler
Torgeir Waterhouse

Regarding Altibox' bid for the RIPE spring meeting 2013

IKT-Norge is the Norwegian ICT industry organization and both represents and bring together companies and communities in all the different sectors of the ICT industry and segments of the Norwegian Internet community. We received the news of the Altibox bid for the RIPE meeting with great excitement and also respect for the value of the task Altibox is willing to take on. We recognize the amount of work and all the critical factors that have to fall into place for a succesful meeting and are confident that Altibox is one to deliver on that task with high quality.

IKT-Norge also recognize the importance of both RIPE and the RIPE meetings. We strongly believe that the spring meeting of 2013 will provide an important opportunity for the Norwegian Internet community and ICT industry to learn and gain motivation regarding both RIPE topics and issues, but also adjacent issues in the Internet sphere surrounding the RIPE footprint in the Internet community.

IKT-Norge strongly supports Altibox' bid for the 2013 spring meeting and look forward with anticipation for the possibility and positive ripples of a RIPE meeting in Stavanger.

Regards

Torgeir Waterhouse
Director Internet & New Media
IKT-Norge - the voice of the Norwegian ICT Industry

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Contents

Front page: Preikestolen, The Pulpit Rock, is one of the main icons of Fjord Norway – situated only one hour from Stavanger.

Letter 1 — Post- og teletilsynet

pt Post- og teletilsynet
Norwegian Post and Telecommunications Authority

RIPE NCC
c/o Conference coordinator
P.O. Box 10096
1001EB Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Our ref.: 1006097-1 - 414.0
Our date: 1.11.2010
Your ref.:
Your date:

Contact:
Ørnulf Storm

www.npt.no

Support for Altibox AS as meeting host for RIPE meeting in 2013

It has come to our attention that Altibox AS wants to put in a bid for a RIPE meeting in Stavanger in Norway in 2013. The Norwegian Post and Telecommunications Authority do participate at the RIPE meetings and value the RIPE meetings as a meeting place where stakeholders from Governments, private sector and civil society can meet, be updated on the technical development and participate in the policy development processes regarding IP-address allocation and managing IP-networks. We also value the unique environment and opportunity for exchange of best practices.

We have no doubt that Altibox AS will be a very professional meeting host capable to provide access to high quality conference facilities and hotels and make a RIPE meeting in Stavanger a truly memorable event.

Therefore, the Norwegian Post and Telecommunications Authority want to express full support for Altibox AS as a host for a RIPE meeting in Stavanger in 2013.

Yours sincerely

Willy Jensen
Director General

Copy:
Altibox AS   w/Ragnar Anfinsen   Postboks 8124   4069   Stavanger

Besøksadresse | Office address   Postadresse | Postal address   +47 22 82 46 00   Fax: +47 22 82 46 40
Nygård 1 Lillesand   Postboks 93, 4791 Lillesand   firmapost@npt.no   Org nr: NO 974 446871

Letter 2 — City of Stavanger

CITY OF STAVANGER

MAYOR'S OFFICE

P. O. Box: 8001, 4068 Stavanger, Norway
Haakon VIIs gate 11
Tel: +47 51507130. Fax: +47 51507021
E-mail: postmottak.ordforer@stavanger.kommune.no
www.stavanger.kommune.no
Org.no: NO 964 965 226

RIPE NCC
c/o the Conference coordinator

DERES REFERANSE	VÅR REFERANSE	ARKIVNR.	JOURNALNR.	DATO
	HSVE-10/91	C83 &29	57386/10	08.10.2010

STAVANGER, NORWAY AS HOST FOR THE RIPE MEETING, SPRING 2013

Norway hereby invites you to convene your conference in Stavanger in 2013. As the Mayor of Stavanger I am happy to welcome you to my city.

Norway enjoys a secluded, peaceful existence: 'Europe's best kept secret', say some of the experienced tour operators in the USA. Stavanger was founded on the North Sea Coast in 1125. The strong maritime heritage developed the city into a centre for fishing, ship building, international maritime transport and to the centre of the Norwegian energy industry. Today 125 000 inhabitants live in Stavanger, although the greater region counts over 300 000. It is a fascinating city which encompasses the old and the new, the large and the small, the provincial and the international.

Altibox is developed by and owned by one of our local energy companies, Lyse Energi ASA, in which Stavanger is a key partner and part owner. The city of Stavanger is in the middle of a transformation into a city of energy and technology, something that hosting the RIPE meeting would underline.

Stavanger is an established convention city. Your Norwegian hosts are acquainted with the stringent requirements involved in organizing international conventions. Nothing is left by chance.

I welcome your prestigious organization and your conference delegates to Stavanger in the spring 2013.

Sincerely yours

Leif Johan Sevland
Mayor

- We have chosen Altibox as our partner because they are the world leader in fully exploiting the capacity represented by IP technology via a robust fibre infrastructure.

Jørgen Myrland,
Managing Director of Cisco Norway.

Altibox – a world-leading fibre environment

We are delighted to welcome RIPE to Stavanger. The development of Altibox is controlled by the west coast of Norway. Altibox is one of the world leading suppliers of data communications over fibre cable. Altibox bases its business concept on laying fibre cable to the customer's home then exploiting the opportunities presented to supply a number of digital services over fibre cable.

As hosts for RIPE, we aim to pave the way for the numerous Norwegian RIPE members to take part in the meeting for the first time. Today, more than 250 Norwegian companies and institutions are members of RIPE. We also aim to communicate to these companies what we do and present our plans for the future of new services via fibre cable.

With a fibre cable, Altibox has the capacity to deliver world-class Internet speeds. On 20 September 2010, the European Commission presented three initiatives related to the development of broadband in Europe. The EC resolution states that the entire population of the EU shall have access to basic broadband by 2013, and 30 Mbit/s by 2020. Moreover, at least half the EU population shall have access to 100 Mbit/s by 2020. For Altibox customers, the EU's goals for 2020 have already been met. Altibox can provide private customers with speeds of 100/100 Mbit/s, 200/200 Mbit/s and 400/400 Mbit/s. Customers are also free to choose lower speeds, ranging from 10/10 Mbit/s, 30/30 Mbit/s to 50/50 Mbit/s. During the world's second largest oil and gas trade show (ONS 2010) in Stavanger, Altibox set up the world's speediest Internet cafe. Visitors to the trade show could make use of Internet lines with speeds of 1000/1000 Mbit/s. The trade show premises will also be used for the RIPE meeting.

Today, over 200,000 Altibox customers in Norway and Denmark receive TV signals, telephone, Internet, alarm and mobile phone services over fibre cable. One of the reasons why Altibox has managed to supply fibre to so many customers is that the customers often

choose to dig the last metres up to their houses for the fibre cable. Altibox suppliers grant a discount to customers who carry out the digging work in their own gardens, and 70-80% of customers choose this option.

Altibox is now focusing efforts on developing new Internet services. In the near future, all your domestic appliances, from the oven to power sockets, will be connected to the Internet and will be able to communicate, just like computers and smart phones today. This will allow for the development of so-called intelligent homes, and also represents a world of opportunity. The fibre-based broadband network and the power grid will be able to communicate. This type of connection opens the door to new potential, the most exciting of which must be the capacity to manage and reduce electrical consumption. If requested by the customer, Altibox can use fibre cables to turn off the hot water tank or lower the temperature in the bathroom for a couple of hours. The capacity this releases in electrical consumption can then be exported abroad in cooperation with a local power company.

Altibox makes use of IP-TV technology to deliver TV signals. This allows Altibox a unique capacity to offer a whole different kind of service. The greatest difference is that the signal for each user is unique. In 2010, Altibox has exploited this potential to broadcast football matches in a completely new way. Altibox is the only TV distributor in Norway to directly broadcast all Premier League matches. What's more, Altibox has additional functionality, such as viewing goals in other simultaneous matches, the potential to watch recordings of matches and highlights and the option to order football packages using the TV remote.

We look forward to the RIPE meeting and are delighted to welcome RIPE to Stavanger and Norway!

The World's Fastest Internet Café

More recently, tourism has evolved as one of Norway's fastest growing industries. The Norwegian business sector works to develop cost-effective, environmentally-sound and technologically-advanced solutions, to increase industrial productivity and enhance efficiency.

Norway exports about 40 percent of the goods and services it produces, while imports make up around one-third of its GDP. Norway's core markets include the Nordic region and Europe, although certain products like oil, gas, minerals and seafood are successfully marketed worldwide. Although Norway is not a member of the European Union (EU) its membership of the European Economic Area (EEA) secures it full access to the EU's internal market. The EU presently accounts for some three-quarters of Norway's foreign trade.

Norway is also known for being amongst the world leaders in humanitarian aid, spending one percent of its GDP on development aid.

Introducing Norway

Norway is a land for nature lovers, with breathtaking fjords and glaciers, summer's midnight sun and a sparsely populated wilderness. The Kingdom of Norway is a very long and very narrow country situated far to the north in the western corner of Europe. The distance from south to north, equals that from Oslo to Rome (1770 km), and crosses the Polar Circle at about 2/3 of the length. Norway boasts one of the longest coastlines in the world (19,950 km), its most outstanding feature being the fjords, which have twice (2006 & 2009) been ranked as the most celebrated and iconic travel destination by National Geographic.

Norway was a poor country back when the Vikings set out on their raids, and in 1349 the Black Death wiped out more than half the population. In 1380, Norway fell under Danish rule and remained so until 1814, when it was handed over to Sweden. The poverty was a product of the geography, its battered coasts, icy mountains, and granite fjords. Whilst the latter make for spectacular scenery, in the pre-globalization era these natural endowments had no comparative advantages. Furthermore only a mere three percent of the country is arable, and Norwegians still joke that their fields are so steep that it rains on both sides. That said, everything changed in 1969 when oil was found in the North Sea. Today Norway distributes so much oil that it is the world's third-largest oil exporter.

The country has evolved from a quiet agrarian society to a dynamic, high-tech country with a prominent international position. In addition to being one of the largest oil exporters, it is also regarded as being amongst the leaders in a wide range of industries including shipping, aquaculture, hydropower, energy and telecommunications.

About Stavanger

The city of Stavanger is part of the Greater Stavanger Region, and is situated on a peninsula along the south-west coast of Norway. The city itself is metropolitan and diverse, yet surrounded by some of the most breathtaking scenery Norway has to offer.

The Greater Stavanger Region is the third largest populated area in Norway, with more than 400,000 inhabitants. The city is the oil capital of Norway and most of the oil industry is concentrated here. It is therefore affluent with a strong international orientation. Stavanger has however managed to preserve its local identity. Everything from hotels and shops, to bars and restaurants are within walking distance. Stavanger was European Capital of Culture in 2008.

Stavanger is intimate, and with its centre arrayed around a pretty harbour, it is also a picturesque place. Stavanger's appeal is as much about atmosphere as anything else. It has a vibrant cultural scene and nightlife, with concerts and events, and a great number of fun and welcoming pubs and bars. Most nights the waterfront is buzzing with life, and it is therefore also a central meeting place for our conference guests. You will notice that when the city is hosting a large conference, the conference and its atmosphere will spill into the city.

You will find a variety of tempting shops; stroll through "Old Stavanger" with its preserved wooden houses and arts and crafts shops, or enjoy some of the specialist boutiques in one of the many pedestrian streets.

The Stavanger region promotes itself as the culinary region of Norway and some of Norway's best restaurants can be found in Stavanger.

Stavanger even has its own food festival, attracting 250 000 people to the harbour every year.
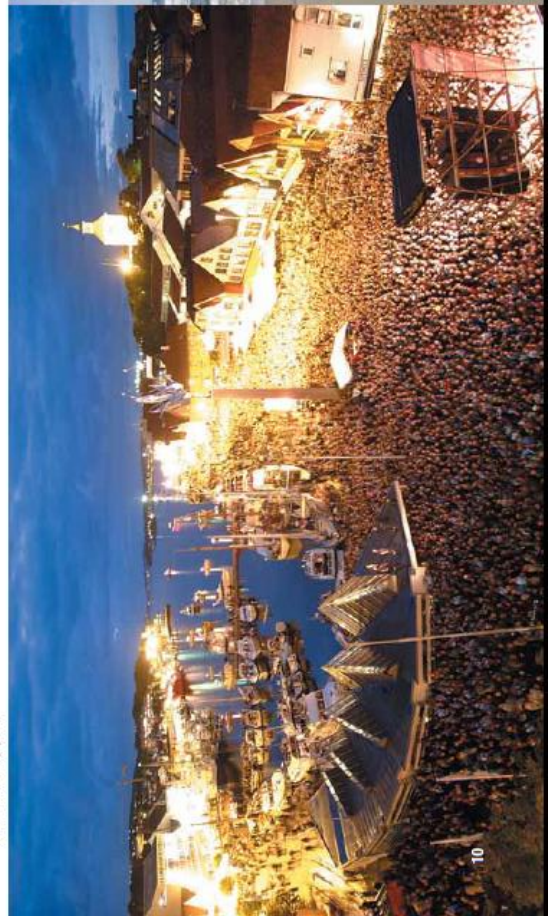
Why Stavanger?

Over the past 30 years, Stavanger has acquired a strong reputation for hosting a variety of international events. A dynamic university, a university hospital, various international research centres make the Stavanger region a competent and interesting host for conferences. The Offshore Northern Seas Conference & Exhibition alternates between Stavanger and Houston every second year, and attracts more than 30 000 visitors to Stavanger each time. For a more detailed overview over conferences hosted, have a look at the attached reference list on page 14.

Facilities

The region of Stavanger has the capacity to host large events. We proudly present 30 hotels and 2000 rooms in the city centre, and another 1000 rooms in the vicinity. Stavanger Forum has top modern conference facilities, and is within walking distance of the city centre.

Accessibility

Stavanger Airport Sola, is directly connected to major airports and has more than 90 daily arrivals. Once at the airport, the city centre is only 10 minutes away by car. Everything in the Stavanger region is within close proximity, which again opens up for many great adventures along with the official conference programme.

Spectacular Scenery

The landscape of the region is an adventure in itself. Out by the coast to the southwest you find the vast North Sea and 70 kilometres of white sandy beaches. Further inland, the landscape rises somewhat, and gently rolling hills give way to extreme mountains. To the east of Stavanger are fjords that let you experience narrow passages inland between tall, extremely steep mountainsides.

Stavanger is clean and unpolluted, and also one of the safest destinations in the world.

Easy access to Stavanger

Official Airline Partner: Scandinavian Airline System (SAS), member of Star Alliance – offer reduced air transportation for delegates attending the conference.

Destinations & frequencies from Stavanger Airport Sola

ALICANTE 1 weekly departure
ABERDEEN 6 daily departures
AMSTERDAM 3 daily departures
BERGEN 10 daily departures
BERLIN 1 weekly departure
BILLUND 1 weekly departure
COPENHAGEN 9 daily departures
FRANKFURT 2 daily departures
GOTHENBURG 3 weekly departures
INNSBRUCK 1 weekly departure
KRISTIANSAND 1 weekly departure
KRISTIANSUND 1 weekly departure
LONDON GATWICK 3 daily departures
LONDON HEATHROW 2 daily departures
MALAGA 1 weekly departure
MURCIA 1 weekly departure
NEWCASTLE 2 daily departures
OSLO 14 daily departures
PRAGUE 1 weekly departure
PARIS 1 weekly departure
RIGA 1 weekly departure
SANDEFJORD 1 daily departure
SKIEN 1 weekly departure
TRONDHEIM 4 daily departures
WARSZAWA 1 weekly departure
ÅLESUND 1 weekly departure

STAVANGER AIRPORT SOLA
Making the Journey a Little Shorter

Non-stop flights from all the destinations above!

Stavanger Airport is Norway's second largest airport when it comes to international flights. There is only one airport, located 15 minutes drive from Stavanger city centre.

Accommodation in Stavanger

The city offers high standard (four stars) conference hotels as well as budget guesthouses. Most of the hotels are located in the charming city centre, while others, like the Rica Forum Hotel, are located at the convention centre.

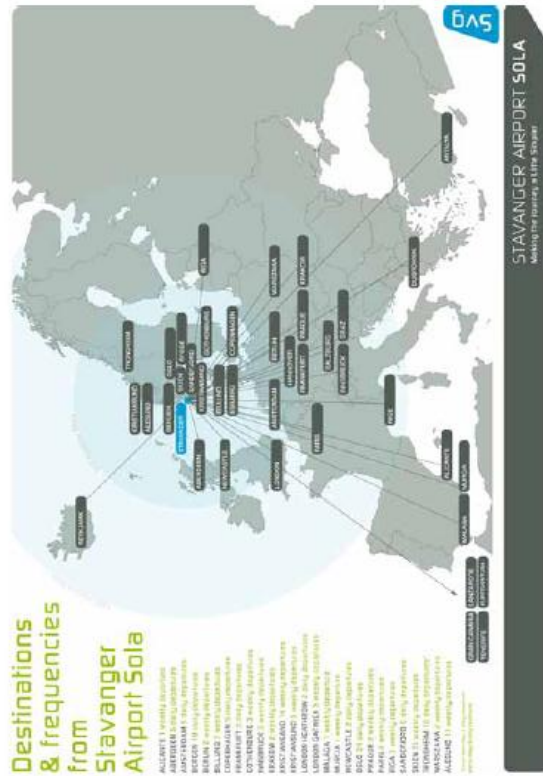| HOTEL	Distance from city centre	Distance from conference area
Radisson Blue Atlantic Hotel	0 km	3 km
Skagen Brygge Hotel	0 km	3 km
Radisson Blue Royal Hotel	0 km	3 km
Clarion Hotel	0 km	3 km
Rica Forum	3 km	0 km
Victoria Hotel	0 km	3 km
Comfort Square Hotel	0 km	3 km
Best Western Havly	0 km	3 km
Myhregaarden	0 km	3 km
Alstor Hotel	3 km	0 km
Solborg student homes	3 km	0 km
Smart Hotel	12,5 km	12 km

Rates from NOK 579 to 1790.

Transportation to the conference venue

Shuttle busses will be arranged to the Conference Centre. You can also walk to the conference venue from all the hotels in the city centre, it is a lovely 20 minute stroll through a beautiful park.

The conference venue: Stavanger Forum

The conference will be staged at Stavanger Forum, during the conference period. Stavanger Forum was established in 1981 and is the city of Stavanger's conference and exhibition centre. The venue offers meeting rooms with capacities from 10 to 1707 people and an exhibition area consisting of five multipurpose halls of 15,000 square metres gross exhibition space.

Stavanger Forum is especially proud of its:

- Spacious break-out areas for networking
- Technical expertise
- Close to 30 years of experience in handling and managing complex events
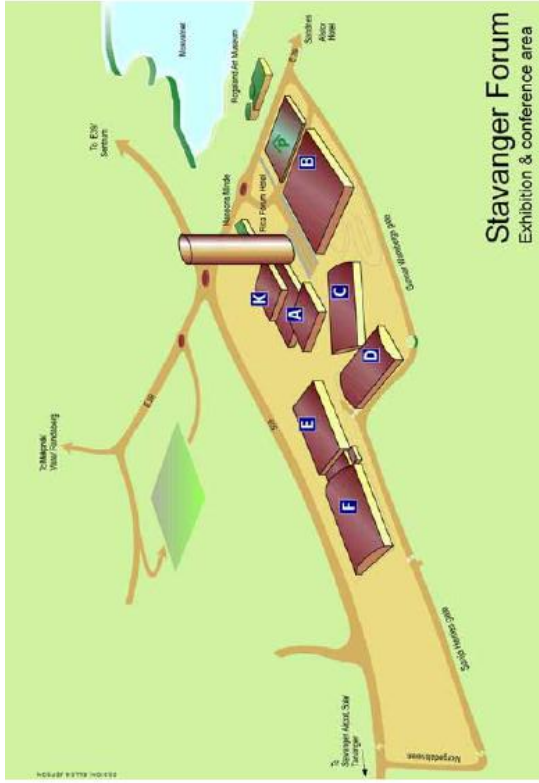
Major recent International Conferences & Events in Stavanger

	Participants/Visitors
2010 ONS 16th Conference and Exhibition	47,000
2010 Food festival	200,000
2010 WHO Helthy cities networks	350
2010 Aqua vision	400
2009 World Championship - Beachvolley	100,000
2009 International Sheep Veterinary Society	800
2009 Scandinavian Update on trauma, resuscitation and emergency medicine	600
2009 EVS – Electric Vehicle Symposium	800
2009 Cartoon Forum	800
2008 Tunza International Children's Conference on the Environment	1000
2008 ONS 15th Conference and Exhibition	40,000
2008 Bocuse d'Or Europe	12,000
2008 EuCheMS General Assembly	2000
2008 Nordic Churchmusic Symposium	1200
2008 InnoTown (Innovation Conference)	500
2007 D.O.T (Int. Conference on deep offshore technology)	1900
2006 ENERGEX – International Energy Foundation	750
2006 ONS 15th Conference and Exhibition	38,000
2005 Eurochambres Congress and general assembly	600

Stavanger Forum
Exhibition & conference area

Capacity/hall

Area	Area (m²)	Conference Theatre	Dining
A-K (Conference Centre)	3130	2696	
B	4670	5000	3000
C	2500	2500	1500
D	3300	2500	1500
E		2500	1500
F	2000	2000	1500

Capacity/floor plan

Rooms	Name	Area (m²)	Theatre	Classroom
A – C	Lindesnes, A+B+C		1707	700
A + B	Lindesnes, A + B	1020	1327	470
A	Lindesnes, A	680	844	200
B	Lindesnes, B	340	400	120
C	Lindesnes, C	220	220	
D	Forum Torg	690		
1 – 4	Galp + Runde + Tungenes + Terningen	640	744	420
1 – 2	Galp + Tungenes	320	372	210
3 – 4	Runde + Terningen	320	372	210
1	Galp	240	246	150
3	Runde	240	246	150
2	Tungenes	80	70	48
4	Terningen	80	70	48
1. floor	Dyna	200	220	134
1. floor	Utsira	80	80	42
1. floor	Halten	200	220	134
1. floor	Kvitsøy	80	80	42

Social events and evening activities

Food and Nightlife at downtown Stavanger

Stavanger has a compact city centre, always lively and pulsating with lots of cafes, restaurants and pubs along the waterfront. Enjoy a five star dinner or have fun at the pub with live music and entertainment.

Guided City walk with beer tastings

A guided walk through the historical Gamle Stavanger, with stops at the fish market, the cathedral and various gastro pubs offering both local as well as international beers, lagers and stouts. Your guide also presents the history and traditions of local breweries. Servings of snacks at the stops.

Fjord cruise on the Lysefjord

Experience one of Norway's most breath-taking fjords. The Lysefjord is the host to one of Norway's most spectacular natural wonders; the Pulpit Rock, a rock formation 597 meters above sea level. The fjord is 42 kilometres long with steep mountainsides reaching heights of 1100 meters. Cruising back to Stavanger you will have great views of the city.

The Exotic Garden Flor & Fjære

Take a 20 minute cruise from Stavanger City Centre and enjoy lunch in Flor & Fjære's beautiful restaurant on the island of Sør-Hidle. All visits include a tour in the exotic garden and a warm buffet with dessert and coffee/tea.

Golf and fishing

Take a break at one of the nearby golf courses. Stavanger Golf Club's 18-hole course is situated 6 kilometres from the city centre, with quiet surroundings near a beautiful lake. Get a complete fishing experience in the open sea only 15 minutes from Stavanger. Fishing equipment and mackerel bait are provided.

Salmon Safari

It is an extraordinary experience to go on a salmon safari and experience the wild fish in their natural element. Through a 30 minute safety introduction at Mo Salmon Farm we learn how to float with the current. The survival suits, snorkel and masks will be tested in the swimming pool before entering the river. Once in the water, the current take takes you down the river; some parts are so shallow that you almost have to squeeze past the flat stones on the riverbed, other parts are more than 12 meters deep.

Post- and pre-event tours

Hike the Pulpit Rock

Take time to experience one of the most visited attractions in Norway, the Pulpit Rock (pictured on the front page). You find the Pulpit Rock Base Camp only an hour away from Stavanger city centre. The hike to the very top of the Pulpit Rock takes a little less than two hours along a marked trail. Remember good footwear and trail snacks. You can return back to Stavanger on the same day, or you can stay overnight at the new Preikestolen Mountain Lodge. The Lodge has won several awards and represents sustainable Norwegian architecture and design.

If you want an even more adventurous twist to your stay, you can stay at the Pulpit Rock Base Camp, constructed by the innovative and modern architects Helen & Hard. This is a unique site for activities and exotic sleeping possibilities. It consists of three different Camps: Mountain Camp, Tree Camp and Water Camp.

You can spend the night in a tree, be suspended on the mountainside or in a hammock just above the sea. Every location has a stack of activities: swimming, fishing, obstacle races, canoeing and so on. This is a combination of an outdoor experience and an architect's fantasy.

Glacier hike

Take a hike on Jostedalsbreen, mainland Europe's largest glacier, and centrepiece of a large national park (www.jostedal.com), which offers other activities such as mountain kayaking and the Glacier Bus.

Norway in a Nutshell®

See the small but great country by exploring the most popular round trip in Norway which departs every day all year around. The trip takes you through some of Norway's most beautiful fjord scenery. You start of by experiencing the scenic Bergen Railway, which is Northern Europe's highest-altitude railway line and voted one of the worlds 20 best railway experiences in 1999.

One of the highlights of the trip is the breathtaking Flåm Railway. The 20 km long train journey takes 55 minutes and takes you from the mountain to down beside the fjord. Throughout the journey, you have views of some of the most magnificent mountain scenery in Norway

with an ever changing panorama of tall mountains and cascading waterfalls. At Flåm there is time to eat and to wander around before continuing by boat. The boat sails out to the Aurlandsfjord and into the Nærøyfjord (listed on UNESCO's World Heritage List), one of the narrowest fjords in Europe and surrounded by towering mountains up to 1,800 meters high. The journey continues by coach down the steep and spectacular hairpin bends of Stalheimskleva, and after enjoying the views of the waterfalls we continue to Voss and further by train to Bergen or Oslo.

Duration: 1-3 days or more if you wish to spend more time on your trip.
Transportation: Local train/regional train, tourist boat and bus.
Price: € 120 from Bergen or € 280 from Oslo
www.norwaynutshell.com

This trip would be suitable to combine with a visit to Norway's two largest cities Oslo and Bergen.

Oslo

Norway's capital city is an easy-going city with a perfect size for exploring by foot. The city has a rapidly growing café and bar culture, and wide selection of restaurants and nightlife activities. Oslo is one of Europe's largest capitals in terms of area but smallest population wise, yet it is the largest city in Norway. The city has an architectural mix of old and new, and the Vigeland Sculpture Park, the Munch Museum, Holmenkollen and the Nobel Peace Centre are just some of the internationally known attractions www.visitoslo.com.

Bergen

Visit Norway's second largest city which is surrounded by seven mountains and seven fjords. Like Stavanger, the harbor area is Bergen's centerpiece and on UNESCO World Heritage list. Make sure you ride the Fløibanen Funicular to the top (320m) and get an unforgettable view of the city www.visitbergen.com.

The Norwegian Costal Voyage (Hurtigruten)

Experience the land of the midnight sun whilst relaxing on a vessel gliding through sheltered waters under the arctic twilight.

This is an opportunity to explore wildlife and stunning scenery along the Norwegian coast. The voyage starts in Bergen and takes you across the Arctic Circle to Kirkenes near the Russian border. Travelling during summer you will experience the midnight sun north of the Arctic Circle (the sun is visible 24 hours a day).

You can choose to join for a short trip, join one-way, or take the whole cruise to Kirkenes and back. The journey Bergen – Kirkenes – Bergen takes 12 days. Departures are daily and the voyage stops at 34 uniquely picturesque ports along the coast. The ships can accommodate cars, making it easy to combine the cruise with a holiday in different places ashore www.hurtigruten.no.

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Appendix D

Conference Facilities

Capacity Overview	maximum seating (cinema)	maximum seating (classroom)	maximum seating (banket)	number of meeting rooms	Exhibition area (sqm)	Total number of rooms
Arkeologisk museum i Stavanger		120		3	356 m2	
Best Western Havly Hotell	40	28		3	80	42
Bryne Kro & Hotell	120	75	100	5	87 m2	34
Byrkjedalstunet	60	40	140	2	1400 m2	17
Clarion Hotel Stavanger	720	460	620	14	500	250
Comfort Hotel Square	30	20	140	2	70 m2	194
Comfort Hotel Stavanger	0	6	0	1		90
Energihotellet	30	30	80	2	50	14
Fjordbris Hotell		20	100	9		26
Forus Leilighetshotel						44
GamlaVærket Hotell & Restaurant	90	65	80	4	126 m2	28
Gjesdal Gjestgiveri	90	60		9		42
Gloppehallen	300		200			
Handelsstedet Ramsvig	150	60	100	3	300	15
Himmel & Hav	130	✔	100			22
Holmavatn UngdomsMisjonssenter		90	100	3		35
Hordatun						
Hotel Sverre	90	60	100	3	100 m2	69
Hummeren Hotel	55	40	150	4		30
Jæren Hotell	250	200	270	4	250 m2	52
Kronen Gaard Hotel	110	70	100	4	100 m2	35
Lilland Hotell	80	40		4		32
Myhregaarden Hotel Stavanger						53
Norsk Oljemuseum	115	80		3	100 m2	
Park Inn Stavanger	280	200	300	11	280 m2	208
Preikestolen Fjellstue			90	3		46
Quality Airport Hotel Stavanger	700	500	500	19	960m2	273
Quality Hotel Residence	350	300	350	12	1400 m2	157
Radisson Blu Atlantic Hotel	550	380	500	15	1800	364
Radisson Blu Royal Hotel	100	64	300	7	480 m2	202
Rica Airport Hotel, Stavanger	200	150	100	10		188
Rica Forum Hotel Stavanger	60	45	120	5	80	182
Rica Park Hotel Stavanger	70	56	80	4	72	59
Sandnes Brygge	✔	✔	✔	2		
Scandic Stavanger Forus	600	420	450	17	✔	240
Skagen Brygge Hotell	30	20	30	1	25 m2	110
Skansen Hotel						28
Skur 2			100			
Sola Strand Hotel	130	160	60	8	0	90
Spa-Hotell Velvære	120	80	100	5		62
Stavanger Forum	1707	700	1500	25	15000 m2	
Stavanger Konserthus Konferanse	1100		500	1	✔	
Stavanger lille Hotel						26
Stavangers nye Konserthus			1500			
Thon Hotel Maritim	120	90	80	8	120	178
Thon Hotel Sandnes	150	85	210	6		82
Utstein Kloster Hotell	180	80	140	5	140 m2	34
Victoria Hotel, Rica Partner	180	120	180	8	534	107
Viste Strandhotell	120	70	200	4	200	38