Conference destination selection in the corporate sector

Master thesis

Authors: Jeanette Hagen and Marianne Jøraandstad

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Authors' affiliation: Master in International Hotel and Service Management

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Advisors: Torvald Øgaard

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Foreword

From professional experiences with the conference market, a substantial amount of educational learning about the importance and influence of the conference industry and destination marketing, and personal interest of the subjects, we decided to focus our master thesis on the subject of what influences the selection of a conference destination and how the relationships between the factors of influence were. We thought it would be an advantage to get a deeper knowledge around this subject especially because of further career interests and objectives. And the knowledge we have developed from exploring this subject has been substantial and of great interest.

After two years at the university at Stavanger and months of work with the master thesis, we are now finishing our studies. It has been a great experience with many busy times and challenging tasks, but it has also been educational and fun, as well as a journey of personal and professional development and growth. We have both learnt the meaning of time pressure, frustration, stress and sleep deprivation, but most we have learnt the meaning of steep learning curve, team work, friendship and support.

A thank you goes out to our advisor, the university, to the corporate meeting planners taking time to answer our questionnaire, the interview objects for contributing with major insight into the conference supplier side and market and our fellow students for help and advice along the way.

We want to express a particular appreciation and a huge thank you to our dear friends and family, for being supportive, positive, understanding and last but not least patient with us during the master study program and especially during the writing of the master thesis. So, dear family and friends, thank you

Abstract

The study has an overall focus on the selection of conference destinations for the corporate sector. The main research question is: What factors influence the conference destination selection and how do they relate? Under this we investigated three areas; the destination factors ranking on importance, relationships between destination factors and intervening factors, and differences on the importance levels of destination factors across the groups of the intervening factors.

Most empirical findings are similar in regards to the factors that are of importance in influencing the selection of a destination. The factors are; accessibility, affordability, facilities, quality of service, attractions and entertainment, safety and security and image. In the process of selecting a destination for a conference various aspects affects the planning and thereby the evaluation of the destination factors, these are called intervening factors. This study look at the relationships among the destination factors mentioned and the intervening factors size of the corporation, economic turnover, use of intermediaries, number of conferences organized yearly by the corporation and the number of delegates usually at the smallest and largest conferences.

A method triangulation was conducted, with interviews of intermediaries and local suppliers for the conference industry, literature review and a questionnaire respondent by meeting planners in the corporate sector in Norway.

The research resulted in the findings of a ranking of the destination factors based on their level of importance, and the ranking was first quality of service, then accessibility, facility, affordability, safety and security, image and last attractions and entertainment.

When exploring the relationships among the intervening factors and the destination factors, quite a few medium and strong correlations were found. The strongest correlations were between image and quality of service, facility and quality of service, accessibility and number of conferences organized, facility and number of conferences organized, and between attractions and use of intermediary. Accessibility and facility also had significant higher important scores for those organizing the number of conferences of respectively over ten and between 3-4 delegates. Attractions and entertainment also had significant higher importance score for those using intermediary services, than those that do not.

The findings are, especially because of the sample size, not generalizable to the population at large, but they can imply certain tendencies maybe worth being aware of and investigate further.

Key words: Destination factors, intervening factors, intermediary, conference industry and destination selection.

1.Introduction

Within this research study we intend to emerge into the field concerning the destination selection process among the corporate sector included in the Norwegian conference market. According to Rogers (2008), conferences and meetings have during the last decades become one of the fastest and largest growing sectors in the industry of tourism (Oppermann, 1996). Not only is the segment of substantial size in the tourism industry, but it is also one of the largest segments in the corporate travel industry. Especially after the Internet became common and world became linked closer together, the market started to grow rapidly both on a national and international basis. However, the conference market is quite young at age and it is therefore a lack of research in several fields. Frequently research in an industry is important in order to promote further growth, healthiness and sustainability in both the companies within the industry itself and the customer market. Evidence are showing that although the market has great market growth, the growth is still slower than preferred, compared to other industries and markets. Our main interest is to investigate the Norwegian market because we have done some research and found that there is a lack of good research in this part of the market.

More specifically the intention is to examine how customers during the organizing process value the importance of different factors that can influence when choosing a conference destination. According to Oppermann (1998) there exist a set of factors that has been proven in international studies, does have an influencing affect when a customer selects a site or destination for their conferences. The factors that were discovered include accessibility, affordability, and facilities at the conference venue, and quality of service at the destination, the access to entertainment and attractions, security and destination image. All these factor those to some extent a certain degree a influencing affect for customers buying conference packages. In addition the research showed that intermediaries and for instance size of corporation could function as intervening factors that influence how customers value the importance level. Such a process can lead the purchasing of conferences in a certain positive or negative direction. A great deal of research has been conducted in countries such as United Kingdom and USA. However, there was no research to find about this phenomenon in the Norwegian conference industry. Also Crouch and Louviere (2004) implies that more research is needed on the importance and actual significance of each factor influencing the selection of a conference destination.

According to Lee & Back (2005), the process of destination selection has been a broad area of study the last decades however it is little empirical research on the relationship between the factors influencing the destination selection and the structure of corporations, as well as the importance of each factor and the relative relationship between them (Lee & Back, 2005).

There can be suggested that the lack of research is a problem because it may indicate that there is no broad understanding of how the market fully functions in terms of factors and trends that the market are influenced by. This is supported through theory developed by Crouch & Love (2004), which suggest that intervening factors that may influence how customers value the importance of factors such as accessibility or quality of service at the destination.

1.1 Presentation of the research questions

In accordance with the lack of research there has been developed one overall research question that covers three underlying questions. These questions will form the basis for every part of this research study. The main question builds on the

What factors influence the selection of a conference destination in the corporate sector?

The factors of great influence in selecting a conference destination, found in most empirical research on the subject are; facilities, accessibility, quality of service, destination image, affordability, safety and security and attractions and entertainment (Lee & Back, 2005).

Since international research already claims that these factors are important, we will find out whether or not this theory implies in the Norwegian industry, This question in itself will not bring that much new and interesting insight to research. Therefore, in order to create new angles towards how important certain factors is, we developed three underlying questions that we intend to measure.

The first underlying question concerns about whether there is a sequential difference on the destination factors and their level of importance? In the case of a sequential difference, what is it?

The second underlying question is about whether there are any relationships between the various destination factors and the interfering factors.

Within the third question whether there are differences in the importance levels of destination factors across the groups of the intervening factors?

The differences between the topic addressed in this study and what has been conducted through previous research, is that the focus is directed towards the relationship between destination factors and intervening factors. When it comes to selecting a conference a customer will always have a set of requirement that need to be accomplished before the actual destination selection process. The intervening factors and destination factors may occur between the customer and the conference destination. During this study it is suggested that the relationship towards the destination factors can change if an intervening factor interfere in the selection process. The intervening factors focused that are selected as a part of this study includes size of the corporation, economic turnover, use of intermediaries, number of conferences organized yearly by the corporation and the number of delegates usually participating at the smallest and largest conferences. An example could be that there is a positive correlation between destination factor and intervening factor if there is a difference in the importance level with regard to destination factor. Larger companies with a high number of delegates attending the conference may view accessibility and facility different than smaller companies with lower delegates attending. Even though it is suggested that destination factor influence the importance level more clearly, the intervening factors most not be forgotten. This is because raising awareness about such factors among corporations within the industry, while make the process of marketing the conference destination in a much more efficient way. The intervening factors corporation size, economic yearly turnover of corporation, how many and how large the conferences they usually organize are, and if they use the services of intermediaries in organizing conferences. These factors are selected because they reflect some of the corporate structure, condition and experience which Crouch and Ritchie (1998) found to be factors of influence.

We intend to measure these questions through a method triangulation. This is because the phenomenon is quite comprehensive and it is necessary bringing different perspectives and angles into the research. In that way we are able to describe to which degree we can support theory and in addition bring new valuable insight and trends in to the discussion about the conference industry's healthiness and further growth. From a further methodological perspective we will, we will conduct the research through three steps.

Secondly the intention is to implement in-depth interviews among key persons that are well positions in the Norwegian conference industry. These persons can perhaps be found within a destination management company or through hotels and purpose-built venues that holds conferences. These are in contact with the customers very often and may have insight into the phenomenon we address. In this part we will investigate what factors that is most important for influencing destination selection among corporations and other types of customers.

In the next part of the research we intend to conduct a questionnaire that measure the importance level among the factors found in empirical theory. We will among other things measure these importance levels across a set of intervening factors. We suggest that intervening factors such as size of corporation in terms of employees and economic turnover may influence how they value the importance level of each factor or aspect with a destination mentioned above. One of the suggestions is perhaps that the larger corporations may be more concerned with factor such as facilities rather than entertainment and attractions. This relationship may exist because larger companies simply have fewer possibilities to be entertained than smaller corporations because they differ in the demand for locations and facility.

1.2 Justification for study

Destination selection in tourism in general and corporate tourism in particular have been studied substantially, but mainly with a focus on end-users` and travelers` perceptions (Bonn & Boyd, 1992). It has been relatively little focus on perceptions of international and local convention cities from an intermediary or meeting planners` point of view (Baloglu & Love, 2004). Most research conducted on the perceptions of meeting planners has focused on cognitive, attribute based and quantitative and not on the qualitative and affective perceptions and image formation. To fully assess perceptions of destinations it is more effective to combine a qualitative and quantitative approach (Baloglu & Love, 2004).

The focus on destination selection in the corporate sector is of importance because of the substantial impact this market has on a site directly and indirectly, especially on the local economy. Because of the fast changing environment this industry is a part of, it is important to continue researching the subject from different angles to understand and keep up with trends, needs and changes in the market and what influences the destination selection process (Baloglu & Love, 2004).

A content analysis was used and developed by Lee & Back (2005), when they reviewed 147 articles about the convention and meeting market within the tourism and hospitality sector from 1990 to 2000. They found that most of the empirical findings were similar in regards to factors influencing the selection of a destination. Those major factors of influence identified frequently in the empirical studies were; facility, accessibility, quality of service, destination image, affordability, safety and security and attractions and entertainment.

Countries have been investigated most as destination level in the literature, then cities and states (Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002).

Empirical findings suggests that many studies conducted on the destination selection process of corporate and association meeting planners lack empirical and conceptual rigor, implying a need for further studies on the subject (G. I. Crouch & Ritchie, 1998).

These former empirical findings are the basis for our study where we are focusing on the selection of a conference destination in the corporate sector, looking at both cognitive and affective factors influencing the selection process.

2. Literature review

Our research is based on information gathered through literature review, in depth interviews and a questionnaire. The literature review has been ongoing since we started the master thesis and the interviews and questionnaire are based on findings from the literature.

We have focused on gathering reliable, valid and up to date data from different secondary sources in per reviewed articles and books, as well as information from official web pages and trade publications for industry data. This has given us a picture of todays` situation in the business tourism industry in general and the conference industry in particular, especially in regards to the conference destination selection process.

The literature review is divided in several sections based on the nature of the content, all being relevant to the overall subject of the conference destination selection in the corporate sector.

2.1 Defining the concept destination

A destination is a place, at a local level referring to a city, county, state or a region, and at a national level referring to the country as a whole. We focus on the destination at the local level, with the suppliers, market and intermediaries at this level, using intermediaries and the corporate market sector in Norway as our context.

Another interesting definition of the concept destination is from a consumer perspective:

"From the perspective of the consumer, destinations are perceived as those geographic areas that have attributes, features, attractions, and services that appeal to the prospective user. How the consumer defines a geographic area varies greatly and may or may not include specific geographic boundaries" (Rogers, 2008, p. 130).

What is interesting with this definition is that it emphasizes that areas that are appealing to the potential consumer is the key. Implying that intermediaries should take into consideration what the consumer thinks the destination is when they market a specific place (Rogers, 2008).

2.2 Business tourism

The definition of a business tourist is: "a traveler whose main purpose for traveling is to attend an activity or event associated with his/her business or interests" (Rogers, 2008, p. 23).

The tourism industry is the overall term for both business and leisure tourism. The conference industry is a concept under the business tourism sector. Both sectors rely on relatively similar factors to be successful; accommodation, communication and transportation, information services, safety and security, entertainment and the like. The difference lies somewhat in the additional needs the business tourists have, such as contractors, staff at conference facilities, appropriate venues and other relevant factors influencing the travel, accommodation and conference needs for many delegates and specific objectives for the conference as a whole (Rogers, 2008).

2.3 The conference industry

The concept conference can be defined as: "Participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact finding, problem solving and consulting" (Rogers, 2008, p. 20). Another definition also includes the aspects of a conference not having a particular continuity, tradition or periodicity as a requirement for being organized and that they are not limited in time, but are often relatively short in duration and have specific objectives. They are generally smaller than congresses, but there are no specific limits (Rogers, 2008).

Since the beginning of civilization gatherings and meetings have taken place. The congress of Vienna in 1814-15 was like a launch event for today's conference industry, were major world powers met to agree on territorial divisions of Europe after the Napoleonic Wars. Larger gatherings then followed with religious and political purposes and then the business meetings and professional association conferences followed. The recognition of it as an industry is however a recent phenomenon, especially in Europe, dating back to the latter half of the twentieth century (Rogers, 2008).

Because of the young and global aspects of the industry terms and definitions vary. And the lack of a properly defined and accepted terminology has also affected the limited data on the value and size of the industry. Because of this shortcoming a glossary for the industry was made during the 1990s, published by the now called “Joint Meetings Industry Council” and the “Convention Industry Council”. The glossary is called the “International Meetings Industry Glossary” (Rogers, 2008, p. 20).

Everybody does however not use this glossary and the terminology still differs some among researchers and nations. Some of the reason for this is that many working within the industry comes from related disciplines and do not have education or professional qualifications from the conference industry in particular. Often the work of organizing a conference is only a small portion of a job description as well, leaving it as a unspecialized subject (Rogers, 2008).

Terms like “meeting”, “assembly”, “convention”, “congress” and the like vary, as well as the emphases and formats of the various events, but the essential objectives and ingredients are similar. They are all bringing people together physically for communication purposes internally or/and externally. The concept “conference” is an overall generic term that can be used to describe this mix of diverse communication events (Rogers, 2008). The term “conference” is used in this research, because it is the most suitable for the measurements and objectives.

Within the conference market there are different types of buyers. The buyers are different meeting planners and organizers, and represent important key people with companies and associations of different sizes. The buyers have the responsibility for buying, or more accurately, selecting and hiring the best suitable destination and conference venues in order to stage their events. Within the conference industry people most commonly refer into two broad types of buyers: The corporate buyer and the association buyer. However, the public sector and entrepreneurs are both types of buyers that are worth mentioning.

According to Rogers (2008), the term “corporate” is used to describe conference organizers who work for corporate organizations. Relatively speaking, there are few companies that have a special department that deals with planning and organizing conferences and other events. Moreover, it is often a tendency for these types of units are allocated significantly less emphasis in difficult financial times. Employees, who are involved in decision-making process and organization of meetings and conferences, appearing through various job titles and it is therefore difficult to identify them. In a wide range, most events involving staff from departments such as sales and marketing, training and human resources and central administration. (Rogers, 2008)

Two types of companies that often play a significant role in the conference industry is the destination management companies and the professional conference organizers. The professional conference organizers, can also be referred to as a PCO or as intermediaries, which is a more generally covering term that are used most often during this study. A typical portfolio for a conference organizer is, among other things, to select and book conference venues, makes reservation of delegate accommodation and planning the actual conference. The destination management companies can also be referred to as DMCs, and are responsible for providing consulting services, creative events and trade fairs where it is possible for conference organizers to reach contact with potential customer group (Rogers, 2008).

It is often the corporate conference organizer, line manager, the managing director or by a group of such people in consultation that makes decisions about the conference or meeting considering choice of venue, budget, size of event, visiting speakers, program content, catering and so forth. Therefore, the contact point between the meeting planner and providers of conference facilities and services have very high importance in the decisions taken, especially with regard to whether providers can tailor packages to suit the needs presented by the meeting planner on behalf of the company. The majority of corporate conferences and meetings are held in hotels or in purpose-built conference centre, while civic venues and town halls tend to attract relatively few corporate events.

This research focuses on the conference destination selection in the corporate sector, not on associations. Even though associations are one of the largest sub segments within the conference industry, and therefore is of high relevance for many destinations, it has several different factors to take into consideration in difference to the corporate sector (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Some differences are related to the attendees having to pay themselves for travel and participating on association meetings, there is no demand that they have to attend, they are usually more loosely attached to an association than their professional work and the site attractiveness is often important because many attendees bring family members and use the conference as a basis for a holiday as well. These factors are often in contrast to the business market as participation on business conferences usually are paid for by the business, the subject and information sharing is more in focus in difference to the site attractiveness, it is often a demand to participate and family members are usually not participating on the trip. The corporate sector also seems to have a closer link between headquarters or business locations and the selection of a site, in difference to what associations have (Oppermann, 1996). At conferences organized by corporation the attendance of delegates is often compelled and conferences organized by the corporate sector furthermore tend to have shorter lead time than those organized by associations (Rogers, 2008).

Having a strong and positive destination image and a clear position in the market is important in today's competitive meeting market, it is not only the conference and meeting itself that is important for meeting planners and delegates, the whole package is of interest. However, the surroundings of the conference seems to be of greater importance for association to attract members than corporations attracting delegates, as there usually is a stronger demand to participate at a corporate level in difference to the free choice of attending at the association level. Association members usually attend conferences on own expense in difference to corporate members were the employer usually pay the expenses (Oppermann, 1996). Thereby, the underlying factors of importance are different between the two segments. Both segments are of high importance to a destination that wants to generate income from the conference market, but we are focusing on one segment because of the differences between them and thereby the differences in factors influencing their destination selection.

2.4 The conference industry in Norway

The conference industry in Norway consists of several organizations that works both nationally and internationally in order to attract customers to Norwegian conference destinations.

2.4.1 Norway Convention Bureau

The first organization that should be mentioned is Norway Convention Bureau. Norway Convention Bureau is an organization where the main activities involve promoting Norway as a potential destination for international congresses, meetings, conferences and other types of events. However, the activity within NCB is mainly directed at two areas, which concerns international congresses as well as the corporate market and incentive market.

Norway Convention Bureau is a cooperative society, which entails a currently number of 24 shareholders. These shareholders include the leading congress and meeting cities in Norway, which involves the five biggest cities Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Stavanger and Tromsø. Furthermore, the main hotel chains, the convention centers and the transportation companies are also involved as shareholders in NCB. The organization has a formal structure meaning that have a general assembly that holds the highest authority. The board consists of five members and two alternates, which is chosen by the general assembly on an annual basis. Norwegian convention bureau has a close relationship and collaboration with Innovation Norway. The collaboration was initiated in 2008, with the aim to strengthen Norway's position and visibility within the international conference market. Furthermore, from 2009 the organizations entered a partnership concerning a common commitment towards the international meeting & conference market. As a result of this collaboration, there was in 2010 developed and launched a new official meeting portal for international meeting planners, in which is called visitnorway.com/meetings. The market strategy developed for NCB is as following: "NCB will conduct targeted sales and marketing – alone and in collaboration with external partners – aimed at players in the corporate conference industry internationally and nationally, including the Norwegian contacts and organizations that can help trigger new traffic." (www.norwayconventionbureau.no).

2.4.2 Innovation Norway

Innovation Norway has established a close relationship with Norwegian Convention Bureau in order to highlight and position Norway as an attractive competitor in the international conference market. Innovation Norway constitutes the Norwegian governments strongest instrument for innovation and development of Norwegian enterprises and industries, whereof the conference industry has been significantly highlighted as an important area of priority. Innovation Norway performs and offers a variety of activities on the basis of the so-called meeting project, where their target group involves incentive houses, professional conference organizers (PCO), destination management companies (BMC) and event companies to achieve promotion at an overarching and international level. The main international market that Innovation Norway designate as most relevant, includes Germany, Sweden, United Kingdom and France.

Innovation Norway has together with NCB, among their main activities to participate at international trade fairs together with Norwegian partners. The IMEX in Frankfurt and the EIBTM in Barcelona are two examples of important trade fairs where Innovation Norway is present. Innovation Norway invites potential buyers in order to develop a relationship with companies promoting conference packages from different destinations within Norway.

In addition, the organization contributes with financing projects developed by destination management companies and event agencies around the country in order to strengthen their competitiveness and visibility. However, the financing will be given only if their strategies meet requirements related to the stated purpose of increasing the international and national traffic on the conference market.

2.4.3 Visit Trondheim AS and Region Stavanger

Visit Trondheim AS and Region Stavanger is two destination management companies that operate respectively in Trondheim City and Stavanger City. These companies are at any time working actively in order to promote their destinations, cities or regions attractiveness, both for general tourism and within the conference market. The destination management companies are often closely associated with Innovation Norway, especially when it comes to implementing new projects and systems for attracting more customers. The destination companies also collaborate downwards to the professional conference organizers and the hotels or conference venues (www.regionstavanger.no).

2.5 Globalization of the conference industry

The conference industry has increased substantially during the last decades and is now considered a global industry, with a lot of possibilities and competition on an international basis. Especially is the supplier side of the industry increasing substantially, but the market is however increasing in a slower scale. There are several reasons for this, some of them are that many of the nations do not have a strong enough national economic for the corporate sector to plan conferences abroad, many of the headquarters of various organizations and international associations are located in North America and Western Europe and many of the conferences and events are held at or nearby these headquarters. The same goes for many corporations that hold conferences at or nearby headquarters and main offices in their respective nations, because of economic and logistic reasons (Rogers, 2008).

It is however a lack of regular research and reliable statistics on the relatively young industry, making it difficult to provide an information basis regarding size, value and trends of the industry, especially on a global basis. This issue has during the last years been taken more into consideration and it is now focus on gathering reliable data on the market and trends of the conference industry (Rogers, 2008).

2.5.1 Marketing principles in the conference industry

Before we go into the marketing of destinations in particular we will explain some general marketing principles and their application to the tourism and conference industry. One appropriate definition of marketing for this research is: “The management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customers` requirements efficiently and profitably” (Rogers, 2008, p. 114). Even though some intermediaries marketing destinations are non-profit, they have an objective of increasing the profit for actors at the destination for the good of the destination as a whole. Referring to the definition one of the key areas to successful marketing is focusing on customers` needs. It is crucial for both intermediaries and the destination suppliers to establish an understanding of the customer and their needs and wants, to be able to target the segment effectively with marketing efforts as well as for meeting or even exceed their needs, wants and expectations. A typical dividing of the segments in the conference sector could be between corporate conferences, national association conferences and international association conferences. These categories can be further segmented into specific industry sectors, demographic factors or other relevant subcategories (Rogers, 2008).

2.5.2 Marketing of destinations

As mentioned earlier increased competition and a substantial economic positive impact in the tourist industry makes it increasingly important to market destinations to give a clear image of the place to potential visitors. The image is considered one of the key factors in a destination selection process for meeting planners, thereby a destination benefits from having a strong and positive image that comply with the needs of the target market (Hakala & Lemmetyinen, 2011).

Caldwell and Freire (2004) suggest that marketing of a destination should differentiate in difference to it being a city, region or a country. They suggest that countries should have a more holistic image focusing on representational and emotional dimensions, in difference to regions and cities which should focus on functional facets (Caldwell & Freire, 2004).

2.6 Impact on destination

The concept destination is in our research context limited the local overall level, like cities and regions, rather than resorts and individual attraction sites (Rogers, 2008).

Conferences and meetings have during the last decades been one of the fastest and largest growing sectors in the industry of tourism (Oppermann, 1996). Not only is the segment of substantial size in the tourism industry, but it is also one of the largest segments in the corporate travel industry (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Hence it is a crucial market for the destination in several ways.

One substantial factor is the economic impact conferences and meetings have on the site and its surroundings; for convention centers, accommodation facilities, food and beverage places, tourist activities, transportation, entertainment, technological assistant and the like. Both academic research and industrial data show that the conference and meeting industry is a major contributor in national and regional economies (Rutherford & Kreck, 1994). However, it is most likely even higher economic impacts than statistics show, as it is a challenge to track all the spending by sponsors, exhibitors and delegates, especially the leisure spending by the delegates. Because of these and other shortcomings in measuring the real economic impact conferences and meetings have, estimates of the industry size should be interpreted and treated with caution (G. I. Crouch & Ritchie, 1998). Not only is it the direct income from the delegates and the like that creates revenue, but the industry create many jobs and thereby other cash flows and taxes, affecting the total destination economy, both locally and nationally.

Conferences and meetings are also an important source of income during the off-season periods, often being during spring and autumn, as tourists often visit during summer or winter, depending on the destination and attracting factors (Oppermann & Chon, 1997).

The marketing factor of the destination is also of great value as participants at the convention are potential future tourists and indirect marketers of the destination. They spread impressions to other potential visitors and thereby influence others to travel to the destination or not, maybe like a leisure tourist or in selecting the destination as a conference destination in the future. Influencing decision makers so they have the destination in their evoked set is a crucial first step for the destination being selected (Clark & McCleary, 1995). Satisfied participants is therefore crucial to create repeat business and a positive word-of-mouth reputation (Oppermann, 1996).

There are a lot of positive impacts from increased conference tourism to a destination, but there are also some negative effects, which has got little empirical attention. This includes impacts like congestion, noise, increased prices and pollution, among other things. The subject has however been broadly researched and discussed on tourism in general (Lee & Back, 2005).

2.7 Networks and social capital

Destinations consist of multiple actors, like hotels, retailers, restaurants, tour operators, gas stations, museums and the like (Grängsjö & Gummesson, 2005). These actors make up a network that gives visitors a total experience of a place. And it is increasingly important for destinations to get a strong and positive position in the market as the competition is increasing, especially because of the globalization and the information technology evolution. This increased need for a consistent position and satisfied visitors creates a need for actors to work together, build relationships and networks, and create synergy effects where they accomplish more together than individually.

Intermediaries are a part of a social network as they market the destination on behalf of many local suppliers and connect their services to meeting planners. The local suppliers sometimes have specific networks working for increased market share to the destination, but most often they connect to an intermediary that do that job for them so they can focus on their specific products and services. Also, the smaller local suppliers often do not have enough human and financial capital to market themselves or the destination alone and supporting an intermediary which can do the job on behalf of them and the destination in general is more effective, especially in approaching the national and international market (Grängsjö & Gummesson, 2005). The more suppliers using the services of intermediaries the more resources the intermediaries have to use in their marketing efforts and the more products and services they have to offer the market. Difference in goals of the individual suppliers might however be increasingly difficult to manage the more they get, therefore they should agree on some overall goals.

Building networks are often part of a strategic marketing plan for some suppliers and intermediaries. They collaborate horizontally or vertically to attract people to the destination, which is a benefit for all the stakeholders in the network. Relationship building is increasingly focused in marketing and cooperation between businesses is also important for a destination as a whole (Grängsjö & Gummesson, 2005). Empirical research also shows that corporations that cooperate within geographic clusters can gain competitive advantage individually as well as for the destination in general (Boari, Odorici, & Zamarian, 2003). Shared values, trust and cooperation are equally important as competition among the destination suppliers in the network, for a destination to develop successfully. These opposites are both crucial and should be taken into consideration simultaneously. Informal and formal institutions and regulations in the political, social and commercial destination context affect this balance.

2.8 Technology advances

Technology advances has made it easier for people to communicate on a global scale, especially because of the Internet that made it possible to attend meetings without being physically present. Some thought this would eliminate the need of a physical meeting space, but several empirical studies found that these advances and increased use of technology has made the physical meeting an increased necessity, especially in building relationships (Lee & Back, 2005).

The technology today gives us many opportunities in communication and is widely used by most intermediaries in the marketing of a destination and meeting planners in the site selection process gathering information, as well as a communication tool between the two actors (Lee & Back, 2005). It can also be used between the multiple stakeholders in a destination communication process, to communicate more effectively internally and get more of the community to represent the image with a feeling of ownership to it.

Negative sides of the more effective ways of sharing information, especially via the internet, could be that one loses control of the information that get shared; who the sender and the receiver is, the content of and the response to the information. Especially communication through social media is something intermediaries and destination marketers cannot control as they control their own communication via web pages or own social media accounts. And all the communication affects how people experience the image of the destination, in both negative and positive aspects (Dioko & Harrill, 2010).

Even though the technology is developing rapidly and virtual conferencing gets more accessible, the face-to-face meeting between people is still of high importance, maybe even more now than before simply because of the technological work conditions today. Meeting face-to-face is important to network, be interactive, brainstorm, enhance learning and get a richer experience in an inspiring learning environment. Virtual meetings on the other hand saves travel costs and time, are effective for fast information exchange, gives an instant global meeting access and might give more structure to a presentation (Rogers, 2008). Increased focus on environmental issues might also be an indication for more virtual meetings as one does not have to travel. On the other hand more and more sustainable venues and travel options are being used to have a minimum impact on the environment, but there is still a long way to go.

2.9 Global trends and possible implications

Many people and sectors want to know the future implications and trends for the conference industry. Students and those working within the industry want to know the development in regards to job projections, market and competitor analyzes and strategy development, politicians need to know if the industry justifies their support and interests, investors need to know in regards to investment decisions and many others want to understand the development for various reasons. It is however difficult to forecast the conference industry precisely as several factor impacts it; national and global economic trends, technological development, threats from epidemics and terrorism, environmental factors, sociological factors and many more. Some trends, however, seem to be that the corporate conferences are of shorter duration than before and that it is an increased focus on cost effective accessibility to destinations, regarding both time and money. But it is difficult to know if the trends are temporary or a long-term phenomenon (Rogers, 2008).

2.10 Destination selection process

To be able to evaluate the various factors influencing destination selection and their relative importance, one has to link it to a theoretic decision process. The process shows that destination preferences can be divided into two components; a random, unobservable component and a systematic, observable component. The random component refers to all the unobserved factors that influence the destination selection, and the systematic component refers to the decision strategy individual’s use when selecting a destination. These two components are both equally important, but the random component can be referred to as the affective component and can be difficult to research empirically, in difference to the more cognitive, systematic component which considers facts and logical factors (G. Crouch & Louviere, 2004).

2.10.1 Product selection process

Consumers have a common selection process when it comes to choosing a product or service. This process is explained in this research with a conference destination being the product of selection. Even though this process might be more complex during the individual steps, than the process of selecting a less expensive product with lower risks involved, the same steps are taken in the process. A six step model explains this process (Louviere, Hensher, & Swait, 2000).

The process starts with step one, where awareness of the destination is essential. One needs to know about it and relate it to the need one is trying to satisfy, to be able to consider it. Step two is where one learns actively or passively about the alternatives and attributes of the various destinations, through search and collection of information from different sources. Step three is the evaluation of the alternative destinations and a comparison of them. Beliefs about the destinations are formed and one looks at what alternatives that best meet the objectives. At the fourth step one forms the preferences of the various alternatives, based on the beliefs and meeting of objectives. The fifth step is the choice of a destination, which is influenced by the former steps as well as various constraints like the budget, time limit and the like. Finally, the sixth step is the evaluation of the choice after a destination is selected and after it is experienced through the conference being held there. After experiencing the destination one has selected, it will affect the learning in step two, evaluation of the destination in step three and the preferences formed in step four, affecting the choice next time one goes through the process of choosing a conference destination (Louviere, et al., 2000).

“Overview of the consumer’s choice process (Louviere, et al., 2000, p. 8)”:

1. Awareness needed
2. Learning actively and passively (attributes and alternatives)
3. Alternatives are evaluated and compared
4. Formation of preferences
5. Choice
6. Post-Choice (re) evaluation

2.10.2 Destination selection process

Another model for selecting a conference destination is also of interest, made by Crouch and Ritchie (1998). This model starts with a five-step process explaining the selection process of a site for a convention for the association sector, but it is here used to explain the selection process of a conference destination in the corporate sector. Most of the difference between the processes for the two sectors is in regards to the factors influencing the selection process, as described earlier.

The model starts with step one, being the preplanning of a conference, where objectives, budget, dates and other necessary details are set. After knowing what the conference objectives and constraints are one evaluates alternative destinations, being step two. Here one gathers information on factors of importance about the various destinations. This is done through bidding rounds; visiting destinations, get advice from intermediaries, official information sources, as well as unofficial information sources like friends, family and colleagues, and various commercial sources. This step ends with a recommendation on what destination the corporation should select. It can be the one gathering the information also making the final selection, but often another meeting planner, the top management or the board of directors take the final decision, depending on the corporation and size and objectives of the conference. The final selection of the destination is made in step three, made separately from step one and two if another person or group is in charge of the decision. Political issues are taken into consideration here, like if there is a specific conference destination rotation, but this is usually an association issue and not so much for corporations. The decision makers can be influenced by the evaluation and recommendation done in step two, but if somebody else makes the decision they can choose to ignore these recommendations. Step four is in reference to the conference being held at the selected destination. After the conference is held, the evaluation of the conference and destination occurs. This evaluation leads to learning and increased knowledge about the destination and the organization of the conference, which will affect the next destination selection and conference organization (G. I. Crouch & Ritchie, 1998).

The five steps of the process of selecting a destination (G. I. Crouch & Ritchie, 1998):

1. Preplanning of the conference
2. Evaluation and recommendation of alternative destinations
3. Selecting a destination
4. Conference held
5. Post-conference evaluation

There are some intervening factors influencing the process of selecting a destination. This is the condition of the corporation, the nature and culture, the employee and management characteristics, past experience, knowledge, values, corporate policies, environmental conditions and the objectives for the conference, among other things affecting the planning of the conference (G. I. Crouch & Ritchie, 1998).

Then specific factors in relation to the conference destination and specific site is considered; the accessibility, security and safety, affordability, facilities, quality of service, attractions and entertainment and the destination image. Each of these factors influences the selection of a destination in various ways, depending on the corporate and conference characteristics and objectives (G. I. Crouch & Ritchie, 1998).

The process of destination selection has been a broad area of study the last decades however it is little empirical research on the relationship between the factors influencing the destination selection and the structure of corporations, as well as the importance of each factor and the relative relationship between them (Lee & Back, 2005). Also Crouch and Louviere (2004) implies that more research is needed on the importance and actual significance of each factor influencing the selection of a conference destination.

There has been a trend in researching the selection of meeting facility and destination together, instead of dividing them in two separate processes (Lee & Back, 2005). This has made some findings unclear, as the factors influencing the decision may vary, and it may involve different decision makers. Because of this the site selection process ought to be viewed from two perspectives; a facility perspective and a destination perspective.

Meeting planners and executives play a central part in the selection process, and are often in charge of selecting the conference destination (Lee & Back, 2005).

2.11 Factors influencing conference destination selection

There have been several studies on the topic of variables and factors, which could influence the conference destination selection. Identifying and understanding these factors are of great importance among destination marketers and local suppliers, so they could develop more effective marketing strategies and meet the needs of potential visitors (Go & Govers, 1999).

Although there has been a substantial amount of research on the different factors that affect the process of destination selection, especially from an association perspective, there is still a need for a deeper understanding of the relative roles of the factors and how the importance of them may vary in relation to situational variables (Lee & Back, 2005). This could help destinations position more effectively towards the different segments in the market. As discussed above, the factors also differ in importance depending on the conference being for the corporate sector or the association sector (Bonn & Boyd, 1992).

Destinations should also look at an optimal mix of products and services that appeal to different segments within the conferences and meeting market, as there are different needs and wants within this market as well. After building an image and expectations to the destination they have to fulfill the expectations or increase them to get satisfied clients.

The factors of great influence in selecting a conference destination, found in most empirical research on the subject are; facilities, accessibility, quality of service, destination image, affordability, safety and security and attractions and entertainment (Lee & Back, 2005).

Physical facilities and accessibility are often seen as main decision factors, but also service quality, safety, destination image, affordability and entertainment and attraction facilities are of importance. However, these latter factors have been neglected in several surveys and could therefore be of greater importance than some of the earlier empirical findings show (Oppermann & Chon, 1997).

Destination image is also shown to be a major influence in site selection and delegate participation, especially research done on the association sector (Lee & Back, 2005). Destination image is an unclear concept and is therefore discussed in depth underneath.

The factor quality of service is in regard to the quality and service opportunities at the conference facility as well as extra service possibilities outside the conference in particular, like food and beverage, cleanliness, friendliness and service in the local community as well as the viewed service quality in general at the destination (G. Crouch & Louviere, 2004).

Affordability is in reference to the costs of the conference, with the prices of the facilities, accommodation, travel, food and beverage and the overall price level at the destination (Baloglu & Love, 2004). There are some evidence that higher costs can damage the competitiveness of a destination, but very inexpensive destinations might also be unattractive as some sees it as a destination with lower quality, this is especially in regards to the price level of facilities (G. Crouch & Louviere, 2004).

Safety and security refers both to the extent the environment is at site facilities as well as the destination in general (G. Crouch & Louviere, 2004). This is in regards to potential risks of various natures, like natural threats and disasters, criminality and terrorism, safety routines at the facility, boycotts and other possible events.

The physical facilities are the size, look, design, technological possibilities and the like of the meeting venue, as well as the accommodation possibilities, and if the conference requirements are available at the facilities. These are basic requirements that need to be met to run the conference and meetings successfully as planned (Lee & Back, 2005).

Accessibility of the destination is also crucial, based on how easy, comfortable, quickly and costly it is to get to and from the destination. Often, the further away delegates have to travel, the more costs it includes of time and money, and the accessibility and possibility for selecting the site decreases (Lee & Back, 2005).

Bonn *et al*. (1994) found that there were little differences between the association and corporate meeting planners in relation to importance of services and facilities, but there were significant difference in relation to the importance of attractions and entertainment. This was more important for association meeting planners than the corporate meeting planners, based on reasons mentioned above. The attractions and entertainment factor consists of facilities for shopping, restaurants, nightlife, cultural attractions among other things, depending on the objectives of the visitors (Rogers, 2008).

Oppermann (1998) found that perceptions and emphasizes meeting planners have of attributes of a destination are quite similar regardless of the size of the meeting and conference.

Several of the attributes and factors mentioned above are also used in former empirical research to measure destination image as an overall factor, were they were seen as components of the destination image. All the components contained functional, tangible or abstract and psychological characteristics. Excluding any of the factors, focusing only on some may result in getting incomplete measures and findings (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). In our research we have focused on all the different factors mentioned above and are looking at them individually and in coherence to each other in regards to importance and correlations.

2.12 Conference destination image

There exists an extensive literature about the concept of a tourist destination image and the importance of it is universally acknowledged, as it affects the subjective perceptions of individuals that again affect behavior and finally the destination choice. However, researchers have not succeeded in fully agreeing on how to operationalize and conceptualize destination image and there are many different definitions of the concept. We have chosen the definition we believe fits the aim of this paper best; Destination image is the sum of ideas, impressions and beliefs that a person have of a place, having both cognitive and affective aspects. One can say that destination image is a complex concept as it allows for several ways of interpretation and because the comprehension do not have a unique meaning (Gallarza, et al., 2002).

Perceptions about a destination form the image, which is held and remembered in people's mind. Destination perceptions have in research literature been divided in three conceptual components: cognitive, affective and overall impressions. The cognitive component refers to knowledge and beliefs, the affective component to feelings and the overall component to impressions of the destination different from or similar to the two latter components (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b). All these components should be taken into consideration when assessing the destination image or trying to influence a markets view and relation to the image. It should also be taken into consideration that visitors with previous experience from a destination usually has a different, and often more positive, view on the destination than those without. This is in regards to all three components in the destination perception. It is also important to remember that the image of a destination may be substantially different depending if one looks at it as a conferences or vacation destination (Baloglu & Love, 2004).

The image of a destination is the sum of impressions; ideas and beliefs people have about it. This is based on previous experience, beliefs, knowledge and stereotypes of the economic, political and social conditions, as well as the culture, history, traditions and people of a destination (Hakala & Lemmetyinen, 2011). Three overall dimensions of an image are suggested; knowledge, experience and stereotypes (Gnoth, 2002).

The dimension of knowledge is about the cognitive evaluation in regards to a destination, which is obtained through information from multiple official sources. Adjusting prior knowledge and cognitive structures is something people often resist and instead they look for information that confirms it.

When it comes to the dimension of experience it is about the personal experiences each individual build with a destination. This is especially affected by the personal meeting with the culture and people, which again affects feelings, thoughts and sensory perceptions towards the destination. Different experiences either enhance or destroy the image of the place. In creating loyal relationships to a destination it is essential to experience and thy emotions to the place (Hakala & Lemmetyinen, 2011).

Stereotyping is also a dimension of the image, meaning that one places people and whole nations in categories. This is a fluid, dynamic process which means it is possible to influence the stereotyping and thereby the image (Freire, 2009). Therefore one should find out what kind of stereotype beliefs the market has about the country or local destination and the people there, and then strengthen favorable beliefs and change unfavorable beliefs.

The image for a destination is often more complex than the image of a specific product and service, as there are multiple components to consider that are outside the control of those forming the image. Landscape, locations, social relations and the dynamic process of connecting people to a physical place make the destination contextual and relational for the visitors. Public diplomacy, international relations, political situations and uncontrollable events also influence the overall image of a nation and the specific destinations within the country. This makes it even more important to build an image on true situational factors, so that expectations can be met or exceeded. One should understand the weaknesses and strengths of current and future situation, as well as current and future threats and opportunities. That would make it easier to know what kind of image is sustainable and meets the market needs (Hakala & Lemmetyinen, 2011).

It is suggested that the image is more important in the selection of a destination than the tangible factors are, because perceptions is what motivates people to visit a place or not and the providing of a tourism service is affected by great subjectivity. The image is a mix of impressions prior to and during the visit, as well as the reassessment after the visit. It is affected by many aspects; unofficial information from friends and family, official information from web pages, magazines, television and the like, and last, but not least the retailer, other tourists, employees and residents at the destination (Gallarza, et al., 2002).

Co-creating the image with citizens, the corporate sector and the government could help enhance the process of finding the right image as well as meeting created image expectations (Hakala & Lemmetyinen, 2011). There is however little attention on co-creation of image in the literature (Payne, Storbacka, Frow, & Knox, 2009). But some do point out that participative involvement and stakeholder co-creation in this process is crucial (Dioko & Harrill, 2010).

2.13 The use of intermediaries in conference industry

Various agencies act as middlemen or intermediaries for the conference industry, being both suppliers for actors at the destination and buyers for the external conference market, both associations and corporations. There are a different forms and structures of these agencies, but they are similar in being an intermediary between the destination and the market (Rogers, 2008).

There are many forms, names and structures of agencies that act as intermediaries. Some references are; independent meeting planners, event management companies, professional conference or congress organizers and destination management companies (Rogers, 2008). Others are called convention and visitor bureaus (Lee & Back, 2005).

Intermediaries can be organizers of detailed tasks such as catering, budgets, contracts, security and the like, as well as being responsible for marketing the destination as a whole towards a specific market (Rogers, 2008). Some intermediaries focus on the local level, while others focus on the national level. They usually act as destination marketing organization as well as conference organizers, depending on the market needs and wants. Intermediaries are usually non-profit and independent organizations that want to bring more conferences, meetings, conventions, congresses and incentive travels to the destination, and should at the same time protect the meeting planners` interest (Lee & Back, 2005).

The intermediaries play an important role between meeting planners and destination suppliers. They often rely a lot on the local suppliers regarding funds for operating (Baloglu & Love, 2004). The supplier uses the services of the intermediaries because they are more specialized in reaching and communicating with customers, have knowledge on customer needs and trends in the market and can thereby offer the customers increased value and the supplier time to focus on their products and services. The meeting planners can give the job of organizing accommodation, transportation, conference facilities and the like to an intermediary and save time and effort (Kokkomäki, Laukkanen, & Komppula, 2009).

One research suggests that intermediary services were not very important as a destination selection factor, indicating that meeting planners use other information sources in the process (Baloglu & Love, 2004). This research was however focusing on associations and not corporations and on five major cities in the US. Not generalizing it to the situation in the corporate sector. However, some other research also show that many meeting planners think that intermediaries do not have an interest in addressing requests and needs from small meetings and therefore they do not use their services, not even when they are for free (Weber, 2001). Some also believe that the use of intermediaries does not give enough value for money or that they get information too slow, do not get up-to-date information or that intermediary personnel are not qualified to arrange their conference or meeting (Kokkomäki, et al., 2009).

It is important for intermediaries to establish stable cooperation with meeting planners and create long lasting relationships that makes it easier to fulfill needs and requirements, get a more stable profit and minimizing risk in demand of the services (Lee & Back, 2005).

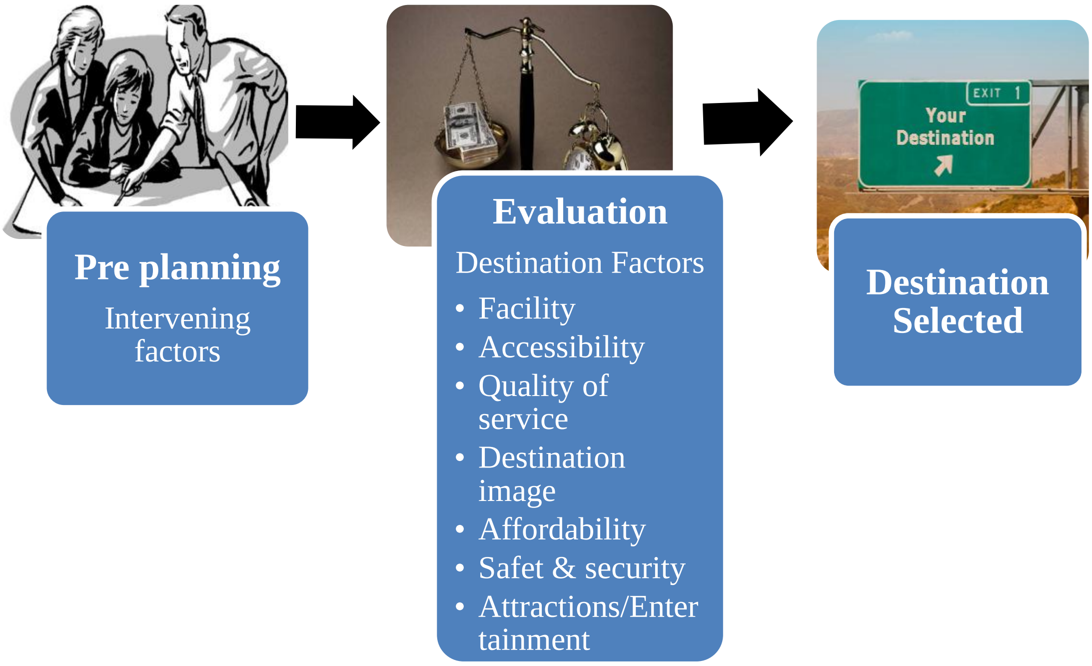
It is little research on why meeting planners use intermediaries and how it affects the destination and facility section, but there is some literature regarding the buying process of the meeting planner and the link to possible positive and negative effects of using the services of an intermediary. Some of the factors affecting the effects of using an intermediary are; risk avoidance, ease of communication, trust, information, expertise of intermediary and quality and attractiveness of the product. However, the most important reason for meeting planners to use intermediaries is the “ease of buying convention packages” (Kokkomäki, et al., 2009, p. 26), followed by personnel know-how and attractive convention packages that had much lower influence on the reason for using intermediaries. But the study with these findings is based on limited literature resources and some interviews on the subject, so it should be further investigated as it may be other factors influencing the use of an intermediary (Kokkomäki, et al., 2009).

2.14 The main questions

The aim of the thesis is to look at the importance of and the relationships among the factors influencing destination selection the most. We want to see if there are any significant relationships between and relative sequential rating of the importance level of the factors. We also want to look at corporate features, which might affect the destination selection. Only a few corporate features are taken into consideration and are seen in correlation with the importance of the destination factors, which again influence destination selection. These features are described as interfering factors when planning a conference, which the evaluation of destination factors` importance might be influenced of (G. I. Crouch & Ritchie, 1998).

2.14.1 Illustration of the main model

Figure 1: Destination selection process



This model is based on theory in the literature review and interviews conducted on intermediaries and suppliers of facilities to the conference industry. The model is an overview of a three-step process in the selection of a conference destination for the corporate sector, influenced by the model made by Crouch & Ritchie (1998) for the site selection process.

Pre planning is step one and is the planning of the details of a conference, being dates, budget, participants, using an intermediary for organizing the conference and the overall objectives. There are some intervening factors affecting this step; policies, corporate members` experiences, knowledge and values, and the condition and structure of the corporation and the environment it is a part of (G. I. Crouch & Ritchie, 1998). The preplanning lays the fundament for the conference and eventually destination selection.

Step two is where the various specific factors of the destination are evaluated. These factors are; facilities, accessibility, quality of service, destination image, affordability, safety and security and attractions and entertainment (Lee & Back, 2005). They are evaluated on importance in reference to plans made in step one.

In step three, the destination that is evaluated to meet the required and wanted factors best, is selected (G. I. Crouch & Ritchie, 1998). Destination here meaning a local geographical place, like a city or region.

After this the conference is held and a post evaluation of the destination and factors influencing is done, and will affect the next process of conference destination selection (G. I. Crouch & Ritchie, 1998). We do not include these steps in the model, because we are only investigating the process before leading to the selection of a destination.

2.14.2 Illustrating of the second model

Model two: Destination factors importance level

2.14.3 Presenting the first question

Is there a sequential difference on the destination factors and their level of importance, if so, what is it?

The theory and the interviews conducted imply that there is a sequential difference on what factors are most important when selecting a conference destination in the corporate sector. In this research we have not looked at any specific destinations and the relationship with the destination factors, only the general importance of the factors when selecting a destination and how important the various factors are. In the analysis of the data we will see if there is a significant sequential difference in the importance of the factors independently of other influences.

The literature review shows various sequential importance levels on the destination attributes influencing the selection process. However, these tables of importance ratings, based on means and standard deviation, differ in the ratings they use different attributes and are not rated based on the overall factors after factor analysis of the attributes (Chu, Li, & Qu, 2000; G. Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Oppermann, 1996). Because of the lack of substantial theoretical agreement on a sequential table of destination factor importance, and some variance in the interviews, we decided not to have any prejudged statements on what sequence the factors will appear in.

This research is based on the overall factors found in a content analysis of a substantial amount of literature, to be the destination factors affecting the selection of a destination the most. We used attributes from the literature, which was most frequently used to describe the details of the various factors (Lee & Back, 2005). A factor analysis was attempted of our research, to see if the attributes measured under the various factors was best suited there or if a reconsideration of the factor attributes should be in order, as well as investigating possible other or a cut of the factors. Conducting the factor analysis was however not possible because of a combination of a too small sample size and many attributes (Pallant, 2010).

2.14.4 Presenting the second question

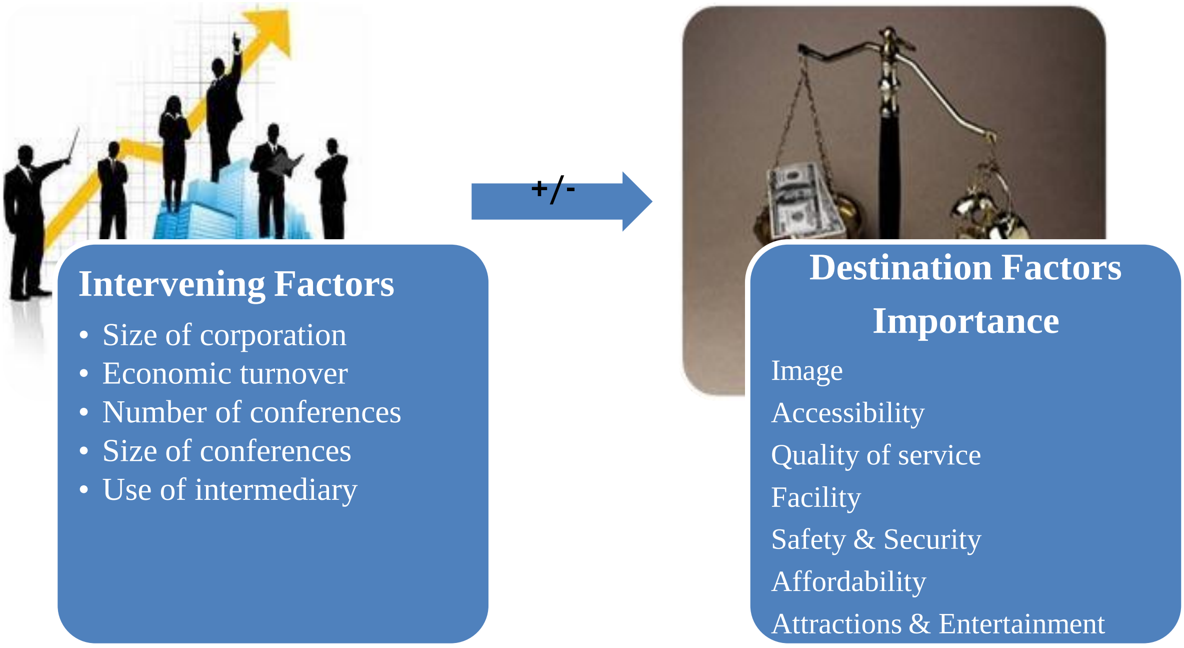
Are there any relationships between the various destination factors of importance and the intervening factors?

It is interesting to see if there are any specific correlations between the destination factors, if one is of high importance does it also imply high importance of another factor, or maybe it implies a low importance of another factor. This is an explorative question and we do not have any hypothesis based on theory or the interviews, stating correlating relationships among the various destination factors.

2.14.5 Illustration of the third model

Model one states the process from planning towards evaluation and to selecting a conference destination. In the next model we will focus on a specific piece of the overall model one. Model three is in regards to the relative relationship between some of the intervening factors within the corporation and the factors of importance of destination. It is of interest because of little research on this subject, and it can possibly affect the importance of the various destination factors.

Model three: Intervening factors influencing destination factors` importance



Model two describes that the intervening factors influence the destination factors in relation to more or less importance. First the intervening factors influence the plans and objectives for the conference, which again influence the evaluation of factors for various destinations as in model one, but model three simplifies the process and shows that the intervening factors eventually influence the factors that will be evaluated and emphasized for the various destinations.

Step one in this model focus on the intervening factors corporation size, economic yearly turnover of corporation, how many and how large the conferences they usually organize are, and if they use the services of intermediaries in organizing conferences. These factors are selected because they reflect some of the corporate structure, condition and experience which Crouch and Ritchie (1998) found to be factors of influence. They are also accessible to gather information about from meeting planners. The destination factors are the factors found to influence the selection of a destination the most (Lee & Back, 2005).

2.14.6 Presenting the third question

Are there differences in the importance levels of destination factors across the groups of the intervening factors?

Hypothesis one:

There are significant differences in the importance levels of destination factors across the groups of the intervening factors

1.a: It is a significant difference between the importance level of the destination factors across the five groups of corporate economic turnover.

1.b: It is a significant difference between the importance level of the destination factors across the seven groups of the number of conferences the corporation organize yearly.

1.c: It is a significant difference between the importance level of the destination factors across the three groups of the corporate size.

1.d: It is a significant difference between the importance level of the destination factors across the nine groups of the number of delegates at the largest conferences organized.

1.e: It is a significant difference between the importance level of the destination factors across the nine groups of the number of delegates at the smallest conferences.

1.f: It is a significant difference between the importance level of the destination factors across the three groups of using an intermediary or not or sometimes.

3. Methodology

Within the methodology chapter we will present how we have retrieved the information that forms the basis for our empirical study and the conclusions that can be drawn from it. In this chapter we want to clarify the methodological choices we have made during the research project. The intention of this project is to look closer at why decision makers within the MICE segment choose a particular destination site in exchange of others in terms of conferences and congresses. We want to address the different factors that may influence the site selection when a meeting planner determines where their conference should be held. A method is a systematic and pragmatic approach.

Based on the literature review, we made an identification of several key factors, discovered by earlier conducted research, which in varying degree are influencing decision makers in British and American companies. Based on our investigation, there is little research to be found that is conducted within the conference industry in Norway. The factors that were identified include accessibility, availability of facilities, and quality of service provided, destination image, entertainment and security.

3.1 Design of the research question

When we decide on a research question, we make an important choice. It means that we limit what we will focus on in the research study. According to Jacobsen (2005), with an appraisal, we simultaneously determine what aspects we do not want to focus on. This delimitation can be made explicit and implicit. When making an explicit definition, we as researchers clearly decide what we want to focus on. Implicit happens delimitations more unconsciously, due to so-called pre-judge, which are assumptions we humans have about how the world looks. In connection with a determination of the research question, should such restrictions be made explicit as much as possible. We must therefore analyze the problem thoroughly (Jacobsen, 2005).

Since the problem area we have chosen for research can be a quite comprehensive topic to embrace, we must make the problem area delimited and more précis along the process of investigation. The tourism industry in general and the conference industry in particular, are important because of the way it can affect a destination either directly or indirectly. The industry has a substantial impact on a destination, especially in terms of the local community and economic impact. In addition, the industry is unpredictable because it has to be adjustable and adaptable for new trends and factors in order to keep track with the constantly changing market environment.

We are focusing on conference destination selection in the corporate conference market, where we investigate cognitive and affective factors influencing the selection process of conference destination. We choose not to highlight the actual venues responsible for hosting the conferences, but rather put the focus towards conference destinations such as cities. The results may be valuable for many destinations around the world, but our main interest is to provide valuable information and improve the possibilities for Norwegian destinations. In order to understand and identify which factors and changes in the market based on customer needs and marked trends, that are influencing the site selection, we must continue our researching process by looking at the subject from different angles. A lot of research has been conducted with the conference market and the site selection process as the main purpose of investigation. The information has been conducted within several countries in Europe as well as USA in order to meet the demand for a more professional and sustainable industries that can face the challenges of an unpredictable market (Rogers, 2011). However, there has been rather difficult to find and gather viable information about similar research on the conference industry in Norway. Through the researching process we want to confirm if information conducted among conference industries in international destinations, are transferable and can be used within the Norwegian conference industry. At the forefront of the research we had little understanding for how the industry functions and how it locate and manage factors influencing the site selection in order to provide competitive advantages and a more professional development of the Norwegian conference market. Furthermore, we have assumptions about that the industry may not be aware of these factors enough to gain benefits from these.

3.2 The choice of research design

Selection of research design is central to any type of analysis and research projects, as this choice will affect what results you will receive. The research design is a plan for how to go about conducting the analysis. Our research is therefore based on a triangulation methodology where we have gathered information through a literature review, in-depth interviews and a questionnaire. This means that we plan to conduct both a qualitative and quantitative approach in order to find valid and reliable solutions to our subject of investigation.

3.2.1 Deductive versus Inductive approach

Deductive reasoning starts with former theories and empirical findings and makes assumptions based on this data. Then the researchers gather new data to see if the assumptions are realistic. Some say that this way of doing research can mislead the researchers in looking only for the information they find relevant and support the assumptions. The opposite is inductive reasoning, starting with an open mind about a context or general principle and gather all relevant information, systemize it and find theories that reflects a realistic picture of the given context (Jacobsen, 2005).

3.2.2 Holistic versus Individualistic approach

An individualistic approach means that it is the individual that is the main source of data, through what they say or do. More complex phenomenon, like corporations or markets, can only be seen like an aggregate of different meanings, thoughts and actions of individuals, mainly independent of the social context. This way of approaching the world has led to controlled experiments and big sample surveys. This approach assumes that a common view on a subject is found by asking the same questions in a survey to many respondents (Jacobsen, 2005).

A more holistic approach emphasize that a phenomenon must be understood as a complex interaction between individuals and the specific context they are in. One individual can act and have very different meanings depending on the context, like in a corporation, family gathering and at a holiday. Researchers having this approach often gather data through observations in natural contexts, either in groups, organizations or whole societies over a longer period of time. The object here is to register the complex interaction between what the individuals say and do, and in what context they say and do it in (Jacobsen, 2005).

3.2.3 Generalization

Those that view the world as it is an objective reality out there believe that the researchers has to be aware of effects they might have on what they are researching. The researchers should not interrupt the objective reality, so there should be a distance between the researcher and the research objects. This is because the researcher should not affect the results, so if another researcher carries out an identical research project, the same results would be found. Critics say that one can never totally eliminate the researcher effect, as it always must be some contact between researcher and object during an investigation. Some even say that the focus on distance makes the research less reliable and valid, as the researcher does not get the deeper understandings and interpretations from the individuals. This means that one should have an equal relation with the respondents and try to understand them on their own premises. Another thing is that researcher always affects the research project in some way or another, either through the main question, the choice of respondents or the like, because of the various values they possess. The critics of the view of an “objective reality out there” say that research never can be totally neutral and objective (Jacobsen, 2005).

The quantitative research method is a based on the assumption that the social reality can be measured by methods and instruments that can give us information in the form of numbers, as opposite to a qualitative method and information in the form of words. A classical quantitative measuring instrument is a questionnaire with fixed response alternatives. This research method requires that the researcher have knowledge about the phenomenon in question, that the definition of the phenomenon is meaningful for the respondents and the phenomenon is possible to structure. Many claim that this method only measures the understanding a researcher has about a phenomenon, as it is the researcher that defines the questions and response alternatives. Some of these critics say that one must do field work or open interviews to really understand social phenomenon and find all the shades and variations that lies in various interpretations (Jacobsen, 2005).

3.2.4 Intensive versus Extensive design

The intensive design is about how deep the research about a phenomenon is, while the extensive design is about how broadly the research is conducted, on how many we want to say something about in the findings (Jacobsen, 2005). These designs leave us with two questions; one; how many shades of the phenomenon should we research, and two; how many units/respondents should we investigate?

The ideal research has many variables and shades, as well as many units/respondents. This is however cost demanding as it takes long time to conduct interviews and observations and the information we find is very detailed and complex and requires a substantial work load of analysis. Because of resource considerations, with a lack of enough time and money, the ideal arrangement is often impossible, and the researcher must choose between the intensive design with many variables and few units/respondents and the extensive design with few variables and many units/respondents (Jacobsen, 2005).

The more extensive a design is the more generalizable they are. This means that individual variances and shades disappear and one is looking at what is common for the sample. It is also possible to have a higher degree of generalization of the findings to other populations. This design gives the researcher the possibility of getting a more precise description of the scope, extent and/or frequency of a phenomenon across various contexts (Jacobsen, 2005). One can divide it in two types of generalization; one type where a theoretical generalization on how variables are connected can be found from a smaller number of observations. These findings could however be difficult to valid generalize to another context. The other type is a statistical generalization, where the researcher can argue that the findings from research in one or more contexts can apply in other contexts as well, with a certain degree of uncertainty.

We have also used intensive design in literature review and interviews, going in depth on the factors influencing the selection of a destination and trying to get as much information on the subject as possible. The interviews were conducted to validate the theory to the reality of the market in Norway, but also to see if it was more factors or other variables of the factors that could influence the selection of a conference destination.

The two designs are however not mutually exclusive, but the basic differences are what the research focus is (context or phenomenon) and how many units/respondents (few or many) that are investigated (Jacobsen, 2005).

We use a combination of the two designs, where we combine an extensive and intensive research design. We therefore have a design-triangulation. We are ensuring relevance of the subject of research by doing in depth interviews first and then we used this insight together with the theoretical information in conducting an extensive research, gathering data from many respondents by a questionnaire with fixed questions, response alternatives and some open ended questions. The design-triangulation could also be done the other way around, having an intensive study after the extensive one to assure relevance of the findings on the specific population the researcher wants to say something more about. Design-triangulation helps increase both the ideal of generalization and relevance (Jacobsen, 2005).

We also used both approaches to complement each other in the questionnaire, with both fixed questions and response alternatives and open-ended questions. Also in the interviews the approaches complemented each other, as we had some standardized questions for the entire interview objects as well as open questions on the subject of interest.

3.3 A triangulation method

Our research is based on a triangulation method where we gather information and relate to the body of knowledge through a literature review, in-depth interviews and a questionnaire. According to Cohen & Manion (1986, p.254), a triangulation is “an attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint”. (Cohen and Manion) The use of triangulation is a consistent way to increase the validity and credibility of data and conclusions. It means that we can control data and conclusions by combining various methods, different interviewers, different contexts and persons that detect and analyze the data. This type of controlling is efficient to ensure that what one researcher comes forward to, also can be obtained by another researcher.

In social research, we build on the principle that we learn by observing from multiple perspectives than by looking from only one perspective. There exists different ways for performing a triangulation due to your research project. The most common type is triangulation of measure, which entails that we take multiple measures of the same phenomena. The next type concerns with triangulation of observers, which is a variation on the first type. By using multiple observers you can bring alternative perspectives, backgrounds and social characteristics into to the research. You thereby reduce limitations and will produce a fuller picture. The third type evolves triangulation of theory, and is a type of triangulation that requires using multiple theoretical perspectives to plan study or to interpret the data. The fourth type is triangulation of method, which mixes the qualitative and quantitative approach and data, is the type we use for our research project. Within many research projects, the researchers often use one of the approaches, either qualitative or quantitative, and develop an expertise within one of them. One can imagine that the qualitative and quantitative approaches are located in their respective extremity of a horizontal scale. Often it is sufficient to use only one method to conduct your study, but you will achieve a more unified project if you use both methods. As Newman (2011) points out, a study that combines both approaches tend to be richer and more comprehensive. Within this particular study we are using the approaches sequentially, which means that we do a qualitative approach first and then a quantitative approach in order to gain a more comprehensive study. During our triangulation method we conduct a context literature review, followed up by in-depth interviews and finally we conduct a questionnaire.

3.4 Data Collection Method

Now that we have decided on the basic research design, whether it is causal or descriptive, intensive or extensive, the next step is to choose the data collection method that is most suitable for gathering the information we need. When it comes to the data collection method we intend to conduct both a qualitative and quantitative measurement through two main research processes.

Regardless of which collection method is chosen, there are always two requirements that apply when conducting research. The first requirement is validity; it implies that we are measuring what we want to measure. The second requirement is reliability, which in other words means that we must be able to rely on the information we have collected. In order to ensure that the requirement is fulfilled within our research project we must implement two methods. Thereby we can confirm whether or not earlier research conducted within the conference industry in countries such as the USA and UK, also is suitable within the Norwegian industry.

Within the qualitative approach, you can choose between several different methods on how to collect the information you need. The first and perhaps the most common method is usage of individual in-depth interviews. Alternatively, one may choose to conduct group interviews or to do an observation of a given situation or a phenomenon. Regardless of which collecting method is chosen it must be suitable for the research question that is required clarified, because the method will affect validity and reliability of the data. It will therefore have consequences for what results you will achieve throughout the study. The main objectives by doing a qualitative study are to explore the subject more closely and create valuable insight into the phenomenon. This must be done in order to provide in-depth understanding about the problem and whether or not other concepts or relationships should be included in the model and hypotheses presented above. More specifically, the intention of conducting primary data through collecting in-depth interviews is because of the inductive and intensive approaches often included in qualitative methods. As mentioned earlier, inductive reasoning gives the researcher an opportunity to have an open mind in the beginning of the study and pinpoint it as contexts and patterns appear. When we then understand the patterns and contexts, the study must follow it should be completed with a quantitative approach. The quantitative approach has a more extensive reasoning and enables the researcher to gain more representativeness and width.

Primary data is data gathered from the primary source of information and the data acquisition is tailored for a specific problem. Primary data is acquired through methods like interviews, observations or questionnaires (Jacobsen, 2005). In this study, the in-depth interviews and questionnaire will be the source for our primary data.

Secondary data is data gathered by others than the researcher and this imply that the information often is acquired for another purposes, another problem, than that of the researcher. This information can be of both quantitative and qualitative nature. It is important to be conscious about what sources that are in the secondary data, where it is from, who has gathered it, who was the population and sample for the former research, and the like. Especially important is how reliable the sources are (Jacobsen, 2005). Secondary data are used through the literature review and will form the basis for collecting the primary data in our research.

3.5 The literature review

In this research project we conducted a literature review, which lays the foundation for our further investigation and research design. Through the literature, we have obtained information from credible researchers and professors who have compiled articles and books about the conference industry. Through the literature review, we have found relevant information for our research subject that will strengthen our research project as a whole, and we will use the information in conjunction with our own data collection.

According to Newman (2011), a review of the accumulated knowledge on our research question is an early and essential step in doing a study. Before we address the research subject on our own we must find out what others have already discovered in relation to the subject. Newman (2011) mentions four goals for doing a literature review. The first goal entails the ability to demonstrate a familiarity with a body of knowledge and establish credibility. The second goal is to show the path of prior research and how our current project is linked to it. The third goal includes the ability to integrate and summarize what is known in an area. The final goal includes the ability to learn from others and stimulate new ideas through the literature review. Our main reason for doing the literature review is to find familiarities with the body of knowledge and establish credibility and confidence through the research work we are conducting.

There exist different types of doing a literature review within the methodology, and we need to find the type that is most suitable for our further investigation. From this basis, we have done a so-called context review. A context review is a common type of review where the author links a specific study to a larger body of knowledge. A context review often appears in the beginning of a research project. It often introduces the study by situating it within a broader framework and showing how it continues or builds on a developing line of thought or study. (Newman, 2011) We believe a context literature review is a suitable and concise way for us to gather the correct information in which is most relevant for the type of research we are conducting.

3.6 The qualitative approach

We have decided to use both a qualitative and quantitative approach because it is ideal in any given research study to use a combination of different approaches. We are aiming to explain differences between the approaches and why it is most suitable for us to use them together in this study.

Firstly we will look at the qualitative approach were we use in-depth interviewing in order to gather primary data. By gathering primary data we will collect information directly from people or a group of people and implies that we gather this information for the first time. Thus we get a data collection that is tailored for the particular problem we want to investigate. The benefits by starting with a qualitative approach, is that this method places few restrictions on answers provided by the respondent. Qualitative methods emphasize details, nuance richness and the uniqueness of each individual respondent and openness is therefore a central concept. In this context, openness means that we that investigates, to a limited extent has decided in advance exactly what we are looking for. It is the people we interview or observe who decide what information we receive. We can argue that this approach will often have a high conceptual validity. Thus, the problem will change eventually as we receive more information (Jacobsen, 2005).

3.6.1 In-depth interviewing technique

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents in order to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation. In our case, we wanted to ask the respondents about their experiences and perspectives related to how the conference market act in the decision making process concerned with destination selection for their conferences. In-depth interviews are appropriate to use when we want detailed information about a person's thoughts, behavior and position or want to explore new issues in depth. Interviews are often used to provide context to other data and earlier conducted research. In-depth interviews should be used when we want to refine questions and topic before future surveys of a particular group, which is the case within our research project (Jacobsen, 2005).

The primary advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is possible through other data collection methods, such as surveys. (Boyce and Neale, 2006)

3.6.2 Organization of the interviews

In the first measurement process we conducted individual in-depth interviews among five selected respondents. In-depth interviews may in the literature be recognized as field research interviews. This type of interviews is often unstructured and nondirective as well as it is not so formal as survey research interviews. Field research interview involves asking questions, listening, showing interest and recording what was said. The interviewees are active respondents whose insight, feelings and cooperation are essential parts of a discussion process that reveals subjective meanings pinpointed to the topic being investigated.

We assume that the conference industry is a fairly hierarchical system where Innovation Norway and the Norwegian Convention Bureau is located at the top and therefore has the most authority. Next in line are the destination management companies that are responsible for specific geographic regions, such as cities. Among them we find Visit Trondheim and Stavanger region. Then follow the various event companies, event agencies and professional conference organizers. These usually have a good working relationship to the destination companies and down towards the customers. On the second lowest level are the various hotels and conference centers themselves. There are those who possess the facilities and opportunities to be able to hold the actual conference. On the lower level you will find customers. We believe that customers can either choose to make direct contact with a potential hotel or conference center where they organize and book the conference on their own or in partnership with our employees. Alternatively, customers can contact a professional conference organizer or agency that performs most of the organization on behalf of the customer. Based on earlier conducted theory, it is an ever-increasing number of companies who choose to entrust the organization of conference packages to an outside booking company. Through the use of individual in-depth interviews we are able to make an insight to how credible the theory is, and whether this theory is transferable for the Norwegian conference industry.

From the basis of this system we consciously selected five respondents that has key position throughout the conference industry from bottom to top. We interviewed two respondents employed in two separate hotels in Norway, including a Sales Consultant, which is employed at one of the premier conference hotels in Trondheim and the Director of Sales, Eli Sømme, which is employed at Clarion Hotel in Stavanger. These hotels are a part of two major hotel chains where both have strong position in the Norwegian conference industry. The hotels along with the conference centers represent the level closest to the customers and are those responsible for hosting the actual conferences. Thereafter we interviewed two destination management companies. We interviewed Lisbeth Fallan, which is the International Sales Manager for meetings and incentives at Visit Trondheim AS. Visit Trondheim AS is the destination management company in Trondheim. Furthermore, we conducted an interview with Per Morten Haarr, which is the Sales Manager at congresses and conferences in Region Stavanger. Region Stavanger is the destination management company for Stavanger and the surrounding regions. The destination management companies constitute the level above the professional conference organizing level, meaning the PCO's and the level including hotels and conference venues. The final interview was conducted with Per Eivind Voie, which is employed in Innovation Norway as a customer adviser in the company's department in Trøndelag county. The interviews were carried out in Trondheim and Stavanger. Trondheim and Stavanger are two Norwegian cities that are very similar when it comes to their level of attractiveness and their ability to compete with other Norwegian and international cities. Trondheim is attractive because of the strong academic environment that is connected to NTNU and other university colleges. Furthermore, it has to be mentioned that Trondheim has paved the way for a positive development within technology in the recent years. The University in Trondheim, NTNU, is well known for their courses within engineering and complex technology and many successful technology companies are located in Trondheim. The attractiveness in Stavanger is high because of the petroleum industry and has a good academic environment based on this industry. These academic environments are important for having ability to maintain a sustainable conference industry within a city. In terms of their ability to compete, we can assume that both Stavanger and Trondheim are placed in the same position. They are in a position where they must compete with Oslo and Bergen, which is already well positioned in the national and international conference market. By conducting information from these positions we will receive a thorough understanding of how the conference industry functions. We will receive information concerning how the different levels in the industry work together and understand how they communicate with each other. Through the in-depth interviews it will be revealed perspectives from two different angles about how the industry perceive the seriousness and professionalism throughout the system and how tasks and responsibilities are distributed.

However the main purpose by conducting the in - depth interview as a first part of our research process, is to understand the network that exists throughout different levels within the conference industry. Furthermore, we are able to create a valuable insight to which factors that are transferable from the theory conducted from research projects internationally towards how they are adapted into the Norwegian industry. The in-depth interviews will function as a quality assurance, which ensures that the theory we have found is actually adequate for the Norwegian market we examine. Furthermore, we will be able to identify other potential factors, which are not mentioned in the literature and therefore must be included into the study. The in-depth interviews also give us an opportunity to pinpoint our research area in a more purposeful direction where the subject we address is interesting and useful for the conference market.

3.6.3 Interview template

Before we started the process of conducting in-depth interviews, we developed an interview template that was used as a starting point for each interview (Appendix B). At a purely qualitative method we are talking about an open conversation that is often associated with a particular theme or a specific type of information needed to create some understanding of a problem area. As mentioned earlier, the qualitative method is an approach that on a regular basis is inductive. Since we are dealing with an open method, we as researchers attempt to add as few constraints as possible on the information that will be collected. Only in the aftermath of the information collection process, the information will be structured, put into categories and divided into variables that are associated with each other. In this way we receive information that is highly relevant for the person being interviewed, talked with or being observed. Thereby the relevance constitutes an important consideration to us.

An interview may possess different degrees of openness. In order to receive the correct information through the gathering process, we must determine whether the interview should be closed or whether it should be open (Jacobsen, 2005). In an enclosed interview, the interviewer most often use a series of questions with fixed response options in a fixed order. In this case, it probably would more appropriate to use a standard questionnaire. In a completely open interview, the interviewer carries out a conversation without an interview guide and without a sequence or sense of regularity in the conversation. Sometimes it is most suitable if the interview takes place as a regular conversation, which means without any limitations or steering from the interviewer. Nevertheless, the interview usually tends to be structured to some extent for example in the means of a list of topics that should be addressed. The purpose with using a template was to create a more comprehensive dialogue between the interviewee and us in order to ensure a two-way communications (Jacobsen, 2005). We want to provide as much information as possible from these interviews. By creating a dialogue we pave the way for our interviewees to provide initiative into the conversation and provide information based on own terms without influence from us. As the respondent replies, it gives us an indication for how much information each interviewee is willing and able to provide. From this basis we can customize and change direction of the interview as we go along at the same time as we show a degree of flexibility towards the interviewee.

3.6.4 Qualitative sampling and sampling size

A fundamental problem in most research studies is that we rarely get to investigate all we want, especially when it comes to qualitative methods. Qualitative methods are often both expensive and time consuming (Jacobsen, 2005). In our study, the time we have at our disposal does largely contribute to determine the actual sample and sample size. When we make a choice about what we should investigate, it is important to keep in mind that the research we do, always is a section of topics and variables, context, time, people and events

(Jacobsen, 2005). The selection of topics, variables and context is something we make in connection with the research question. Thereby, the investigation is only valid for the topics being examined. As mentioned, the time limitation is a crucial aspect and the research project cannot continue forever. Since we are students who perform this project, the limitations of time is often determined in advance and we have basically only a few months to gather the information we need. Therefore we cannot allow ourselves to interview all respondents in the population and there is limited how much we can immerse ourselves in the problem being investigated. The range of devices is of great importance for the study's reliability and credibility, and it is important to critically look at whether we can trust the information we receive from the units. When we do interviews, we can experience problems when people are lying, do not have sufficient knowledge of the topic we want information about or that they provide inaccurate information. When it comes to the sampling of units we must make a distinction between the interview, the observation and the document investigation. When we for instance conduct interviews, we must be concerned about which kind of people we choose to create a dialogue with. In terms of observations we must concentrate on which kind of situations or events we choose and with document investigations we must be critical towards the sample of sources we choose. In this study we must be concerned with what kind of people we need to interview.

A sampling process can move through a set of defined phases or stages. Firstly we created an overview of everyone we wishes to examine if we have had unlimited amount of time, resources and possibilities to analyze the data (Jacobsen, 2005). This overview represent the theoretical population we are interested in, and in our case it consist of the hotels, conference venues, the destination management companies, the professional conference organizers and organizations such as the Norwegian Convention Bureau and Innovation Norway. It is rather difficult to determine the actual size of this population, because we do not have a clear understanding of how the overall industry functions. From the assumptions of the hierarchical system we divided the population in to sub groups. These groups make up the different levels throughout the conference industry. Since this industry is widely spread between the destination and cities in Norway, we selected on two cities, Trondheim and Stavanger, that we assume is positioned at a similar basis when it comes to attractiveness and competitiveness. Within Trondheim and Stavanger we picked out five respondents representing the bottom, the middle and the top of the industry. These respondents have important positions that provide valuable information to the study.

In qualitative methods, we operate rarely with representative samples. The number of people we want to create a dialogue with are often many. In our case, the industry we choose from is quite large and comprehensive and we must therefore add a few criteria. The sampling selection is often governed out the purpose of the interview, which means that we already have a specific type of information we are looking for. Therefore, we can simply select respondents who we think can give us much and good information. This can be people with a lot of knowledge about what we are interested in, people who are good to express themselves, or it could be people who we know are willing to give up information. This selection criterion requires that we first have to know how good the various information sources the respondents are. We therefore cannot select only based on the potential information they can provide. We can additionally choose to perform a so-called typical sample selection, which means that we draw sample of a group we assume create a good picture of the typical unit. The purpose is to describe how different factors can influence the destination selection, so the specific group we are looking for is the customers that choose and buy conference packages at a destination. This group is more appropriate to address through a questionnaire, which we will do later in the research process. In the in-depth interviews, we therefore address and describe the factors from the industry's point of view in order to create different angles in the study. Through the university we have studied at, we established contact with key people who are well positioned in the conference industry. One of the key people was a manager from the destination management company in Stavanger and therefore we used this person as a starting point for selecting respondents within the conference industry. The five respondents in the interviewing process represent three important levels in the conference industry, and they are thoroughly chosen on the basis that they provide as objective information as possible.

3.7 The quantitative approach

In the following sections we are aiming to describe how we have created and developed the questionnaire. The quantitative methods are often extensive and relatively closed, meaning that they address many devices and the information to be collected is predefined by the researcher. The intention with these methods is to gather information that is easy to systematize. Therefore must central definitions be categorized and made clear before the empirical investigation can be conducted. This characteristic of quantitative method means that it has been attached special emphasis on the operationalization of concepts and that this pre-categorization makes it possible to standardize the information in form of numbers.

When it comes to the methods of collecting primary data, it is the questionnaire with closed response options that are the most dominant type. The researcher asks a number of questions based on a set of variables required measured. The device can only respond within the limits defined by the researcher in advance and is hence forced into the response categories such as “yes”, “no”, “strongly agree”, “very positive”, etc.

3.7.1 Benefits and weaknesses with a quantitative approach

Advantages of using a quantitative method are several, but the most obvious one is maybe that it standardize the data and makes it easy to manage and analyze, as well as it is easy to restrict the research, having a clear start and finish of the study. The costs of time and money are often smaller with a quantitative than a qualitative approach, making it possible to gather data from many respondents and get a representative sample, increasing the possibility of generalizing from the sample to the population. This approach, in short, makes it possible to say something about variations and correlation between different variables and conditions, highlight main features, the typical, the common and the deviations from the standards.

The quantitative approach is not investigating very complex conditions, because the researcher is trying to reach many respondents, and this can give the research a superficial touch (Jacobsen, 2005). It is difficult to go in depth about a subject and impossible to get all the individual variations in the sample or population by using this approach. There is no space for data regarding conditions that are not a part of the questionnaire, conditions that might be of higher interest than what we are asking for. It could therefore be valuable to have some open ended questions in the questionnaire, asking for individual meanings about the subject. This requires more analysis costs, but can give a higher degree of relevance, depending on the main objectives of the research.

The phases of a quantitative approach are more sequential than the phases of a qualitative approach, meaning that they come after each other in time. This approach is therefore less flexible and making changes during the research could be costly as well as it can damage the reliability of the research (Jacobsen, 2005).

3.7.2 Quantitative sampling and sampling size

In the study we used a survey design were a self-administrated questionnaire was sent by mail to randomly selected corporations from a list of the 500 largest corporations in Norway in 2011. This list was obtained from the Internet page Norgesstorstebedrifter.no. A challenge was that we wanted to have meeting planners as our respondents, but the mail addresses we found was mostly to the administration or front desk of the corporations. Therefore we wrote to those receiving the mail that we wanted meeting planners to be the respondent answering the attached questionnaire.

In our study, we used two methods in order to check the non-response bias. One is comparing the demographic sample profile with that of the population. This could however not provide answers to if the attitudinal responses were similar or not between non-respondents and respondents. To answer this we compared early and late respondents on the demographic profiles and the findings on factor importance and intermediary use (looking at the difference between those answering first and those answering after reminder sent).

Difficulty of estimating population size – calculate sample with the level of significance and precision we consider is important. Assume normally distributed population, +/-5% precision level, and 95% significance level. These assumptions require use of standard deviation to estimate size of desired sample. Here standard deviation (S) is 1,96, precision is 0,05 and coefficient of variation (V) (a predetermined number) is 1/3 in a normal distribution.

N= (S/P)2 x V2

Sample size= (1,96/0,05)2 x 1/9 = 171 (1)

According to equation 1 the sample should entail 171 respondents, but because the questionnaire could be biased it is optimal to have even more respondents, to enhance reliability and validity (Lachin, 1981).

3.7.3 Pretesting of the questionnaire

In order to ensure that questionnaire was good enough to measure the concepts we wanted to measure, a pretesting session was conducted. We showed the questionnaire to group of university students that have a relatively high level of knowledge about social science and the use of research method. From these we got feedback and discussed various details regarding face validity in the questionnaire. Face validity expresses what measures the questionnaire seems to measure seen from a subjective perspective. This means that one argues that the type of measurement selected, is so obviously correct that all would agree that we are measuring exactly what we are looking for in a good manner. Either interviewing a researcher or discussing the topic with people in the target group we are investigating, can easily implement face validity. (Gripsrud, Olsson & Silkoset, 2007). We therefore discussed the questionnaire with four managers that have been responsible for organize and plan meetings in their corporations. We did this session in order to get feedback on their meanings of and how they understood the questions, response alternatives, concepts, sequencing, flow and continuity, scaling, timing and length. The feedback was mostly the same from all the respondents on the pre-test; there were some spelling mistakes, some thought it would be better to have it in Norwegian instead of English, there should be a “other” option on the question of education, there should be a fixed demand in the administration of the questionnaire were one have to answer all the questions before it could be completed and there should be a clearer explanation of the concept intermediary in section three. Based on this feedback we fixed the spelling mistakes, added an “other” option on the question of education, and wrote a clear explanation of what we meant with the concept “intermediary” in section three. It was unfortunately not an option on the Questback administration for us to demand all questions to be answered before completing the questionnaire. We decided to continue to have the questionnaire in English, because the master thesis is in English and we wanted the concepts and variables to have similar meaning from the theory we gathered it from to the results and findings, as using another language could give a different meaning to the different concepts. Another reason to have the questionnaire in English is that some of the largest corporations in Norway have international administrations and therefore some of the respondents could found it easier to answer in English than Norwegian, as well as most Norwegians has a good understanding of the English language.

Otherwise the questionnaire got feedback on being clear, having good length and timing as well as being clear and orderly in regards to questions, sections, response alternatives and scaling. The open ended questions was also seen to be of importance for respondents to add information if needed.

The correlations within and between items were not pre-tested in our questionnaire, as they were both pre-tested and used in several other questionnaires in research published in per reviewed articles.

3.7.4 Using the Questionnaire technique

The questionnaire was made based on research questionnaires used before and found in research published in per reviewed literature, having a high level of reliability and validity, as well as high correlations of variables within items and between items.

One study that used content analysis of published articles within the tourism and hospitality journals from 1990 to 2003 found that the major factors in destination selection were accessibility, quality of service, availability of facility, destination image, affordability, attractions and entertainment and safety and security (Lee & Back, 2005). The questionnaire consist of three different sections that each measures variables based on the literature review we have conducted.

3.7.5 Different sections of the questionnaire

Section one, questions one to nineteen (19), in the questionnaire is in regards to demographic and corporate information, to be able to compare the respondents with the population and see if there are any variations on findings based on demographic and corporate background.

Section two focuses on factors influencing the selection of a conference destination. These factors and variables are found in several per reviewed literature articles (Baloglu & Love, 2004; Gallarza, et al., 2002; Lee & Back, 2005). In our survey the various factors are measured as different items with several variables measured on each item. They are measured on importance on a five point unbalanced Likert scale, ranging; “not important”, “slightly important”, “moderately important”, “very important” and “extremely important”. This scale is also used in previous research literature were the objective was to examine meeting planners` perceptions and intentions for various convention cities, focusing especially on the destination images (Baloglu & Love, 2004). Oppermann also used a Likert scale in finding the importance of 15 different decision criteria in regards to selecting a convention destination (Oppermann, 1996). He did however use a seven-point scale, while we chose a five-point scale to make it easier to analyze the findings as well as making the questionnaire clear and the scales as little confusing for the respondents as possible.

It starts with the item “image” that is measured on feelings, atmosphere and personal and professional experience of the destination because of inputs from interviews, as well as former qualitative research that has found a strong support for image being a concept of three components; cognitive, affective or feeling and overall perceptions. While reputation, safety, attractions, perceived quality and climate are variables that are found to correlate highly with the item “image” (Baloglu & Love, 2004). Other researcher sees all the items as attributes of the one overall concept of tourism destination image (Gallarza, et al., 2002). Many of these attributes are researched, but we want to see the correlation between them as separate items and which one of them that is most important in choosing a conference destination. And since the concept “image” is subjective, we meant it would be better to separate the image into various variables as well as separate the image concept from other items that may have a separate meaning for the respondents than only being part of the image concept.

The item “information” is measured on the variables of how important various information sources about a destination is, sources being friends and family, official and commercial. The official information obtained makes up the cognitive evaluation or the knowledge of a destination (Hakala & Lemmetyinen, 2011). While information from friends and family often affect the affective evaluation on holds about a destination.

“Accessibility” is the third item, measured by the variables ease and time of transportation at and to the destination and accommodation on site of conference facilities (Baloglu & Love, 2004).

The fourth item is “affordability” and is measured by the variable price of different attributes, like transportation, accommodation, food and beverages, facilities and overall price level at destination (Baloglu & Love, 2004).

“Safety and security” is item number five and is measured on the importance of perceived and official information on safety and security at the destination. This item is discussed in the interviews and is having two components; official statistics and facts and perceived and felt security.

Item number six, “location and facilities”, is measured on capacity and technological opportunities at facility at destination. This is only measured with two variables because we focus on the destination selection and not facility selection, but because some may choose by facility requirements before assessing the destination we decided to include this item. Based on information from interviews and literature the variables capacity and technology are of high importance, as it is the basis for availability of capacity needed and the basic need for technology resources in the conference market today (Baloglu & Love, 2004; Lee & Back, 2005).

“Attractions and entertainment” is item number seven and is measured on the importance of the variables restaurants, cultural attractions, nightlife and shopping facilities at the destination. “Quality of service” is item number eight and is measured on the variables of perceived quality of service, cleanliness and friendly people at the destination. Both these items has been found to be major factors in selection of a destination in former empirical studies (Lee & Back, 2005).

Section three is in regards to how corporations use intermediaries. This is measured by statements and a five point Likert scale measuring the agreement of the statements, also used in research done on factors influencing use of intermediaries (Kokkomäki, et al., 2009). The scale is ranged from “totally disagree”, “disagree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “agree” to “totally agree”. Most of the statements are based on former research on the subject of intermediaries` image and some of the statements and questions are based on findings from the interviews we conducted.

In the term intermediary we include professional conference organizers, event companies, booking agencies, destination management companies and the like, this explanation is also included at the top of section three for all respondents to have an understanding of what an intermediary is. The intermediaries have in common that they help the corporation with organizing a conference and the like, at the same time as they have an interest in helping stakeholders at various destinations to attract the tourism business sector (Lee & Back, 2005). Names like PCO, CVB, DMO and the like are used to explain various destination marketing and conference and convention organizers, but we include all of these in the term intermediary to get one clear concept to relate the research and findings to.

The two first statements are made based on information from interviews, as some corporation get in contact with intermediaries before they have decided on a destination, others contact them after deciding on the destination. In our research we also want to find out whether meeting planners get influenced by intermediaries in selecting a destination or not.

Statement in question 54 is about if the corporation use an intermediary for organizing conferences or not, and this statement is included to see how many corporations actually use the services of an intermediary in organizing conferences for them instead of doing it themselves. Leaving the responsibility to an intermediary could affect the selection of a destination if the corporation has not decided on the destination before contacting the intermediary, as one of the primary roles of an intermediary is to market a destination (Lee & Back, 2005).

Statement in question 55 and 56 is about if the corporation uses an intermediary if they are at a familiar or at an unfamiliar destination. This is interesting to see in relation to the answer on the first two statements about whether the corporation contacts intermediaries prior to or after deciding on the destination. Maybe they contact intermediaries after selecting destinations, but mostly when it is at an unfamiliar place or vice versa. This statement is made based on the interviews conducted in the first phase of the research.

Statement in question 57 is about whether the meeting planner means that intermediaries offer better conference packages than they can organize themselves. This statement is based on several statements used in the research on finding what influences meeting planners to use intermediaries (Kokkomäki, et al., 2009). There the statements are in regards to the quality, attractiveness and presentation of the packaged services of the intermediary, but we want to find if the conference packages offered by intermediaries are perceived to be better than those organized by the meeting planner at the corporation. If so, this might also influence the selection of the destination, because of influence from the intermediary which also has the responsibility to market various destinations (Lee & Back, 2005).

Statement in question 58 is about risk avoidance and using the services of an intermediary because it limits “the risk of making a wrong choice” (Kokkomäki, et al., 2009, p. 24). Using the services of an intermediary can be because the meeting planner wants to avoid risk (Lapierre, 2000). It is interesting to see whether this correlates with using intermediaries before selecting a destination or not, and if it is a correlation with selecting a familiar or unfamiliar destination.

Question 59 is about how the corporation and intermediary first come in contact. It is interesting to see if intermediaries contact the corporation actively or vice versa, because an intermediary contacting a corporation first could influence the selection of a destination because of its marketing perspective (Lee & Back, 2005).

Question 60 is in regards to the corporation having a long-term agreement with an intermediary or not, as well as why or why not. Former research show that building a strong relationship between destination staff and meeting planners is a critical, as it influences how successful a conference or meeting is. It is also of importance for the intermediaries to enhance their reputation and achieving a stable demand and profit (Lee & Back, 2005). This may in turn influence the destination selection. We included an open-ended response alternative on this question because of the interest in understanding why meeting planners have long-term agreements or not with intermediaries.

Question 61 to 68 is a rating of importance on a five-point unbalanced Likert scale. It is an individual rating of all the items in section two of the questionnaire and of importance of intermediary advice in relation to selecting a conference destination. Every item is rated individually because rating them up against each other could give a skewed result, as some may find several items equally important (Jacobsen, 2005).

The last question, number 69, is an open-ended question asking it there are other factors than those mentioned that affect the selection of a conference destination, if so what factors and why. This is a question of more qualitative design that we included to see if there were something of relevance that we had not included in the questionnaire with the fixed questions (Jacobsen, 2005).

The open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire could be influenced by the questions with fixed response alternatives and scales (Baloglu & Love, 2004). It could therefore maybe be better to have open-ended questions in the beginning of a questionnaire. However, getting questions with fixed answers first could also open the mind of the respondent and get him or her to start reflecting more around the subject.

4. Qualitative analysis

This chapter discusses and covers how the first part of the methodological approach we have chosen for this study. First and foremost, this analyzes what we have come forward with in the results from the qualitative method. In this section there has been collected information in order to confirm earlier conducted research and possibly uncover new aspects about the conference market in Norway. It was conducted five in-depth interviews among key people in the conference industry and a fully report can be found in the appendix. In the following the information as been simplified and categorized in order to be used for further discussion.

4.1 Categorization of the first in-depth interview

Respondent number one is employed as a Sales Consultant at a significant conference hotel with membership in the Rezidor Group, located in Trondheim. The respondent is a woman, is 37 years old and lives in Trondheim. She wishes to remain anonymous, so no name of the respondent will be mentioned. The interview took place the 23rd of February 2012 at 14.00 pm.

The respondent speaks calmly and gives answers to the questions we ask, but seems stressed and uncomfortable. The respondent seems unwilling to provide too much detailed information, and gives us indications that she is not completely confident in the answers she gives.

4.1.1 Category one concerning accessibility and the ease of getting to the destination

The accessibility and the ease of getting to the destination are of great importance. The respondent argues that many customers appreciate a central location of the conference venue. The venue should have a central location in the city with easy access to nearby airports and transportation stations.

4.1.2 Category two concerning price and affordability

The price is not the most decisive factor. The respondent claims that the price is of course important, especially to smaller companies. The price standard is determined of what the conference venue can offer and compete with. These companies often choose to add the conference in other countries. There are an increasing number of conferences for each day that passes, which indicates that other factors are more important.

4.1.3 Category three concerning quality of service

The quality of services is an important factor. The respondent answers that the quality of services is more important than price in medium sized and large companies. Comparing the quality of service and price the standard is at a similar level. The quality of services depends on what expectations the customers have.

4.1.4 Category four concerning facilities and locations

The facilities are an important factor, but are not decisive for influencing site selection. The respondent argues that hotels with similar quality in facilities offer similar prices.

4.1.5 Category five concerning attractions and entertainment

Entertainment and activities is not an essential factor. The respondent argues that if there are a lot of cultural activities going on at the destination, and then it will be attractive to some customers. She believes, however, that customers on conferences do not have much free time to experience other things.

4.1.6 Category six concerning security and safety

The respondent had no opinion about the importance of this factor.

4.1.7 Category seven concerning destination image

The image has to some extent a fairly large impact. The respondent argues that it is more crucial for the conference customers that the hotel can offer facilities and location in anticipation for the size and type of event the customer wants to keep. The image is not so important because most conference guests will spend most of their time at the conference venue. The image only functions as a push or pull factor that attracts customer to the destination. The respondent further replies that there will be opening a new congress hotel in Trondheim, which she says will be a major contributor to attract more and bigger conferences and other cultural events.

4.1.8 Category eight concerning usage of intermediaries

There is a low degree of cooperation between the hotel and destination management companies, but has cooperating relationships with intermediaries, meaning conference organizing companies, booking agencies and meeting planners. The respondent claims that the detailed planning and process of contacting customers is mostly done by the sales department at the hotel and only use destination management companies when necessary. Furthermore she argues that the hotel rather puts emphasize on the collaboration with professional conference organizers, or travel agents, that plan and organize the actual conferences on behalf of the hotel.

4.1.9 Category nine concerning the importance of having a conference market

The importance of having conferences at a destination is important. The respondent replies that the market is valuable for the conference venues because conference guests spend most of their time and utilize most of the services at the venue. The conference guests are the most valuable customer group for a hotel because they generate more income and revenue of the hotel and they contribute to increased additional sales.

4.2 Categorization of the second in-depth interview

The respondent number 2 is the international Sales Manager for meetings and incentives employed at Visit Trondheim AS. The respondent is a woman named Lisbeth Fallan and is 45 years old. Visit Trondheim AS is a non-profit destination management company in Trondheim.

The respondent seems very calm and motivated. She seems very confident on the information she conveys and shows willingness to participate largely in the conversation where she includes own viewpoints as well. She has been employed in Visit Trondheim in many years and possesses thorough competence, which is reflected in the responses given.

4.2.1 Category one concerning accessibility and the ease of getting to the destination

Accessibility is a very important factor. The respondent argues that the most important aspect is to have as many direct flights as possible. As an example the respondent points out the collaboration between Visit Trondheim and Avinor. She replies that Avinor helps Visit Trondheim in the planning and establishment of new direct flights in and out of Trondheim Airport. She further mentions the aspect of having more direct flights to Trondheim is decisive in terms of greater attractiveness, because it is easier to make sales agreements with customers if the transportation time is shortest possible.

4.2.2 Category two concerning price and affordability

The price is not the most important factor. The respondent is of the opinion that Norway is not so expensive that many believe. She argues that Norway is expensive when it comes to beverages and tobacco, but in the conference industry the price standard is similar with the level in other European cities. According to the respondent, documentation was made in England where the prices standard in European cities was compared and Norway came at the second lowest level.

4.2.3 Category three concerning quality of service

Quality of service is an important factor. The respondent argues that international customers are more concerned with quality than Norwegian customers. When we for instance invite customers on viewing tours we receive feedback and comments from them as they observe and notice details that Norwegians does not notice at all. The respondent highlights that these details will be stored in the customers' mind and will influence the image for the overall destination.

4.2.4 Category four concerning facilities and locations

Facilities are an important but not a decisive factor. The respondent argues that when it comes to the conference facilities, location sites and the hotels, it is something that you can get in every destination you choose and it does not determine whether you select the conference site or not. Therefore, this is no conclusive factor that makes customers return for new conferences at the same destination. These are the facilities that constitute and make the conditions for us to have a market for conferences and other events. The most decisive factor that makes customers coming back to a particular destination, is determined of what that can be experienced outside the actual conference or congress. This factor applies ultimately unless the trade unions decide.

4.2.5 Category five concerning attractions and entertainment

Entertainment is an important factor and to some extent a decisive factor for influencing site selection. The respondent argues that entertainment is more important for congress guests than for conference guests, because the latter often have their own happenings included in the conference package at the venue. She mentions that Visit Trondheim uses concerts and cultural events as a selling point for attracting new potential customers to the destination, because the city has a lot to offer when it comes to music, art and culture. She continues, we have a customer in Germany that brings his underlying companies to gospel concerts. Here we could have offered the annual summer festival in Trondheim, but since the artists are revealed in late spring it is often too late for the customer to decide. It is more often the incentives market that is interested in activities and entertainment during their stay.

4.2.6 Category six concerning security and safety

Security is an important and fundamental factor. It is important because it is something everyone assumes has high priority and high quality standard. The respondent argues that Norway is viewed as a safe country to visit and is something that Visit Trondheim often receives feedback about. The respondent argues that Visit Trondheim has received feedback from customers that homeless people, drug addicts and criminals are not very visible in the cityscape and they feel very safe in the destination.

4.2.7 Category seven concerning destination image

Image is an important factor that influences site selection. The respondent argues that in the term of image one must include technology, the young environment, the students and the innovativeness. Many customers get impressed with the local food served and we use local food as competitive advantage attracting customers to the destination. Many restaurants in Trondheim use local food and ingredients that are locally produced, which makes a good impression and an excellent selling point through for instance food courses. The respondent further mentions that Trondheim is seen as young and vibrant city because of the academic environment along with emphasize for technology development and innovation.

4.2.8 Category eight concerning usage of intermediaries

The usage of intermediaries is important. The respondent argues that they have a close collaboration with Innovation Norway and Norway Convention Bureau (NCB), because they supports with a large amount of financial resources in order to maintain satisfactory conditions throughout the international conference market.

4.2.9 Category nine concerning the importance of having a conference market

The importance of having conferences in a destination is very high. The respondent argues that having conferences to Trondheim are of very high importance. This has several aspects with it, but if one looks at the financial side of having conferences in Trondheim, we got various trade unions and associations it is those who attract the majority of conferences to the city. The trade unions and associations have therefore quite high value for the destination.

Researchers and academic members are often well placed in the associations, and these often function as decision makers for their members. As decision makers they are placed in a position where they can plan and book conferences for their members, they have great influential power with regard to the choice of site selection, and can bring their association to the city perhaps every second year or every third year. This entails that they often return on a consistent basis if they are satisfied with what the destination has to offer with regard to conference facilities and so forth.

4.3 Categorization of the third in-depth interview

The respondent number 3 is the Sales Manager at congresses in Region Stavanger AS. The respondent is a man named Per Morten Haarr and lives in Stavanger. Region Stavanger is a destination management company with Stavanger and the surrounding region as the company's main focus area. The interview was conducted the 8th of March 2012, starting at 12:30 pm.

The respondent seems calm and relaxed. He is obviously prepared himself for the meeting and is approachable. He provides a lot of relevant information that is relevant to the conversation and is easy to create a dialogue with. He is knowledgeable and contributes a great deal of the knowledge into the interview.

4.3.1 Category one concerning accessibility and the ease of getting to the destination

Accessibility is a very important factor influencing site selection. The respondent argues that Stavanger have extremely good flight connections, which makes the ease of getting to the destination quite satisfactory. If you do not have an international airport with good connections, we are simply out of the market. Due to the fact that Stavanger has a strong position globally in terms of our petroleum and energy industry, it has formed a very good flight network that enables us to already have a competitive advantage in the market.

4.3.2 Category two concerning price and affordability

Price is an important factor influencing site selection. The respondent argues that price has an influencing effect and many international customers consider Norway as too expensive. He further responds that this image of Norway may be functioning as a stern point for adding conferences in the country. Region Stavanger is therefore at any given time engaged in finding productive solutions towards this challenge. We have found several solutions, and one of them involves filling up the weekends with conference guests instead of midweek days. The midweek days are often filled up corporate or business travelers and are highly attractive days for many customers. The hotels will therefore take particularly good charge for these days. However, on Saturdays and Sundays the hotel rates will be in line with the price standard that applies to the majority of European big cities. The respondent argues that the image of Norwegian destinations being expensive is a myth and customers must be convinced otherwise.

4.3.3 Category three concerning quality of service

Quality of service is a very important factor influencing site selection. The respondent argues that Norwegian destinations attract a great number of quality conscious customers that are demanding more tailored conference packages. Stavanger has therefore been developed to become a destination that is easy to anticipate. According to the respondent it means that if there is a meeting planner that adds a conference or meeting five years ahead, we can ensure and the customer can have the confidence that the conference will be carried out and completed.

4.3.4 Category four concerning facilities and locations

Facilities constitute a very important factor influencing site selection. The respondent argues that after quite a few years of affluent customer and quality-conscious customers, we have facilities to maintain a very high standard. This includes everything from hotels to exhibition and conference centers, transporters and service providers in the local community. It provides us with a pretty high level of expertise that is a competitive advantage and a good selling point. The respondent replies that demand for providing satisfactory conference facilities is because of the petroleum industry and the academic communities related to the petroleum is heavily anchored in the destination.

4.3.5 Category five concerning attractions and entertainment

Entertainment and activities outside the conference is not an important factor. The respondent argues that even though customers expect more customized packages there is a low demand for cultural happenings outside the conference. This is because conference attendees usually do not have spare time to participate outside the venue.

4.3.6 Category six concerning security and safety

Security is an important but not a decisive factor. The respondent argues that Norwegian destinations in general and Stavanger in particular can provide high safety for the customers, which is appreciated.

4.3.7 Category seven concerning destination image

The image of a destination is a very important factor. The respondent often mentions that the petroleum industry along with petroleum related academic communities gives an impression of Stavanger being an expensive destination to visit. Region Stavanger have also received feedback from the market that it is difficult to get to when it comes to accommodation because the coating is always filled up, especially because of the corporate or business travelers. The respondent argues that the image of Norway being a expensive country may be functioning as a stern point for adding conferences in the country. Image makes a destination visible and the respondent points out that international meeting planners most often do not include Norwegian destinations in the decision making process because of price standard.

4.3.8 Category eight concerning usage of intermediaries

The usage of intermediaries is very important. The respondent argues that Region Stavanger has a close collaboration with about 200 stakeholders. There exists a strong cooperation with professional conference organizers (PCOs) in the destination, because they contribute a great deal through their membership in Region Stavanger and they work a lot nationally to provide new customers to the Stavanger area. The respondent further points out that the professional conference organizers Region Stavanger work well together because they exerts a high standard and has developed a high degree competence. The main reason for this professionalization comes from that they for many years have specialized them selves and working with clients through petroleum and energy related meetings. They have made great progress in their market shares. The intermediaries are therefore highly significant when it comes to attracting more conferences and congresses.

4.3.9 Category nine concerning the importance of having a conference market

The importance of having conferences at a destination is quite high. The respondent argues that the first aspect is the economic benefits left behind by the conference attendees. These advantages will benefit everyone, both the conference venue in particular but also the surrounding businesses and the inhabitants in the region. This means that a delegate will often pay several thousand kroner for a hotel accommodation in Stavanger, something that is beneficial for the local business life. This represents one side of the important role the conference market plays. The other side, which, according to the respondent, is quite more interesting to look at, is the long-term perspective we will experience a strengthening of the competence for the trade union hosting the conference. By showing the strength and competence possessed by trade unions, will make them more visible in their market. Furthermore, they receive an increased competence by showing their area of expertise. There is also an opportunity for the trade union to visualize their role in the local community. This side is quite essential because this is related to the university environment and the local community as well as the ambitions that form the basis for tourism in the region.

4.4 Categorization of the fourth in-depth interview

The respondent number 4 is Director of Sales at Clarion Hotel Stavanger. The respondent is a woman named Eli Sømme, she is 35 years old and lives in Stavanger. Clarion Hotel Stavanger is a member of the Nordic Choice Hotels. The interview was conducted the 8th of March 2012.

The respondent is easy to have a conversation with. She possesses extensive knowledge and expertise and is able to convey information that is relevant to the topics discussed. She has a tendency to talk fast making it necessary for us to slow down the conversation at some stages.

4.4.1 Category one concerning accessibility and the ease of getting to the destination

Accessibility is a very important factor. The respondent argues that within the centre of Stavanger, one can find different hotels; service providers and conventions centers, such as Stavanger Forum, located very close together and the destination promote themselves for being within reach. For many conference guests and business travelers the transportation time must go as effective as possible and accessibility is therefore a very important factor for being able to even have a healthy market. Stavanger has focused heavily on making it simpler for all types of visitors to move easily around in the Stavanger area.

4.4.2 Category two concerning price and affordability

The price is not a decisive factor. The respondent argues that it depends on what type of stakeholders you are talking about. The respondent further points out that if the customer is fundamentally very price conscious then the price will be of great importance, while for others the price is less important. In the latter case the customer often have a greater interest in the overall experience and what the destination has to offer when they are outside the actual conference venue.

4.4.3 Category three concerning quality of service

Quality of service is a very important factor. The respondent argues that at Clarion Hotel Stavanger they have a high price standard to work from, which is applicable to other hotels at the destination. Therefore she claims that the hotel focus very strongly on maintaining high quality in every service they deliver to the customers. The respondent replies that, when we hence employ new persons to our positions at the hotel, then we conduct a mandatory audition for all potential applicants. It is no longer enough to have a flawless resume; you must also prove your worth in practice. We have implemented this audition in order to improve the competence among employees and have a quality assurance that the service provided is at a maximum level at any given time. It is important and required that the hotel are able to provide the little extra. There is a reason for the price standard being at a high level, and it is because we want to offer the equivalent level of service quality.

4.4.4 Category four concerning facilities and locations

Facilities are an important factor but are not decisive. The respondent argues that customers are more demanding than before. There is no longer enough to offer good facilities and good location for conferences. She points out that customers wants to an greater extent to be a part of the organization and planning of the event and they require more tailor-made packages where entertainment and good experience outside the conference constitute a more essential part of the overall conference package. She further mentions that the facilities offered at the hotel and destination holds good standard.

4.4.5 Category five concerning attractions and entertainment

Entertainment and activities has become an increasingly important factor. The respondent argues that the market has changed in such a way that you are dependent on having something in the bottom in terms of activities and entertainment. She points out that entertainment is a particularly important factor when it comes to filling up the weekend market, which has been focused strongly on. The conference market is more individualistic in their needs and demands, but if nothing happens during the weekends that can attract customers to spend this particular amount of time away from their spare time, we will not be able to experience success and economic advantages from the weekend market. She points out that it therefore is a need for customized packages. The clients are demanding more, especially when it comes to what they can experience of cultural events and entertainment outside the actual conference site. You must be able to offer more, in order to be attractive.

4.4.6 Category six concerning security and safety

Security as a factor is not important. The respondent argues that the market have demands for when it comes to their requirement for safety being met. However, it is something that many customers take for granted and are not consciously included in the site selection.

4.4.7 Category seven concerning destination image

Image is an important factor. The respondent argues that many possess a perception that Stavanger is a very difficult city to place their conferences and visits in. The corporate market gives high demand and along with the lack of enough hotel rooms, it leads to the perception of a generally high price standard. The respondent points out that the new conference customers cannot get access to the destination because it is too difficult to add a conference there. She further mentions that Stavanger has short distances between the different hotels and service providers within the industry and the accessibility is viewed as satisfactory.

4.4.8 Category eight concerning usage of intermediaries

We cooperate with intermediaries and the cooperation is beneficial. The respondent argues that this is part of a trend the hotel have observed, where an increased number of companies choose to go through a PCO in order to plan and organize the conference on behalf of the company. When it comes to Innovation Norway, we do not have a strong relationship with this organization, because we usually move directly to Region Stavanger or the conference organizers.

In order for this fieldwork to be successful we are dependent on having a strong network and that the different stakeholders within the industry work together to attract more conferences to the different regions. We are in the principle interested in managing much of the process on our own terms, but we are not afraid of reach out to Region Stavanger or a conference organizer to help us in specific cases where help is necessary.

4.4.9 Category nine concerning the importance of having a conference market

Conferences feature a great importance to the destination. The respondent argues that the corporate market mostly fills up the majority of hotel rooms, that is, business travelers, in light of how the market has evolved in recent years. This means that there are generally full booked from Monday to Thursday. However in terms of the meetings & conference market, we see an increased need for more concentration and focus on this particular marketplace. This is because they generate more dinners at the site, are interested in getting more value for money they leave behind and contribute to more additional sales at the hotel than other segments. So it is something we have always focused on and there will be focused even more about in the future. Therefore, we have recently entered a closer cooperation with Region Stavanger in order to distribute more of the conferences over to the weekends.

4.5 Categorization of the fifth in-depth interview

The respondent number 5 is employed as a customer adviser in Innovation Norway AS, positioned at the department in Trondheim. The respondent name is Per Eivind Voie, is 40 years old and works mainly with tourism companies in the county.

The respondent seems very calm and relaxed. He participates to a high degree in the conversation and provides solid and relevant information. The answers given reflect a high competence on the topic discussed.

4.5.1 Category one concerning accessibility and the ease of getting to the destination

Accessibility as a factor has become increasingly important, and according to the respondent this is the most important factor. The respondent argues that in the aftermath of the financial crisis in 2008, many companies were affected and a shortening on the transportation time became necessary. A strategy called the “one hour belt” was implemented, meaning that the transportation time should not last more than one hour. The respondent further points out that the strategy favors the major cities at the expense of smaller destinations, because they have more direct flights that does note exceed the one-hour limit. Having a satisfactory infrastructure and accessibility is therefore quite essential for how the conference market moves as well as it is essential for your survival in the market. The respondent argues that it is quite apparent that if one should have the ability to attract international clients, it is important to have a short and effective accessibility to Trondheim, because the travel time is a major issue for many international companies.

4.5.2 Category two concerning price and affordability

The price is not a decisive factor. The respondent points out that when it comes to the professional conference market, the time spent on transportation to and from the conference destination is more important than the price it costs to get there and reside at the site. If it takes a day to travel, this will result in substantial costs associated with absenteeism as participants at the conference incurs. Having too long traveling time is something many companies want to avoid because it results in total for the high costs for all members to be included. The respondent further points out that it is clear that Norway is an expensive country to visit, but in an area we are not so expensive is the hotel rooms offered. The fact that Norway is an expensive country and appears to be slightly upscale is something many companies appreciate. The customers appreciate being able to afford something you usually cannot afford.

4.5.3 Category three concerning quality of service

Quality of service is an important factor. The respondent argues that generally in Norway we have a very good service level; there is no doubt about that. Norway is about to distinguish ourselves at an international level, which means that Norway is the Scandinavian country that attracts the most congresses. Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go and we are not where we should be when it comes to quality of service and hospitality. This is something we focus strongly on within Innovation Norway and therefore we run a number of hospitality courses, in order to improve the destination as a whole when for instance hosting a major congress. The respondent points out that for a conference guest who does not want to be situated at the hotel, but rather wants to experience, eat at a restaurant, make visits to different shops, visit cultural sites and is seeking information, it is important for the customer to receive an overall good impression. It is the overall impression that matters most and is something that the customer will remember; therefore will a bad experience with a service provider affect the overall impression of the destination. When we are running the hospitality courses we are concerned that you should think about latitude in the business sector and not only focus the courses on tourism companies. According to the respondent, every service provider that customer may get in contact with, should be able to provide information and good service quality to the customers. The respondent points out that instead of being competitive on price it is important to promote Norway as an exclusive destination to visit where you can expect good quality on service.

4.5.4 Category four concerning facilities and locations

The ability to provide facilities is a very important factor. The respondent argues that it holds great significance for such a destination that you are able to provide enough facilities based on high quality in order to satisfy our customers through this offer. The respondent points out that the main problem is not that facilities is not good enough in a quality matter, but rather the fact that the destination has not been able to provide enough facilities. The technological equipment is satisfactory but there is a problem in the destination to provide enough single rooms to accommodate all delegates attending a conference. According to a respondent, without a satisfactory number of hotel rooms, you have simply not enough capacity to compete at the conference market at all. The problem is particularly evident within rural hotels that are not located in central of Trondheim. However, in central of Trondheim city we are experiencing a large improvement and increasingly number of hotel rooms, so the demands are soon to be met here.

4.5.5 Category five concerning attractions and entertainment

The entertainment as a factor is very important. The respondent argues that the ability to provide entertainment and activities has become increasingly important, because there are a growing number of attendees who want to exploit this down time outside the conference venue in form of entertainment, cultural events or activities. To have the opportunity to participate in something outside the conference is about to become a decisive factor for many companies. The respondent points out that the collaboration between destination management companies become particularly important in order to provide good packages and solutions for customers in the future. We have discovered that the demand for more activities and entertainment is an increasing and upcoming trend, where research is about to become more necessary

4.5.6 Category six concerning security and safety

Security is an important but not an essential factor. The respondent argues that security is something that everyone demands that destinations take seriously, but there are no indications that the security is not on a satisfactory level, both in Trondheim and in Norway. The respondent mentions that outside the coastline there has been a number of tourists involved in accidents related to saltwater fishing, something that never create a positive image of the destination. It is not preferable to be associated with low security and accidents.

4.5.7 Category seven concerning destination image

Image is an important and decisive factor. The respondent replies that because the positive and negative happenings that occur at a destination is something a customer will always remember and thereby influence the overall impression of the destination. The respondent further argues that every service provider that customer may get in contact with, should be able to provide information and good service quality to the customers.

The respondent replies that in Trondheim students constitute a great significance for Trondheim, because students who come here and receive a good experience from their stay will be good ambassadors for the city. Students who get a positive impressions are in a much more visible position to share their positive impressions to others through word of mouth.

4.5.8 Category eight concerning usage of intermediaries

The collaboration with intermediaries is important. The respondent argues that Innovation Norway prefer to cooperate at a destination company level, rather than cooperating directly with hotels and service providers that has relationship with the customers, because we work with the destination companies on the basis of all companies linked up to Innovation Norway or Visit Trondheim. Then it is easier for us to be involved without affecting the distortion of competition, which is an important principle for Innovation Norway. The respondent points out that Innovation Norway has some requirements when it comes to degree of support and participation between intermediaries. Because a high degree of support and participation will improve the fellowship between the destination management companies, which brings them together in order to analyze the market.

4.5.9 Category nine concerning the importance of having a conference market

According to the respondent, it is obvious that the meetings & conferences is very important for the destination because conference guests generate a lot of money for hotels and external service companies. The respondent argues that having conferences is important because conference guests are responsible for a quarter of the number of rooms in the city and which represents an important income source to the destination. Furthermore, Trondheim is a destination where academically environments are heavily anchored and there is a vital connection towards the university NTNU and St. Olav’s Hospital. The respondent replies that conferences play a significant role to the academic communities by providing more competence and interest around the different communities.

4.6 Additional factors mentioned by respondents

Respondent 2: A trend that has been increasingly prominent is that visitors are setting higher requirements and correct a greater emphasis towards sustainability and environmentally friendly tourism. There are more focus on the term “ green city” and is very upcoming trend.

Respondent 3:The most important factor is that you have to fit into one of those demographic rotating models placed by the international organizations hosting such a conference. Next trend is that there must be a major initiative from the local communities and the academic communities in the region

Respondent 4: There is a trend in the whole industry where you have to convince quite thoroughly that your candidacy is anchored often all the way up against the mayor level. There is required that you can financially guarantee for the content in the conference stay, especially when it comes to welcome buffets, conference facilities and venues. This shows that the seriousness in this industry has become increasingly more important.

The clients are demanding more, especially when it comes to what they can experience of cultural events and entertainment outside the actual conference site. You must be able to offer more, in order to be attractive.

Respondent 5: We have a trend that embraces the demands for environmental and sustainable tourism, and Innovation Norway focus heavily on certifying destinations. This is not a decisive factor for chosen one conference destination in front of another, but it matters in a positive direction.

4.7 The importance of factors influencing destination selection

All of the respondents argue that accessibility and the ease of getting to the destination is of great importance. Respondent number 5 argues that accessibility is the most important factor.

Respondent 1, 2, 4 and 5 argues that price is not a decisive factor and is not important for influencing site selection. Respondent number 3 argues that price is an important factor, because the image of Norway being too expensive impacts as a stern point for international customers.

All of the respondents argue that quality of service is an important factor that influences site selection. Respondent 3 and 4 argues that quality of service hold a very high importance, because the high price standard attract a lot of quality conscious customers that demands higher quality of service.

Respondent number 1, 2, 3 and 4 argues that facilities are an important factor but it is not decisive for influencing site selection. Because providing good facilities are no longer enough to satisfy the customers as they expect more. Respondent number 5 argues that facilities are very important, because if you cannot provide enough facilities you are simply out of the market.

Respondent number 1 and 3 argues that entertainment and activities is not an important factor. Respondent number 2 argues that entertainment is important but not a decisive factor. Respondent number 4 and 5 argue that entertainment is becoming increasingly important.

Respondent number 2, 3 and 5 argues that security is important but not decisive for influencing site selection. Respondent 2 argues that security is fundamental and is something everyone assumes is of good standard. Respondent 4 argues that security is not important and respondent 1 has no opinion about this factor.

All of the respondents argue that image is an important factor influencing site selection. Respondent number 5 argues that image is decisive for choosing destinations.

All of the respondents agree that the usage of intermediaries is important and all companies represented by the respondents have a close collaboration with them. Respondent 2 and 3 argues that the destination management companies mainly collaborate upwards with Innovation Norway and Norway Convention Bureau. Respondent 1 and 4 argues that the hotels collaborate mostly with professional conference organizer, rather than destination management companies.

All respondents argue that having conferences holds great importance for the destination, mainly because of the financial benefits gained from the conference market.

5. Quantitative analysis

This chapter is presenting information and theory about various types of analysis that has been conducted in order to evaluate the results from the quantitative approach. This analysis builds on a questionnaire that was developed in a more explorative direction. The questionnaire was conducted in order to create new insights and perspectives into the discussion concerning the importance factors. In the following there will be accounted for some types of statistical measurement instruments and what among them creates the best fit for our research study.

5.1 Descriptive and frequency analysis

Frequency analysis was used to see how many times the observation values repeat it for the various variables. A summarize was made of the frequencies for the observations to see the distribution of the responses and to find missing values, missing values meaning respondent that had not answered a question. Descriptive analysis was conducted to get a summary of statistics for the continuous variables, to see the mean, median, standard deviation, maximum and minimum, which could show extreme values.

5.2 Reliability analysis

One should check the reliability within and between variables when using a likert scale to measure attitude concepts, like importance, values and attitudes. Several questions under several items are measured on a consistent scale to capture the different aspects of the concepts we want to map. This is explained closer in the reliability section.

The Cronbachs alfa gives an indication on reliability within a variable and shows the sum of correlation between the attributes within one variable (e.g. image). Usually a number bigger than 0, 7, but not too close to 1, are good and show reliability within the item. The

Cronbachs alfa will however increase the more variables one has in one item and the higher the correlation between the variables is. One uses several variables for an item to capture the various aspects of the item/concept. If the Cronbachs alfa is too close to 1, it can be because the variables are too similar and do not capture the total aspect of the concept. No use in measuring Cronbachs alfa on measures that do not belong to the same concept.

5.3 Factor analysis

Factor analysis is a method of statistics, which can be used to analyze correlation between multiple variables and explain these correlations from the common underlying dimensions, meaning factors of the variables. It will always be substantially more variables than factors, so the factor analyzes is also called a data reduction method. The goal is to simplify the relationship between multiple observed variables, so the correlations and variances are easier to detect and interpret. It is however important that one does not lose a lot of information from the variables when reducing them to factors, even though some information always will be lost in this process.

The factor destination image cannot be measured directly through observation, but variables can be used to measure the importance of the destination image. This is the same for the other factors investigated. Therefore is the factor an unobservable, latent variable. The observed variables are functions of the factor and since the factor alone cannot explain all the variance in every variable, a residual is included in the calculation.

A differentiation can be made between an explorative and an affirmative factor analysis. An explorative analysis explores the data to find patterns and interesting correlations without trying to adapt the data to a specific structure. In difference, an affirmative analysis tries to adapt the data to a specific structure. This structure, or model, is usually based on a set of hypothesis or a completely developed theory. The correlations between the factors and variables are checked for significance, where the value should be at least over 0, 30. Then the factors need to be named so they represent the variables.

We were to conduct an affirmative factor analysis, checking if the structure of the factors were the same as ours, made on a theoretical review. Because of too few respondents and some non-linear and non-normal distributions our data showed to be most appropriate for non-parametric analysis and a factor analysis could not be conducted.

5.3 Linearity

The variables checked for correlation should have a linear relationship. Scatter plots of the variable scores, showing a relatively straight line and not a curve, when inspecting this. If the data is spread all over in the scatter plot, it suggests a low correlation between the variables.

We checked the linearity between the various destinations factors importance scores and found most of them to have linear relationships, but some that did not have any specific lines. The linearity between corporate features and between the features and importance scales were also controlled and showed the same results; some linear relationships and some that were not linear. Because of these results we could not use the parametric statistic Pearson correlation as it assumes linear relationships, but instead we used the non-parametric alternative Spearman`s rho to identify the correlations. The Spearman`s rho is also a suitable correlation coefficient for ranked or ordinal data, like the variables we are investigating, all being continuous variables.

5.4 Normal distribution

The scores for each of the variables should have a normal distribution and using histograms of the variable scores, or looking at the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics results from the assessment of normality analysis in SPSS can check this. A non-significant result implies normality.

The importance scales for each of the factors were normally distributed, based on a test of normality using Kolmogorov-Smirnov to compare the sample with a standard normality on the continuous distributions. A significance level over 0,05 implies a non-significant result and is an indication of normality. The significance level was over 0,05 for all of the factors, but the facility and quality of service factors had very low significance levels, respectively 0,063 and 0,079. Comparing if the 5% trimmed mean and original mean are relatively similar also imply the normal distribution, as one can see if the extreme scores have any substantial influence on the mean. In this case they do not and there is a reasonable normal distribution on all the factors.

The normality test of the interfering factors corporate features indicates a violation of the normality assumption, as all the significance levels are under 0,05. This does not have to be an indication of a problem with the scale, but is merely a reflection of the underlying nature for the variables and constructs that are measured. A violation of the assumption of normal distribution also implies the use of non-parametric alternatives for analyzing the data.

5.5 Correlation statistical measurement

5.5.1 Correlation versus causality

Correlation measurements can give indications of there being a relationship between two variables, but it does not indicate if it is a causal effect of one of the variables on the other. The correlation could also be because a possible third variable causes both of the two variables in the analysis. Even though two variables increase at the same time, it can be because of another variable influencing it. Partial correlation can control statistically for additional variables, but it is however a non-parametric alternative to this analysis, suitable for our research data.

5.5.2 Statistical versus practical significance

If one finds significant correlation coefficients, one should look at the actual size of the correlation coefficient and not so much on the significance value. The significance level is an indication on how much confidence and trust one could have in the obtained results of correlations, not indicating the strength of the relationship between two variables. With larger samples, even a relatively low correlation coefficient can be statistically significant, and for small samples moderately correlation coefficients could maybe not reach the traditional statistical significance level(Pallant, 2010).

5.5.3 Size and direction of relationship

Correlation coefficients suggest the strength of a relationship or association between variables, by the size of the values of the correlation coefficients. Correlations under 0,30 are low, between 0,30 and 0,50 are medium, and correlations over 0,50 are strong correlations, but all correlations that are not +1 or -1 are not perfect correlations. The direction of the relationship is however not associated with the size of the values, only the plus or minus sign in front of the value imply the direction. A positive correlation indicates that higher levels on one variable are associated with higher levels on the other variable. A negative correlation indicates that higher levels on one variable are associated with lower levels on the other variable (Pallant, 2010).

5.5.4 Correlation and co-variation

Even though a correlation is at zero, it does not always mean that there is no statistical co-variation. Measures of co-variation are often based on the assumption that there are linear relationships between two variables, meaning that these measures usually are constructed to capture the units by a straight line. Many co-variations, however, are not linear. An example could be that the corporations with the lowest and the largest economic turnover could be those thinking safety and security at the destination is least important. This could be a strong and perfect co-variation without being linear. Therefore, if we have any suspicion about a non-linear co-variation, a plot diagram can be used to see how the units are placed between the variables (Jacobsen, 2005).

Regression analyses can show in what degree a variable covariate with another variable, in difference to correlation analysis, which only show if there is a correlation between variables. This was however not possible for us to conduct because of the basic assumptions not met for linearity, normal distribution and sample size (Pallant, 2010).

5.6 Kruskal-Wallis test

To get some indication in exploring the differences in the importance levels of destination factors across the various groups of the intervening factors, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted. As this is a non-parametric alternative for analyzing the variance between groups one-way. It makes it possible to compare scores on continuous variables for more than two groups. The scores are ranked and the rank mean for each group are compared. It is thereby an analysis between groups. The groups cannot overlap in regards to people, as there must be different people in each group (Pallant, 2010).

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to see if there was any difference between the importance levels of the destination factors across the response alternatives of the corporate features size, economic turnover, number of conferences organized yearly, size of conferences, and use of intermediary.

If the significance level results from the Kruskal-Wallis test are higher than .05, the results can suggest that there are no differences in the importance levels of the factors across the various corporate features. Inspecting the mean rank can be of interest even though the differences are not significant as well as if they are, to see the variance in scores across the different groups (Pallant, 2010).

5.7 Test of mean measurement

The mean is not an accurate measurement because the data can have extreme values, differencing from most answers and giving a wrong impression of the average number. However, checking results for extremes help validate the mean measures. The average should only be used when the data is at interval or ordinal level.

6. Research results

6.1 Sample characteristics

The demographic distribution of the sample is; 67% females and 33% males, highest percentage of the respondents are between the age of 40 to 49 years old with 57%, and the lowest percentage of respondents are those between the ages of 20 to 29 with 3%. 70% of the respondents have a bachelor degree or higher level of education, most respondents are located in Oslo county, then Rogaland and Sør-Trøndelag, 90% worked at a corporation that had an economic turnover over 40 000 000, - NOK, and 20% have one-49 employees, 33% have 50-250 employees and 47% had more than 250 employees, showing that most of the respondents are employed within big corporations. Most respondents are in the private corporate sector, within oil and gas, engineering, retail and finance. The respondents work in various departments, but most work in the administration, top management or as sales and marketing managers, being relatively similar to the departments most often in charge of selecting conference destinations; top management and administrative department. This implies that the respondents most likely are part of the destination selection for conferences. Meeting organizer however, seem to be organizing the conferences, but not selecting the destinations. Most of the respondents do not have a conference group, but those that do usually have the same group organizing every conference. 30% has averagely over nine conferences each year and 23% only has one or two, most of these are organized without the help of an intermediary. The size of conference by delegates varies, but over 90% have one-49 delegates at the smallest conferences and 30% had over 349 delegates at the largest conferences, as well as 27% having one-49 at the largest conference as well. 33% selects destination before facility every time, 57% sometimes, while 10% selects facilities before taking into consideration the destination, which could imply these having a specific facility they often hold conferences at.

Most respondents do not contact intermediaries before selecting the destination, implying that intermediaries may not affect the choice of destination often. Organizing a conference at a familiar or unfamiliar destination did not seem to affect the use of an intermediary much, only slightly more at unfamiliar destinations. Most first contact with intermediaries is done from the corporations getting in touch with intermediaries via phone, web page or mail, and 90% of the respondents do not have a long term relationship or agreement with an intermediary.

6.2 Qualitative results summary

In this section a summary is presented, involving information from the in-depth interviews.

6.2.1 Table one: Qualitative results

Destination Factors	**Level of importance**	**Relationship among factors**	**Intervening factors**
Image	All agree that image is a very important factor One argue this is the most important factor	One say that the price level influence the image, that this can correlate both negatively and positively Some say that image and quality of service correlates.	One mention that corporations are more into sustainable tourism now and those think a “green” image of the destination is important
Accessibility	All the respondents argue that accessibility is of great importance One say accessibility is the most important factor		
Quality of service	All agree that quality of service is a highly important factor		Some say that all corporations think the quality of service is very important, independent of

		Two say that the price level and level of quality of service correlates positively	corporate features
Facility	All except one agree that facilities are not of high importance when selecting a destination, that destinations are selected before facilities One argue that facilities are very important		One argue that the importance of facilities is influenced by the size of the conference
Safety and security	Three say safety and security is important, but not the most important factor One argue that it is not important		
Affordability	All except one argues that price levels are not important when selecting a destination One argues that the price levels are one of the most important factors	Two say that the price level and level of quality of service correlates positively One say that the price level influence the image, that this can correlate both negatively and positively	One say that the corporate size and economy influence the importance of affordability in regards to price levels
Attractions & entertainment	Two agree that attractions and entertainment are not an important factor Two argue it is becoming increasingly important One argue that it is important, but not the most important factor		

The results from the interviews are gathered in Figure four, showing the main features from all the interviews. The results are based on an analysis of the interviews, looking at similarities and differences between the answers from the interview objects. All the destination factors are in the analysis seen in relevance to their level of importance, relationship among them and if there are any intervening factors which might influence the emphasize on importance of the various destination factors. This figure summarizes the similarities and differences of the analysis. It is however important to remember that these results are only based on personal reflections from various intermediaries, which has experience with requests from meeting planners and marketing of destinations and facilities, implying a high level of subjectivity.

All agree that using an intermediary is an important factor influencing the destination selection, because intermediaries can influence through the way they market the destination, packages they make, quality of the service they deliver and the like. This can possibly influence the levels of importance of the various destination factors.

The intervening factors and relative relationships between the destination factors were less discussed than the levels of importance of the destination factors. This was because the interview objects did not have much idea on how intervening factors like corporate characteristics influenced the importance of the destination factors. In discussing the relationships between the destination factors only price, quality of service and image were mentioned as possibly having correlating relationships.

To summarize the importance level of the destination factors, the interview objects say that image and accessibility are the most important factors, then quality of service, and then attractions and entertainment, safety and security and least important is affordability and facility.

6.3 Evaluation and results from question one

Is there a sequential difference on the destination factors and their level of importance, if so, what is it?

A descriptive statistical analysis was used to examine the mean and distribution pattern of respondents` perceptions of the importance of each factor influencing the destination selection. Results are shown in table two.

6.3.1 Table two: Destination factors actors sequentially ranked by mean scores

Factors	**Mean**
Quality of service	4,41
Accessibility	3,97
Facility	3,83
Affordability	3,4
Safety & Security	3,4
Image	3,31
Attractions & Entertainment	2,69

Factor	Attribute	Mean rank	Min	Max
Image	Positive atmosphere	3,67	2	5
Image	Professional experience	3,6	1	5
Image	Perceived quality image	3,41	2	4
Image	Positive feeling	3,4	2	5
Image	Safety reputation of destination	3,4	1	5
Image	Personal experience	3,4	1	5
Image	Destination reputation	3,37	2	4
Image	Attractions	2,87	1	5
Image	Climate	2,37	1	4
	Sum mean image attributes	**3,28**	**1,4**	**4,6**
Accessibility	Accommodation at site	4,14	3	5
Accessibility	Time to travel to destination	3,93	2	5
Accessibility	Ease of transportation to destination	3,9	2	5
Accessibility	Ease of local transportation	3,6	1	5
	Sum mean accessibility attributes	**3,89**	**2**	**5**
Affordability	Price on conference facility	3,63	2	5
Affordability	Price on accommodation	3,57	2	5
Affordability	Price on food and beverages	3,32	1	4
Affordability	General price level	3,3	1	5
Affordability	Price on transportation to destination	3,17	1	5
	Sum mean of affordability attributes	**3,4**	**1,4**	**4,8**
Safety and security	Perceived safety and security	3,57	2	5
Safety and security	Official info. on safety and security	3,13	1	5
	Sum mean of safety and security attr.	**3,35**	**1,5**	**5**
Facility	Technological facility	4,3	3	5
Facility	Capacity on conference space	4	2	5
	Sum mean of facility attributes	**4,15**	**2,5**	**5**
Attractions and entertainment	Restaurants	3,63	1	5
Attractions and entertainment	Cultural attractions	2,57	1	4
Attractions and entertainment	Nightlife	1,9	1	4
Attractions and entertainment	Shopping	1,53	1	4
	Sum mean of attr. & ent. attributes	**2,41**	**1**	**4,25**
Quality of service	Cleanliness	4,37	3	5
Quality of service	Friendly people	4,37	3	5
Quality of service	Perceived quality of service	4,27	3	5

Factor	Attribute	Mean rank	Min	Max
Image	Positive atmosphere	3,67	2	5
Image	Professional experience	3,6	1	5
Image	Perceived quality image	3,41	2	4
Image	Positive feeling	3,4	2	5
Image	Safety reputation of destination	3,4	1	5
Image	Personal experience	3,4	1	5
Image	Destination reputation	3,37	2	4

Image	Attractions	2,87	1	5
Image	Climate	2,37	1	4
	Sum mean image attributes	**3,28**	**1,4**	**4,6**
Accessibility	Accommodation at site	4,14	3	5
Accessibility	Time to travel to destination	3,93	2	5
Accessibility	Ease of transportation to destination	3,9	2	5
Accessibility	Ease of local transportation	3,6	1	5
	Sum mean accessibility attributes	**3,89**	**2**	**5**
Affordability	Price on conference facility	3,63	2	5
Affordability	Price on accommodation	3,57	2	5
Affordability	Price on food and beverages	3,32	1	4
Affordability	General price level	3,3	1	5
Affordability	Price on transportation to destination	3,17	1	5
	Sum mean of affordability attributes	**3,4**	**1,4**	**4,8**
Safety and security	Perceived safety and security	3,57	2	5
Safety and security	Official info. on safety and security	3,13	1	5
	Sum mean of safety and security attr.	**3,35**	**1,5**	**5**
Facility	Technological facility	4,3	3	5
Facility	Capacity on conference space	4	2	5
	Sum mean of facility attributes	**4,15**	**2,5**	**5**
Attractions and entertainment	Restaurants	3,63	1	5
Attractions and entertainment	Cultural attractions	2,57	1	4
Attractions and entertainment	Nightlife	1,9	1	4
Attractions and entertainment	Shopping	1,53	1	4
	Sum mean of attr. & ent. attributes	**2,41**	**1**	**4,25**
Quality of service	Cleanliness	4,37	3	5
Quality of service	Friendly people	4,37	3	5
Quality of service	Perceived quality of service	4,27	3	5
	Sum mean of quality of s. attributes	4,34	3	5

6.3.2 Table three: Mean of attributes assessing factors

The mean of the total scales of importance for each factor can be skewed by the number of items measuring each factor, as the total score might be higher on those factor variables that are measured on more items than those measured on less items. Therefore we use the mean rank of the factors measured on importance without variables, or attributes, measuring them. An investigation of the mean ranking in each of the attributes are also included below in order to examine if any of the attributes under the various factors vary in difference to the ranking in table one, which could imply that they should have measured another factor.

6.3.3 Mean ranking of attributes assessing each factor

For image the positive atmosphere and professional experience from the destination is of highest importance when selecting the destination, attractions and climate is least important. The two least important attributes have mean rank scores under moderately important, the rest are between moderately and very important. Many rated the safety reputation to be of high importance under the image, maybe this attribute should only have measured the safety and security factor, as the attraction attribute for the image should maybe just have assessed the attractions and entertainment factor. The reason why several various attributes measured the image factor is that the literature and interview objects suggest that this is a complex concept influenced by attributes assessing other factors as well. This could maybe imply that the research should have focused more on the less complex concepts and factors. But at the same time there is a need for more research assessing both quantitative, cognitive destination attributes and the affective, more complex perceptions like image. This assess perceptions about destination more fully than just one of the focus areas (Baloglu & Love, 2004).

None ranked the destination reputation, perceived quality image and positive feeling to be “not important”, in difference to the other attributes. The perceived quality image, destination reputation and climate were however not rated as “extremely important” by any.

The factor accessibility rated high on all attributes, but highest on accommodation on site which rated just over very important and none had rated it lower than “moderately important”. Time to travel to destination and ease of transport to destination are highly rated with mean scores just under “very important” and nobody rated them as “not important”. Ease of local transportation was rated between “moderately important” and “very important”, leaning against “very important”, but some had rated this as “not important”.

For affordability all of the attributes were rated between “moderately” and “very important”. Price on conference facility and accommodation rated highest however, leaning toward “very important” and none had rated them as “not important” in difference to the other attributes. The facility price is rated highest and price on transportation to destination rated lowest. The price on food and beverages is the only attribute none had rated as “extremely important”.

Safety and security is also rated between “moderately” and “very important”, the attribute perceived safety and security is rated highest and lean towards “very important” and has no ratings on “not important”. Official information however is leaning towards “moderately important” and has been rated on “not important”.

The factor facility has high scores on both attributes; the technological aspect is rated highest with a score just over “very important” and has no ratings under “moderately important”. The capacity of conference space is rated as “very important” and has no ratings as “not important”. Some respondents rate both of the factors as “extremely important”.

Attractions and entertainment is a factor that has a great variety in the ratings of attributes. The highest rating is for restaurants, leaning towards “very important” and is the only attribute with ratings on “extremely important”. Cultural attractions lean towards “moderately important”, and nightlife and shopping leans toward “slightly important”, being least important. All of the attributes had some ratings as “not important”.

Quality of service was rated high on all three attributes, highest was cleanliness and friendly people, and then perceived quality of service. All attributes were rated between “very important" and "extremely important", leaning towards "very important". None had lower ratings than "moderately important" and all had ratings as "extremely important".

6.3.4 Table four: Mean ranking of all attributes

Factor	Attribute	Mean rank	Min	Max
Quality of service	Cleanliness	4,37	3	5
Quality of service	Friendly people	4,37	3	5
Facility	Technological facility	4,3	3	5
Quality of service	Perceived quality of service	4,27	3	5
Accessibility	Accommodation at site	4,14	3	5
Facility	Capacity on conference space	4	2	5
Accessibility	Time to travel to destination	3,93	2	5
Accessibility	Ease of transportation to destination	3,9	2	5
Image	Positive atmosphere	3,67	2	5
Affordability	Price on conference facility	3,63	2	5
Attractions and entertainment	Restaurants	3,63	1	5
Accessibility	Ease of local transportation	3,6	1	5
Image	Professional experience	3,6	1	5
Safety and security	Perceived safety and security	3,57	2	5
Affordability	Price on accommodation	3,57	2	5
Image	Perceived quality image	3,41	2	4
Image	Positive feeling	3,4	2	5
Image	Safety reputation of destination	3,4	1	5
Image	Personal experience	3,4	1	5
Image	Destination reputation	3,37	2	4
Affordability	Price on food and beverages	3,32	1	4
Affordability	General price level	3,3	1	5
Affordability	Price on transportation to destination	3,17	1	5
Safety and security	Official info. on safety and security	3,13	1	5
Image	Attractions	2,87	1	5
Attractions and entertainment	Cultural attractions	2,57	1	4
Image	Climate	2,37	1	4
Attractions and entertainment	Nightlife	1,9	1	4
Attractions and entertainment	Shopping	1,53	1	4

6.3.5 Mean ranking of all attributes

If we look at the mean ranking of all the attributes we see that half of the attributes lean towards "very important", almost all of the rest lean toward "moderately important" and only climate, nightlife and shopping leans towards “slightly important”. Climate assess image and the two others assess attractions and entertainment.

Quality of service and facility attributes are all rated highest together with the accommodation at site attribute assessing accessibility. All these are rated over “very important”. The other accessibility attributes are also rated relatively high on the ranking, as well as positive atmosphere and professional experience-assessing image, restaurants assessing attractions and entertainment and price on conference facility and accommodation assessing affordability. Somewhat surprisingly safety and security is also rated among these with the attribute perceived safety and security.

Most of the image attributes are rated in the lower half of the ranking, but most rating over affordability which has three of the five attributes rated on the lower half of the lower half of the ranking. Lowest rated are the rest of the attributes of the attractions and entertainment factor, one of the two attributes assessing the safety and security factor, and two of the image attributes.

6.3.6 Results from the rankings of attributes

From the ranking of attributes based on means we can set up a new ranking of the factors, by adding the mean rankings of the various attributes and dividing them on number of attributes assessing the factor. And thereby see if it is relatively similar to the ranking of factor importance or if it significantly different.

One can see that the ranking is the same for the factors ranked independently and the factors ranked by the attributes. The only exception is that accessibility is ranked second and facility third on the independent factors ranking than on being assessed by the attributes, where the facility factor is ranked second and accessibility third.

This suggests that the ranking of the factors based on importance is relatively reliable for the respondents of the questionnaire.

This table shows the differences between the mean importance rate on the factors rated independently and the mean importance rate on the factors rated by the attributes. It is almost the same results, but the mean on attributes ranking is slightly higher for facility, and slightly lower for quality of service, accessibility, safety and security, image and attractions and entertainment. It had the same scores for affordability.

6.3.7 Table five: Mean ranking of factors independently and assessed by attributes

Factors	**Mean**	**Mean of attributes**
Quality of service	4,41	4,34
Accessibility	3,97	3,89
Facility	3,83	4,15
Affordability	3,4	3,4
Safety & Security	3,4	3,35
Image	3,31	3,28
Attractions & Entertainment	2,69	2,41

Factor ranking from ranking of attributes

1. Quality of service
2. Facility
3. Accessibility
4. Affordability
5. Safety and security
6. Image
7. Attractions and entertainment

Factor ranking independently

1. Quality of service
2. Accessibility
3. Facility
4. Affordability
5. Safety and security
6. Image
7. Attractions and entertainment

Factor ranking from interviews

1. Image and Accessibility,
2. Quality of service
3. Attractions & entertainment
4. Safety & security
5. Affordability and Facility

Attractions and entertainment: Nightlife and shopping are the two least important attributes, having a mean score under slightly important, cultural attractions is scored just under moderately important and restaurants has the highest score, leaning towards very important.

Image: The least important attributes of a destination, under the image factor, are climate and attractions, mean ranked at moderately important. Destination and safety reputation, positive feeling, perceived quality image and personal experience are of approximately similar importance, between moderately and very important. Positive atmosphere and professional experience are the most important, leaning most towards very important on the mean rank.

Accessibility: Time to travel to destination, ease of travelling to destination and accommodation on site of conference facility is all important attributes, but ease of local transportation is the relatively least important, still being between moderately and very important, and accommodation on site of conference facility is the most important, being over very important.

Affordability: The price on food and beverage, general price level and accommodation are equally important, price on transportation is marginally least important and price on conference facility is marginally most important. All these attributes are mean ranked between moderately to very important.

Within the importance factor facility and location, technology at facility is over very important, marginally more important than the capacity of conference facility that has a mean score of very important.

Within the importance factor safety and security, perceived safety is marginally more important than official information on safety, both are between moderately and very important.

Within the importance factor quality of service, friendly people, cleanliness, perceived quality all have mean scores over very important.

Most of the attributes have a mean score between moderately and very important, accommodation at site of conference, capacity on conference space, technology facilities, cleanliness, friendliness and perceived quality of service are however those attributes with highest scores on importance, all being over very important. The least important attributes are shopping, nightlife, attractions and climate.

6.4 Evaluation and results from question two

Are there any relationships between the various destination factors of importance and the intervening factors?

To explore the relationships between the various factors influencing destination selection and the corporate features of the intervening factors, a Spearman`s correlation test was used. The relationships showing significant correlation coefficients over 0,3 are summarized in table two.

6.4.1 Table six: Medium and large correlations between destination factors importance and corporate features.

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Image	-				**0,56**	0,46					
2.Accessibility		-		0,38			**0,503**	-0,43	0,31		
3.Affordability			-						0,35		0,44
4.Facility				-	**0,5**		**0,505**		0,31		
5.Quality of service					-						
6.Attractions & entertainment						-	-0,37				**0,51**
7.Number of conferences yearly							-	-0,46	0,44	0,334	
8.Del. at smallest conferences								-		-0,39	
9.Del. at largest conferences									-		
10.Size of corporation										-	
11.Use of intermediaries											-

From table two one can see the correlating relationships between the various destination factors importance and the corporate features, which are parts of the intervening factors affecting the planning of a conference and then affecting the importance levels of the destination factors. Almost all had significance levels reaching statistical difference, except from the relationship between affordability and delegates at largest conferences, facility and delegates at largest conferences, attractions and entertainment and number of conferences organized yearly, and between numbers of conferences organized yearly and size of corporation.

Correlation coefficients over 0,5 are considered as strong relationships and these also have the highest levels of statistical significance. These are highlighted in the table.

6.4.2 The correlation results

The correlation coefficient suggests a strong positive relationship between image and quality of service, and a medium positive relationship between image and attractions and entertainment. This implies that high importance levels of image are associated with high importance levels of quality of service and attractions and entertainment, and vice versa.

For accessibility it is a strong positive correlation with the number of conferences organized yearly, implying that increased importance of accessibility has an association with increased number of conferences organized yearly by the corporation.

Accessibility also has correlation coefficients suggesting positive medium associations with facility and delegates at largest conferences organized yearly. This suggests an increased importance on accessibility occurs at the same time as increased importance of facility and with increased number of delegates at large conferences. The correlation coefficient between accessibility and delegates at smallest conferences organized yearly suggests a negative medium association.

Affordability has correlation coefficients suggesting positive medium association with delegates at largest conferences organized and use of intermediaries. This implies that higher levels of importance of affordability are associated with higher number of delegates at the largest conferences organized by the corporation and more use of intermediaries.

Facility correlates strongly and positively with quality of service and number of conferences organized by the corporation yearly. A positive medium correlation is it also with delegates at the largest conferences organized. This suggests that higher levels of importance on facility are associated with higher levels of importance when it comes to quality of service, higher number of conferences organized and higher number of delegates at the largest conferences.

Attractions and entertainment correlates negatively medium with number of conferences and positively strong with the use of intermediaries. This indicates that higher levels of importance when it comes to attractions and entertainment are associated with lower number of conferences organized, implying that the less conferences organized the higher levels of importance of attractions and entertainment. Furthermore, the higher level of importance of attractions and entertainment is associated with more use of an intermediary for organizing conferences.

The number of conferences organized by the corporation has correlation coefficients suggesting a negative medium association with delegates at smallest conference organized and positive medium association with delegates at largest conferences organized as well as with the size of the corporation. This implies that the more conferences organized is associated with less delegates at the smallest conferences, more delegates at the largest conferences and larger size of corporation.

The number of delegates at the smallest conferences has a correlation coefficient suggesting a negatively medium relationship with the size of the corporation. Implying that the larger the corporation is the lower number of delegates is it at the smallest conferences.

6.4.3 Evaluating the correlations

The rest of the destination factors and corporate features had small correlations, but some that could be of interest for further investigation is the corporate economic turnover correlations with the destination factors. All these had small correlations, but most of them were negative. Maybe it is a small indication of when the economic turnover increases, the importance of these factors decreases. Affordability had a correlation coefficient of 0,01, almost zero, and attractions and entertainment had a correlation coefficient of 0,028. These almost zero correlations can indicate that there are no correlation between the economic turnover and the importance of affordability and attractions and entertainment.

The size of corporations had very low correlations with all the destination factors, which also might be an indication that there is no association between the importance of the destination factors and the size of corporations.

6.5 The evaluation and results from question three

Are there differences in the importance levels of destination factors across the groups of the intervening factors?

6.5.1 The first hypothesis

H1: There are significant differences in the importance levels of destination factors across the groups of the intervening factors.

The Kruskal-Wallis test is used to explore the relationships between the various factors to see if there were any significant differences across the groups for the various intervening factors on the levels of importance for the destination factors. This test is a non-parametric alternative for analyzing the relationship between groups and the scores are ranked and the rank mean for each group are compared.

1.a: It is a significant difference between the importance level of the destination factors across the five groups of corporate economic turnover.

Corporate economic turnover

Factors	**Significant level**
Image	0,136
Accessibility	0,697
Affordability	0,543
Safety & security	0,116
Facility	0,487
Attractions & entertainment	0,322
Quality of service	0,203

None of these continuous variables have significant levels under the significant level of 0,05. Therefore these results imply that there is no difference in the levels of importance of the various destination factors across the five groups of corporate economic turnover. The alternative hypothesis stating this cannot be supported and is therefore rejected. However, one cannot say that there are no variances across the groups on the importance scales, as some variance is seen when inspecting the mean ranks. Even if it was a significant result, the test do not identify where the differences are or how many that actually occurs, this must seen by investigating the mean ranks. The mean ranks for the groups suggests that the group with the lowest economic turnover (0,- - 10 000 000,-NOK) had the highest importance levels on total image, those in the group with the highest economic turnover (over 40 000 001,-NOK) were substantially more respondents however, implying that the mean ranking can be effected by it. The same goes for the mean ranks across the groups and the importance levels of the continuous variables accessibility, affordability, safety and security, facility, attractions and entertainment and quality of service. This little normal distribution between the groups is probably affected by the election of the sample, being part of the largest corporations in Norway based on the economic turnover in 2011. However, since the Kruskal-Wallis is a non-parametric method it does not a normal distribution, it only assume an identical scaled and shaped distribution for each group. One can however see the tendency that the various factor importance levels do not differ significantly across the groups of corporation economic turnover.

6.5.2 The Second hypothesis

1.b: It is a significant difference between the importance level of the destination factors across the seven groups of the number of conferences the corporation organize yearly.

Conferences organized yearly

Factors	**Significant level**
Image	0,543
Accessibility	0,04
Affordability	0,519
Safety & security	0,551
Facility	0,048
Attractions & entertainment	0,587
Quality of service	0,844

The significant level is over 0,05 on most importance levels of destination factors, but not on accessibility and facility. For image, affordability, safety and security, attractions and entertainment and quality of service there is no significant differences in the importance levels across the different number of conferences groups. An inspection of the mean ranks show that those organizing 3-4 conferences yearly have the highest image importance scores, while those with 5-6 conferences have the lowest. For the affordability importance score, the highest scores are on those organizing 3-4 conferences and lowest for those with 9-10. The safety and security importance scores are highest for those with 3-4 conferences and lowest for those with 5-6. Attractions importance score is highest for those with 1-2 conferences and lowest with over 10. The mean rank suggests that the group organizing 5-6 conferences has the lowest importance quality of service scores and highest for over 10 conferences.

For accessibility and facility levels of importance differ across the different number of conference groups. The highest scores on the accessibility importance levels are for those organizing over 10 conferences and lowest for those with 9-10 conferences, it is also a low mean rank for those organizing 1-2. Facility importance scores are highest for those organizing 3-4 conferences and lowest for those with 1-2.

6.5.3 The third hypothesis

1.c: It is a significant difference between the importance level of the destination factors across the three groups of the corporate size.

Corporate size

Factors	**Significant level**
Image	0,082
Accessibility	0,671
Affordability	0,819
Safety & security	0,8
Facility	0,353
Attractions & entertainment	0,681
Quality of service	0,577

The results show no significant values less than the alpha level 0,05, suggesting no differences in importance levels of factors across the corporate size groups.

The mean ranks suggest that the medium sized corporate group (50-250 employees) has the highest image importance scores, and the smallest sized corporate group (1-49) has the lowest. On the importance score for accessibility the largest sized corporate group has the highest scores and the smallest the lowest. The same goes for the importance levels of facility and attractions and entertainment. For the importance level of affordability the mean rank suggest that the smallest size group has the highest scores and the medium the lowest. Safety and security has highest scores on the smallest size group and the largest group the lowest, while quality of service has highest on the medium sized group and lowest on the largest group.

6.5.4 The fourth hypothesis

1.d: It is a significant difference between the importance level of the destination factors across the nine groups of the number of delegates at the largest conferences organized.

Delegates at largest conferences

Factors	**Significant level**
Image	0,193
Accessibility	0,242
Affordability	0,122
Safety & security	0,282
Facility	0,346
Attractions & entertainment	0,898
Quality of service	0,385

There are no significant differences on the importance levels of all the factors across the different groups of the number of delegates at the largest conferences the corporation usually organize.

The mean rank investigation suggest that the group with 250-299 conference participant has the highest image importance scores, with the group with 200-249 reporting the lowest. It also suggests that the group with 200-249 participants has the highest accessibility importance scores, followed by two groups that are larger, and the group with 100-149 having the lowest. The affordability importance scores seem to be highest for the group with 50-99 participants and lowest for the group with 250-299 as well as the group with 1-7. Safety and security importance score are highest for the group with 250-299 and lowest for 200-249, the same goes for the facility importance scores and the quality of service importance scores. Attractions and entertainment importance scores seem to be highest for those with 250-299 participants at the largest conferences and lowest for the group with 150-199.

6.5.5 The fifth hypothesis

1.e: It is a significant difference between the importance level of the destination factors across the nine groups of the number of delegates at the smallest conferences.

Delegates at smallest conferences

Factors	**Significant level**
Image	0,964
Accessibility	0,072
Affordability	0,523
Safety & security	0,681
Facility	0,596
Attractions & entertainment	0,804
Quality of service	0,948

There are no significant differences on the importance levels of all the factors across the different groups of sizes for the smallest conferences the corporation usually organize.

An inspection of mean rank suggests for the various groups suggest that the participants group of 50-99 has the highest image importance scores and the lowest for the smallest group of 1-49 participants. The same goes for the attraction importance scores. The accessibility importance scores are suggested to highest for the group with 1-49 participants and lowest for the group of 50-99, the same goes for the facility importance score. The group of 100-149 participants seems to have the highest affordability importance scores and the smallest group of 1-49 the lowest scores. The group of 100-149 is suggested to have the highest safety and security importance scores and lowest for the smallest group. Quality of service importance score is lowest on the smallest group and equally highest on the groups of 50-99 and 100-149.

6.5.6 The sixth hypothesis

1.f: It is a significant difference between the importance level of the destination factors across the three groups of using an intermediary or not or sometimes.

Intermediary use

Factors	**Significant level**
Image	0,215
Accessibility	0,959
Affordability	0,07
Safety & security	0,186
Facility	0,816
Attractions & entertainment	0,026
Quality of service	0,881

The results suggest that there are no significant differences in the importance levels of all the factors across the different groups of usage of intermediaries, except from the attractions and entertainment importance level which the significant result of 0,026 suggests there is a difference of the level across the groups.

The mean ranks inspection for the groups across the various factor importance levels suggest that the group of those using intermediaries for organizing conferences have the highest image importance scores, while the group of those only using them sometimes has the lowest. The same goes for the quality of service importance scores. The accessibility importance score is suggested highest with the sometimes group and lowest with the yes group. For the affordability importance level the highest scores are with the yes group and lowest with the no group. It is highest scores for the sometimes group and lowest for the no group on the safety and security importance scale. It is highest scores for the yes group and lowest for the no group on the facility importance scale.

The attractions and entertainment importance levels are suggested to be different across the groups of intermediary usage. The mean ranking inspection shows that the yes group has the highest importance scores and the no group the lowest.

For the statistical significant results obtained in the Kruskal-Wallis test one does not see what groups that are statistically significantly different in regards to each other. One has to do a follow up test, using Mann-Whitney U, to see these differences, by testing between pairs of the groups. The significance level should be over 0,05 for the results not to be significant and the mean rank shows what groups have the highest and lowest scores (Pallant, 2010).

The attractions and entertainment importance level has a significant result from the Kruskal-Wallis test across the groups of intermediary usage, and is thereby checked with a Mann-Whitney U test. This test also indicates a significant level of 0,004 and the mean rank show that the yes group (those using intermediaries for organizing conferences) has the highest attraction importance scores and the no group the lowest. This is the same result as the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated.

For the accessibility and facility importance levels there were significant differences across the groups concerning number of conferences that the corporation organizes yearly. These were also followed up by a Mann-Whitney U test and the significant levels from the test on facility shows a high significance level of 0,003 and the mean rank imply that the group with 3-4 conferences has the highest importance levels on facility, while the groups with 1-2 conferences has the lowest by the mean rank. The test on accessibility show a significance level of 0,005 and the mean rank show that the group organizing over 10 conferences has the highest accessibility importance score and the groups with 1-2 has the lowest importance levels of accessibility in regards to the mean rank. These are the same results as the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated.

7. Validity and reliability

Within this chapter there will be performed tests that checks whether or not we measure what we intend to measure, and if there are good enough reasons to rely on the results gained through the method triangulation. Firstly, it will be checked for validity and reliability in the qualitative approach. Thereafter, it will be examined whether the quantitative approach hold good validity and reliability.

7.1 Internal validity in the qualitative approach

Internal validity in qualitative research concerns about whether the results can be considered appropriate and if the description of a phenomenon is correct (Jacobsen, 2005). Within social science we concentrate about inter subjectivity rather than the truth, because many researchers find it difficult to find the one truth in qualitative approaches. The term inter subjectivity involves that closest we can get to the truth, is that several persons agree that something is a correct description when we test the results to others. Internal validity simply involves whether we have managed to gather the information we needed to gather in order to draw good conclusions. The internal validity can be tested through two actions. The first action can be done by controlling our investigation and conclusions with conclusions that other researchers have done about a similar phenomenon. The second action is to make a critical review of the results ourselves. (Jacobsen, 2005)

When we are to undertake a critical review of the sources we have used and the most critical phases of the research process, we must look towards the selection of units to the in-depth interviews. We can among them questioning whether we have interviewed the appropriate units, and whether they have communicated truthful information that is relevant for our research. We have in advance of the performance of in-depth interviews selected five units, where all is well positioned in the hierarchical system that exists in the conference industry. All units have a good understanding of how the industry works from different angles and which trends and movements that exists among customers in the Norwegian market. As previously mentioned, we chose to extract a customer adviser employed in Innovation Norway, because this organization is positioned at the top of the system and controls a great deal of the financial support provided from the governments to enterprises and projects in the conference industry. Innovation Norway together with Norway Convention Bureau is responsible for facilitating a growing customer supply and must therefore have a good understanding of what factors that is important for influencing national and international clients.

Furthermore, we have extracted two destination management companies that are located in two different cities in Norway, which is Trondheim and Stavanger. This is because we wanted to ensure that the information gathered from two different destinations in Norway is the same or whether there might exist any differences. Destination companies are often represented in major national and international fairs and workshops to promote their destinations to potential conference customers. We made the same process when we extracted two units representing a conference hotel in Trondheim and a conference hotel in Stavanger. Because Norway is elongated there might exist different perceptions concerning the factors.

By examining the perceptions from two destinations, we can see whether or not these perceptions agree with each other when it comes to the factors that influences conference destination selection. A normal problem in such interviews is that we may not get access to the units that can provide correct information (Jacobsen, 2005). In our interviewing process we managed to find the respondents appropriate for answering our questions. However, the first interview we conducted the respondents at some problems with specifically answering some of the questions, which resulted in a more general answering than we preferred. Thereby, the first interview may not hold the same quality as the other interviews conducted. Since the first respondents clearly had some problem with answering the questions, we changed the wording in the questions in order to emerge more clearly in the next interviews.

The four interviews we conducted with Visit Trondheim, Region Stavanger, Clarion Hotel Stavanger and Innovation Norway held good quality because of the changes and the respondent had no problem with providing truthful information. Hence we enter the critical discussion of the sources' willingness to provide information. Respondents may have different interests that may lead them to give false answers. We must therefore consider their motives for not coming forward with any information or whether they give a distorted picture of reality. We found that respondents' answers correlated with each other and they showed great willingness to provide information based on expertise and experience. The respondents came up with good reasons and examples in their answers without necessarily asking about this. The only respondent we found reason to evaluate is the respondent in our first interview. This respondent was unwilling to set aside enough time for us to collect the necessary information from her. She further was not willing to provide detailed information about the enterprise she represented, which resulted in general answers. The respondent seemed stressed and uncomfortable making it difficult to provide precise information. Even if this interview does not give as good strength as the others, however, we found information that is important in order to answer our questions.

If the various sources used in the interviews are of varying quality, we should clarify what respondents who have given better information than others. The respondents we pulled out have good knowledge on the subject addressed. They are regarded as first-hand sources, because they convey information about something they can and has expertise in, as well as they refer to happenings they have participated in and earned their own experiences about.

None of the respondents have clear motives for lying, because we are not addressing a sensitive topic. The topic can rather be of assistance to the enterprises that the respondents represent. The first interview may have resulted in a somewhat skewed picture of the reality than the others, but when comparing with the other interviews we see that the answers are inconsistent with each other. Furthermore, the respondents represent a variety of sources, meaning that they can provide different perspectives into the topic (Jacobsen, 2005). They have unsolicited contributed with providing data and other factors not mentioned by us, and that are considered important to emphasize. This creates good conditions to argue that the internal validity is of high quality when it comes to the selection of appropriate respondents to the interview process. In addition, the interview template used in the interviews, is put together on the basis of information earlier gathered by researchers that have addressed the same topic but in a different country. This information is discussed and mentioned in the literature review. The review consists of information from several independent sources. When information is gathered from several sources and gives a valid description about the same phenomenon.

Having examined the sources of data, the next critical phase will be to evaluate the first part of the analysis, which involves the categorization of our qualitative data. In the analysis we have divided the data into categories based on the seven factors we examine the importance of. These factors include accessibility, affordability, conference facilities, quality of service at the destination, entertainment and attractions, safety and security and destination image. In addition, we have categorized the overall importance of having conferences at a destination, the usage of intermediaries and other additional factors mentioned by the respondents. Categories are essential because we use them to organize the respondents and establish contexts between phenomena. Therefore we should try to change the categories for instance by adding two categories together in order to analyze if any differences occur that can entail a difference in the conclusions drawn (Jacobsen, 2005).

During this research process we have conducted a triangulation of methods, meaning that we have both in-depth interviews and a questionnaire. This involves that a research question or topic is investigated through different angles of approach (Jacobsen, 2005). When two different methods provide the same result, it will be a strong argument for claiming that the results are of strong internal validity. For instance, we can see that the “quality of service” is an important factor that influences destination selection. The results show that both the respondents in the questionnaire and the respondents in the in-depth interviews agree that this factor has high importance, and we can therefore claim that the validity for this factor is strong.

7.2 External validity in qualitative approach

The external validity concerns about the extent to which findings from the study that can be generalized to different contexts (Jacobsen, 2005). Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that in qualitative methods the intention is not to generalize from the selection of units to a larger group of devices, which means the population (Jacobsen, 2005).

The purpose is rather to understand and elaborate on concepts and phenomena that exist (Jacobsen, 2005). We can, for instance, make a theoretical generalization in which we relate our findings to the theory that other researchers have discovered about the same phenomenon. The results we arrive at in a qualitative study can often be closely linked to a specific context where other researchers have addressed the same phenomenon in perhaps a different direction. If we should be able to argue that the findings gathered in our study also applies in other contexts, we can thus look for support in other studies. When several studies from different contexts, can demonstrate the same results and agree that the results are transferable, we can to some extent argue that the phenomenon can be generalized to the larger population (Jacobsen, 2005). In our study we have collected information from a variety of studies at an international level. The researchers that is perhaps most strongly represented is Oppermann (1996), Baloglu & Love (2004) and Lee & Back (2005), who has published several empirical and peer reviewed studies that proves the importance of each factor we measure in this study. These researchers have mainly performed their study in countries such as United Kingdom and USA, and our interest is to find whether or not these factors applies in the Norwegian market as well. Our analysis and results are compared with and linked up to the findings made by these researchers mentioned. These studies substantiate all the investigation we do (Baloglu & Love, 2004; Lee & Back, 2005).

7.3 Reliability in the qualitative approach

The next phase is to examine whether the results from the in-depth interviews are reliable. First and foremost we need to analyze how the formulation of the exploration scheme may have an impact on the interview objects. Because the interview object can be exposed to different levels of stimuli and signals that can affect the respondents reactions and how they respond and behave during the interview. (Jacobsen, 2005)

For each interview conducted we followed a preplanned interview template with a range of fixed questions in order to make sure that all necessary data was collected and to prevent information not relevant for the study. At the same time as we were consistent with provide enough flexibility and space for the respondent to respondent to respond on own terms without too much pressure. We allowed the respondent to provide information based on own experience and perception in order to ensure objectivity. In other words, the main purpose of the template was to create a conversation and a good dialogue with each respondent. (Jacobsen, 2005)

We were also consistent about meeting the respondents at their work place, because we wanted to avoid an artificial context. This is something that easily could have occurred if we had invited the respondents to our study place our home place for conducting the interview. (Jacobsen, 2005) Furthermore, we chose to conduct scheduled interview where we agree on meeting place and time in forefront of each interview. We wanted to give the respondent time to prepare for the interview in order to receive planned and well thought out viewpoints. We could have chosen a more surprising approach in order to provide spontaneity, but it is not appropriate in this particular study because of a comprehensive topic that is necessary to explain for the respondent in advance. In order to ensure that data from the interviews became correctly recorded, we used a sound recorder while writing notes during the interviews to be sure we received all relevant information and to avoid having key viewpoints excluded from the study. In the analysis of data we need to make sure that the information is placed in appropriate categories. Subsequently, all information was recorded in a report before it was put together in more comprehensible categories. Based on this analyze there are several reasons for arguing that we have managed to use this exploration scheme without affecting the objectivity in the conversation, which resulted in reliable answers that makes it easier to provide more reliable results and conclusions.

7.4 Conceptual and internal validity in quantitative approach

A quantitative questionnaire holds good quality when it measures what it should measure, meaning that it has conceptual validity (Jacobsen, 2005). The survey is good if it can demonstrate that conditions with correlation also are causally linked to each other. . There is further advantageous that results emerging from the survey can be transferred to other areas, this means in other words, a certain degree of generalization or external validity (Jacobsen, 2005). The last requirement that should be included in order to evaluate whether or not the questionnaire is good enough, is to investigate the reliability. Reliability means to which extent we can trust the data we have collected and the investigation process we have conducted. (Jacobsen, 2005) If these requirements are followed we have reasons to suggest that the survey holds a high degree of internal validity

7.4.1 Conceptual validity

Conceptual validity means that we simply must ensure that the questionnaire actually measures the factors and the overall phenomenon we want and aims to measure (Jacobsen, 2005). Therefore we need to analyze if there exists a correspondence between the theoretical phenomenon and operational definition. We need to find out if there is an overlap, which means how much the different questions cover the theoretical phenomenon they intend to measure. In the questionnaire we wanted to measure the importance by a set of factors. These factors include the terms accessibility, affordability, location and facilities, quality of service, entertainment and attractions, security and destination image. These concepts may be too difficult for the respondent to understand because they are comprehensive. One can never accomplish a perfect operationalization with such complex concepts, but it is possible to approach towards the concepts through with accuracy and a critical attitude towards the operationalization. (Jacobsen, 2005)

Before we developed our questionnaire the concepts were divided into different attributes that are found in previous empirical studies that have measured the same concepts. Subsequently, this was followed by questions designed for each attribute, which can be linked under each concept. Thus we can be sure that we measure the concepts we want to measure, at the same time, as respondents understand what we needed answers to.

As an example from the questionnaire, we needed to capture whether or not accessibility could influence conference destination selection. To cover this concept we entered questions about the ease of local transportation at the destination, time of transportation to the destination, the ease of transportation to the destination and how easy it is to get accommodation at the destination. Each of these four questions represent an attribute that previous studies suggest belongs under the concept “accessibility”. We have made the same process with all the other concepts in the questionnaire. In addition, we were uncertain about whether respondents would understand what we added in the word destination as a concept. Since this concept is repeated in many of our questions, there was formulated an explanation of what a destination is and asked the respondents to respond accordingly. Because our theoretical concepts consist of several subsets, it is necessary to capture these subsets by asking more questions. What we could have done differently in this questionnaire is to add the same amount of questions or attributes under each concept, because it would have made the process of analyzing the results easier. However, we will still suggest that the questionnaire holds a high conceptual validity.

7.4.2 Pre-testing for conceptual and internal validity

We further controlled the conceptual and internal validity by doing a thorough pretest to examine the face validity of the questionnaire. This was done by firstly discussing the questionnaire with university students, which have the same theoretical fundament as we do in order to comment potential changes and whether the questionnaire measures correctly. We went through the questionnaire together and discussed spelling mistakes, wording of the questions, whether or not the questions and concepts was understandable. Further we asked them to comment the length of the questionnaire. Finally we explained what we wanted to measure and asked the students to provide feedback on how well the subsets explained the more complex concepts. We specifically asked them to evaluate the term intermediaries, destination and the seven factors. The students responded that there was some spelling mistakes and wording of the sentences that was recommendable to change. However, they commented that the length of the survey was satisfactory. They further mentioned that the questionnaire was easy to understand and complete, however it was suggested by one of the students that there be an explanation detached to the concepts “intermediaries” and “destination” can be perceived as too confusing and comprehensive for the respondents to accurately understand what we are looking for. On the other hand, the students argued that the subsets were satisfactory in order to measure each of the factors we intend to measure. After the discussion we went through the questionnaire once more in order to correct the mistakes that were found and give a explanation for some of the terms and also explain in the survey what we want to gain from the survey.

We further asked one of the respondents from the in-depth interviews, which is named Lisbeth Fallan and is employed in Visit Trondheim AS, to browse and evaluate the questionnaire. Lisbeth Fallan is employed as Sales Manager for conferences and congresses, and has therefore a good understanding for what type of questions that should be asked to the customers buying conference packages. Simultaneously, since we have conducted an in-depth interview with her, she already has an understanding about the topic we address. She responded through email that the questionnaire contained many relevant and excellent questions. However, she also responded that from her experience it might be too many questions and that the companies are quite difficult to reach unless they receive something out of it. We went through the survey to see if some of the questions could be excluded, but we found that all questions are necessary in order to measure the concepts. In reality, if we have had more time and resources, the questionnaire should have been developed even further. Furthermore, Norwegian and International companies that are located in Norway are the most appropriate population to draw our sample from. Because it is these companies that constitute the customers who buy conference packages in the Norwegian market. These companies can also be referred to as the corporate market, which based on international studies represent the most dominant customer group within the international conference industry. Therefore, we could not change the population even though it could imply less answering rate.

Finally, we pre-tested the questionnaire against our target group, which is meeting planners in large companies. The questionnaire was pretested by three managers and one customer adviser. Feedback on this pretest was that questions were perceived as clear and understandable, as well as easy to read even though it is written in English language. We received some comments about the language, but we will not change it in order to avoid measurement errors and mistranslations.

7.4.3 Validity testing of concepts

When it comes to testing validity through an operationalization of the concepts, the best method to use is to perform a measure of the correlations between each importance factor and the subsets that belong to the same importance factor. If we return to the example concerning accessibility we measured how the concept correlates with the subsets, which include the ease of local transportation at the destination, time of transportation to the destination, the ease of transportation to the destination and how easy it is to get accommodation at the destination. We performed a Spearman non-parametric correlation test and found that the correlation between the three first subsets was quite strong, while the last had a low correlation. We suggested that accommodation on the destination would have a higher correlation if we replaced it in another concept, such as location and facilities. In this concept, the subset gained a higher correlation.

7.5 External validity in quantitative approach

When we examine the level of external validity in our quantitative research study, it entails to which degree the results from the sample we have chosen, can be generalize to the larger population (Jacobsen, 2005). There exist two kinds of generalization. The first form of generalization is concerned about to which degree there exist connections between empiric and theory, which mainly applies to qualitative studies. In a quantitative research approaches, we already suggest that the phenomenon exist, based on what we have discovered in the literature review and the in-depth interviews. However, we are uncertain about how often the phenomenon occurs and how widespread it is. The purpose is therefore to generalize from a sample to a bigger population. (Jacobsen, 2005)

The sample we have chosen is drawn from a population that consists of large corporations in Norway. Originally we wanted to include all companies in Norway, but found out this is rather impossible to accomplish because we lack time to cover them representatively. At the same time we did not manage to find a proper list of the companies in Norway in order to randomly select an optimal sample. We found, however, a list of the 500 largest companies in Norway, and randomly selected 250 companies, which constitute our sample. Thereby, we have a specific group that is interesting for us to measure, even though other potential groups, such as middle-sized to small companies, are excluded. According to EU’s objectives for assessing which companies are considered small, medium sized or large, the enterprises with more than 250 employees considered being large companies in Norway (www.merkur1.cappelendamm.no). We believe that larger companies organize more conferences, because of financial resources, so this group will provide more data according to what we measure than smaller companies. Examining smaller and medium sized companies could be a subject for further research.

Nevertheless, we received only 30 responses from the 250 surveys we sent out to our corporate sample. This could be because many of the companies’ contact information was difficult to find. Among those we found contact information about, had either a automatic mail response or a virus programs that hatches out email addresses they do not know. Furthermore, many companies refuse to answer such questionnaires because they lack time or interest to participate. Therefore, we cannot claim that the results from the questionnaire are representative for the population as a whole. It will, however, be large enough to show insight and tendencies for what factors that might influence conference destination selection. This means that our quantitative research cannot show a perfect external validity.

7.6 Reliability in quantitative research

The design of the questionnaire can in different ways affect the outcome of research (Jacobsen, 2005). Therefore we must check for and examine the level of reliability, meaning whether or not you can trust the data. The biggest threats to reliability is, firstly, leading questions, which means questions that lead the respondent to answer in different direction, because the respond options could be perceived as negatively or positively. Secondly, a question context can contain mistakes, which mean the connection between the questions. Such mistakes can lead the answering process in a certain direction, so we will not receive the correct results. Thirdly, there is a problem with questions being unclear and does not completely understand what they are answering. Finally, there could be a problem with double-barreled questions, which means that you ask about two concepts in the same questions that may lead to confusion (Jacobsen, 2005). As mention earlier, we went through the questionnaire several times in order to avoid these problems. We pretested the questionnaire among a group of university students, a professor at the university, an international Sales Manager we previously have in-depth interviewed, and tested against four managers that all have experience with organizing conferences. The questionnaire itself is put together on the basis of surveys that other researchers have conducted. These researchers are all mentioned in the literature review.

7.6.1 Analyzing and testing of the reliability

In order to measure the reliability in our results obtained from the questionnaire, we performed a procedure for checking the reliability of a scale in the statistical program SPSS.

In section two of the questionnaire, we had questions that concerns about the destination attributes or subsets and how they might influence conference destination selection. These attributes were included in a reliability test. The attribute scale shows a relatively good internal consistency, and many of the attributes correlated with each other in a positive direction. There was also some attributes that had a negatively correlation with each other, but this is due to the fact all attributes are not supposed to correlate. From the inter-item correlation matrix we can see that there is a positive correlation between time of transportation to the destination and ease of local transportation at the destination and ease of transportation to the destination. This is because these three attributes all measure the same concept “accessibility”. In addition there is a fourth attribute included that is accommodation at the conference destination. We found out that it was not as reliable as we thought, and had a negative correlation with the attributes mentioned above. It had however, higher correlation with attributes that measure the concept location and facilities. The Cronbachs Alpha shown in the reliability statistics measured .74, which is a satisfactory level and suggests therefore good consistency. However, from a total number of items there was five items excluded. It is necessary to evaluate Alpha if item deleted, which shows values above .70. We can therefore suggest that these questions are reliable.

In section three of the questionnaire, we had questions that concerns about the usage of intermediaries within corporations. The intermediary scale shows a good internal consistency. The inter-item correlation matrix shows positive values in the scale, which means there is an positive correlation. The Cronbachs Alpha coefficient reported .90, which suggests a good internal consistency because, values above .70 are considered satisfactory and values above .80 are preferable. The number of items in total is 30, but 3 was excluded. Therefore, we must also check the Cronbachs Alpha if item deleted, which shows values above .87. If we compare with the first Cronbachs Alpha we can see that the values still holds a good internal consistency with values higher than .80. In addition, the summary item statistics shows that the mean inter-item correlations is .58, with values ranging from .24 to .84 which suggests a strong relationship among the items. We can therefore suggest that the questions are reliable.

In the last part of section three the questions concerns about rating each factor individually based on how the meeting planners evaluate their level of importance. These factors are different from each other, and we cannot expect a perfect correlation matrix in this scale. However, we did perform a reliability test that showed both positive and negative correlations, which entails that internal consistency is not perfect. For instance, there was a positive correlation between destination image and all the other importance factors except from accessibility, which showed a negative correlation. The Cronbachs Alpha showed a value at .51, which is lower than what is satisfactory. We cannot claim that correlation is reliable.

The questionnaire in itself holds good validity and reliability, and the results received from this research can be trusted. However, we can never receive an optimal quantitative research in this study, because the amount of respondents that answered is too low. We cannot claims it is representative for the larger population, but we can suggest that results can be trusted and the information that are gathered will provide valuable insight and tendencies into our study. In an eventual further research we recommend that a bigger sample must be provided.

8. Discussion

7.1 Discussion of the first question

Question one is about the ranking of the destination factors, based on the level of importance they have on the selection of a destination. We wanted to explore the importance of the various destination factors and see if it was possible to make a sequential ranking of them or if they were equally important.

First we conducted a descriptive statistics to assess the mean ranking of the various total importance scales of each factor, but because these scales had various number of items measuring them the mean ranking could not be used to rank the importance relation. We therefore used the mean ranking of importance showing from the scales where all the factors are ranked on importance independently, without attributes measuring them. This resulted in a ranking of the factors based on how the sample respondent to the importance of each factor.

By also assessing the mean ranking of the various attributes measuring each factor, we investigated what the ranking of the various attributes were for each factor and independently. Because of a too small sample we could not conduct the factor analysis to validate the attributes measuring the factors, were maybe other clusters of attributes under fewer or more factors had shown to be of importance, and maybe a more valid ranking of factors would have been made. But with the data we had a ranking of the factors was made and it is presented in table one

Table one: Mean ranking of importance scores for destination factors measured independently

Factors	**Mean**
Quality of service	4,41
Accessibility	3,97
Facility	3,83
Affordability	3,4
Safety & Security	3,4
Image	3,31
Attractions & Entertainment	2,69

8.1.1 Mean ranking of attributes measuring factors

The questionnaire rated many attributes, which assessed the various factors on levels of importance, and the result gives an indication of what importance level the attributes have. Because the factor analysis could not be conducted we checked if there were any of the attributes showing significantly higher or lower importance scores than the factor they were assessing, as this can affect the total importance scores of the destination factors being measured on various attributes. A mean rank order of all the attributes was also conducted to see what the ranking of the attributes was and if there were any extreme differences in importance of them. A summarized mean ranking of the total attribute scores divided on number of attributes was made for each factor to control the reliability of the ranking of the factors measured independently. These results are summarized in table two.

Table two: Mean ranking independently and by attributes

Factors	**Mean**	**Mean of attributes**
Quality of service	4,41	4,34
Accessibility	3,97	3,89
Facility	3,83	4,15
Affordability	3,4	3,4
Safety & Security	3,4	3,35
Image	3,31	3,28
Attractions & Entertainment	2,69	2,41

8.1.2 Qualitative ranking of factors

From the data collection through the in depth interviews we got an idea of how important each of these factors were as well as what factors they considered most and least important for selecting a conference destination. All agreed that image was a very important factor and one said it was the most important, the same was for accessibility, especially getting to the destination easy and fast was important, quality of service was ranked high by all, but not highest by any. Three argue that attractions and entertainment is important and two not, three say safety and security is important, one say it is not. Four say that affordability, especially the general price level at destination, is not important, but one say it is most important. The same goes for facility which is said not to be important when selecting a destination, but one say it is very important. This leaves us with the rank order:

Factor ranking from interviews

Image and Accessibility,
Quality of service
Attractions & entertainment
Safety & security
Affordability and Facility

Both rankings are however relatively different to the ranking of factors made from the interviews. Similarities are that accessibility and quality of service is ranked among the three highest and safety and security as fifth for the interview objects and fourth on the questionnaire results. The image was ranked highest for the interview objects, in difference to second last on the other rankings. And affordability and facility is ranked lowest by the interview objects in difference to the other rankings, having facility among the third highest and affordability as fourth on the ranking.

8.1.3 Accessibility

Accessibility is of high importance for both research methods and the literature mention that easy accessibility, good infrastructure and short travel times are of high importance for the corporate sector when organizing conferences, because of both economical and logistical reasons (Rogers, 2008). Oppermann and Chon (1997) also suggest that accessibility is one of the most crucial factors of importance when selecting a destination for a conference. Accessibility is important based mainly on costs of time and money, especially time of getting to the destination. The further it is to travel the less likely it is to select the destination (Lee & Back, 2005).

8.1.4 Quality of service

Bonn et al. (1994) found that between meeting planners of conferences for association and corporation the difference of importance was low in regards to quality and service, and that it was important for both sectors. Both the interview objects and the respondents on the questionnaire ranked the quality of service as very important when selecting a conference destination. The factor was however ranked substantially higher than the other factors on the quantitative results, in difference to being ranked after image and accessibility on the qualitative result. However, it is ranked as very important on both and the literature also suggests that this is a very important factor (Lee & Back, 2005). The attributes assessing the factor were all ranked among the highest of all the attributes researched and cleanliness and friendly people ranked highest on importance. It could be interesting to further investigate this factor in specific and see what more aspects of it that might be important or not.

8.1.5 Safety and security

Some of the interview objects mentioned that the reason they rated safety and security low was because they think people take this factor for granted, especially those arranging conferences from Norway. Meeting planners from other countries might feel it is positive to select Norway as a destination because they feel it is a safe place to be, one of the interview objects stated. The results from the quantitative data ranked safety and security almost similar to the ranking from the quantitative data. It was rated between “moderately important” and “very important”, but leaning most towards “moderately important”. Perceived safety and security was however more important than the official information on it. The safety reputation assessing the factor image should maybe only have assessed the safety and security factor instead. This attribute scored the same mean rank as the safety and security factor measured independently and by two attributes assessing the factor.

8.1.6 Affordability

Affordability is ranked the lowest at the ranking from the interview data and in the middle in the ranking from the questionnaire data. One of the interview objects had however another view on the affordability factor, seeing it as one of the most important factors in selecting a destination. The affordability is assessed by attributes of price, not on low price or high price, just if the prices on various features were of importance. Implicitly one can think that if the price level is important it is important that it is low, but it can also imply that it is important because higher prices might be a sign of higher quality, and very low prices might indicate lower quality (G. Crouch & Louviere, 2004). The affordability has a mean ranking showing a tendency that it is between moderately and very important leaning against moderately. Affordability is however important, but maybe it is not the decisive factor for the corporate sector selecting a destination. It might be ranked as one of the least important factors among most of the interview objects, but that can also be because they also thought about association meeting planners selecting destination for conferences where the delegates pay their own travel expenses and often pay to participate. In this case the image and attractions and entertainment most likely would be of high importance as well, as many association conference delegates use the conference as a vacation basis as well (Oppermann, 1996). Also Bonn et al. (1994) found substantial differences between the importance of attraction and entertainment for the association and the corporate sector, being more important for the association meeting planners than the corporate.

8.1.7 Attractions and entertainment

Some of the interview objects say that attractions and entertainment seem to be most important for the association market and not for the corporate market, and one uses the attractions to describe the destination image, implying a possible crossover between the attributes of these two factors. This can also be implied by the attribute attraction scoring lower on importance than the other attributes measuring image, and being ranked with most of the attractions and entertainment attributes. The same result was it for the attribute climate assessing the factor image. And the attribute restaurants scored much higher than all the other attributes assessing attractions and entertainment, implying it might have been better for assessing another factors, as for example quality of service, as being an extra service possibility outside the conference facilities (G. Crouch & Louviere, 2004). Conferences are often held at off season periods (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). This also might imply that attractions and entertainment, as well as the attribute climate under the factor image are not very important for the corporate sector.

8.1.8 Facility

Facility is ranked much lower on importance from the interviews than the questionnaire, this might imply that the interviews were clearer on the concept of selection of destination, and that the responses on the questionnaire ranked facility high on importance because it is the factor making the basis for the conference requirements being fulfilled, but some may have ranked it without thinking about if it is important in the process of selecting the destination at a local level. Facilities is seen as one of the most important destination factors influencing the selection (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Facilities are seen as crucially important because the basic requirements need to be met, as space and technological necessities.

The characteristic questions in section one of the questionnaire tells us that most corporations selects the destination before selecting facility, but some actually answered that they select facility first and many answered that the sometimes selects destination first. This can also imply that the importance of facility was ranked without considering where in the selection process one selects facility or it can just be an indication of the process being more dynamic, as some evaluate the destination on the various factors and after selecting the destination a new evaluation of facilities is conducted and a new selection is in order. Another reason can be that corporations have conferences at facilities they have used before and are satisfied with, and the attractions and entertainment, image and safety and security are less important because the corporation focuses mainly on the facility, being where the total or most of the conference experience will happen anyway. Bonn et al. (1994) suggested that facilities are approximately equally in importance for the corporate and association sector.

This may be implying that the huge difference on the rankings from the qualitative and quantitative data does not come from the interview objects thinking more of associations than corporations.

8.1.9 Image

The literature suggests that image is one of the most crucial factors in conference destination selection, most of this is however in relation to the association market and the corporate market could differ on the level of importance on the image factor (Hakala & Lemmetyinen, 2011; Lee & Back, 2005). This factor was also rated high on the ranking on the data from the interviews, maybe implying that several of the interview objects talked about their meanings and thoughts in relation to the association sector. All of the interview objects have contact with both the association and corporate sector and have substantial knowledge on the sectors in relation to destination selection and what they emphasize, but they may not be fully aware of the differences between the sectors in regards to factors of importance. The reason image is not high on the factor ranking from the questionnaire data, could be because the concept is unclear, the attributes are not suitable enough for the concept or it can simply be showing a tendency of image not being the decisive factor when selecting a conference destination.

In conclusion, the ranking of the destination factors is interesting, but maybe also dependent on factors not controlled for in this question. The ranking conducted from the questionnaire and mean rank of the independent factors seems to be the most appropriate to explain variance with for the corporate sector, because of things discussed above, but mainly because these ratings are the only ones we have which are ranted by actual meeting planners. Rating the accessibility higher than the facility is also based on the literature review and the interview results. Thereby the ranking of destination factors on levels of importance is; 1.

Quality of service

Accessibility

Facility

Affordability

Safety and security

Image

Attractions and entertainment

8.2 Discussion of the second question

In question two we want to see if there are any correlating relationships between the various destination factors and between the various intervening factors of corporate features. We ask this question because we want to explore the relationships between factors that influence destination selection, to see if there might be tendencies of them affecting each other.

With the non-parametric Spearman`s correlation analysis we only see what factors that have correlating relationships, if certain factor importance levels and corporate features increase or decrease at the same time for example. However, we cannot see a cause and effect tendency were if A happens B always happen, we can only observe if two variables have a tendency to happen at the same time, an association not a cause. A third variable could be the reason for them increasing or decreasing simultaneously, but we cannot check this with non-parametric analysis alternatives. We are however looking at the strength of the relationship between the various variables by looking at the correlation coefficient Spearman`s rho and the significance level gives us an indication on how much trust we can have in the correlation results.

A small sample like ours could have moderate correlations which do not have statistical significance levels under the traditional 0,05 level. In difference larger samples can reach statistical significance at smaller correlations. The most important is however to focus on the relationship between the variables and see how strong they are, as well as their shared variance (Pallant, 2010). Almost all of the correlations that had moderate or strong relationships reached statistical significance, except from the relationship between affordability and delegates at largest conferences, facility and delegates at largest conferences, attractions and entertainment and number of conferences organized yearly, and between number of conferences organized yearly and size of corporation.

8.2.1 Correlation of the image factor

The strong positive correlation between image and quality of service tells us that the importance of image and quality of service increase simultaneously. This tells us that when one is considered important the other one is also considered important. This might imply that those meeting planners thinking image is important also thinks quality of service is important, but as we have seen from the results for question one, image is rated much lower than quality of service. They can however be correlating, just that image is not as important as quality of service. It can also be a correlation because some see the quality of service as a part of the image, as some of the interview objects mentioned that when the quality of service increased at a destination the image also increased positively. Both factors are seen as very important in the literature and among the interview objects, but for the quantitative ranking the image was rated much lower than the quality of service, maybe implying with these results that some of the attributes measuring the image were not suitable enough.

The affordability is discussed in the interviews as price levels and what the corporation can and will afford. One says the price levels can influence the image, both negatively and positively because, as two other mentions, it can affect the view on quality of service. A higher price levels give better quality and a lower price level give lower quality. And the quality of service is mentioned as affecting the image of a destination, maybe even being a part of it. The literature also suggests a correlation between the affordability on quality of service and thereby affecting the image and attractiveness of the destination (G. Crouch & Louviere, 2004). There is however not seen any correlation between affordability and quality of service or image in this analysis.

A medium positive relationship between image and attractions and entertainment tells us that higher importance on image happens simultaneously as higher importance of attractions and entertainment. Image and attractions and entertainment were ranked lowest on importance of the destination factors. Both are however seen as very important factors, especially for the association sector, in the literature (G. Crouch & Louviere, 2004). The correlation could imply that the attraction and entertainment factor is related to the image of the destination, that the more important the attractions and entertainment the more important the image. This could be because the image is a complex concept which could include a number of attributes as well as other factors (Gallarza, et al., 2002).

8.2.2 Correlation of the accessibility factor

The strong positive relationship between accessibility and the number of conferences organized yearly tells us that the relationship between these two variables is strong and they increase at the same times. It can be showing a tendency of the more conferences the corporations organize the more important is the factor accessibility. Maybe the more conferences organized the more important is the time and ease of transportation, because of cost constrains of time. This also imply a relationship between the intervening factors of corporate features and the importance of destination factors as well, the intervening factors possibly affecting the importance levels of the destination factors. To state this other analysis of course has to be conducted, but this might be an implication for further research on it.

A medium positive correlation between accessibility and facility gives us an indication that the more important accessibility is considered the more important is also facility considered and vice versa. This imply that the meeting planners that think facility is important also thinks accessibility is important, and as they are ranked high from the quantitative data a positive correlation between them is likely. These factors are also considered the most important in some literature (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). However, between accessibility and the number of conferences organized it was a strong positive correlation, as well as a strong positive correlation between facility and the number of conferences organized, which might imply the relationship between accessibility and facility is because of the third variable number of conferences organized by the corporation. So as the number of conferences increases the importance of accessibility and facility increases at the same time. Maybe it is because one has to be more effective and focus on the practical issues when organizing a lot of conferences.

The medium positive correlation between accessibility and the number of delegates at the largest conferences the corporation organizes tells us that the higher levels of importance considered for the accessibility is happening simultaneously as the number of delegates at the largest conferences increases. We cannot state a causal relationship or what happens first, but logic thinking imply that this can show a tendency of if there are many delegates at a conference, the importance of accessibility increases at the same time.

A medium negative correlation between accessibility and number of delegates at the smallest conferences mean that higher levels of one of the variables occurs at the same time as lower levels of the other variable. For example if the importance of accessibility increases the number of delegates at the smallest conferences decreases, or that as the number of delegates at the smallest conferences increases the accessibility importance decreases. However, because of the positive correlation between accessibility and the number of delegates at the largest conferences, logical thinking imply that as the number of delegates decreases the accessibility importance increases. A practical example could be that you would maybe not travel across the Atlantic Ocean to hold a small conference for ten people, or maybe you would.

8.2.3 Correlation of the affordability factor

The medium positive correlation between affordability and the number of delegates at the largest conferences show a simultaneously increase of importance of affordability and increase of the number of delegates at the largest conferences. This can imply that as the number of delegates gets higher the affordability increase in importance. Maybe this is because as more delegates attend conferences the more expensive it gets and the more important the prices get for the meeting planner, as in difference to associations the corporations usually pay for the expenses of the delegates (Oppermann, 1996).

The medium positive correlation between affordability and the use of intermediary suggest that when the importance of affordability increases the likelihood of using an intermediary increase or vice versa. By using intermediaries the meeting planners can get help with everything from making of the budget, catering, contracts, accommodation, conference facilities and the like, implying that those more likely to use intermediaries are more focused on affordability and the price levels. Maybe they use intermediaries to get better agreements and save money or maybe the use of intermediaries leads to a higher focus on the affordability aspect and its importance as well. This is however in difference to some of the literature that suggests that some does not use intermediaries because it does not give enough value for the money (Kokkomäki, et al., 2009).

8.2.4 Correlation of the facility factor

A strong positive correlation between facility and quality of service shows us that the increase of importance on facility happens at the same time as the increase of the importance of the quality of service. These are both considered as the destination factors of highest importance from the qualitative data and might correlate as they are both very important for the meeting planners but it might also be because when one for example the importance is high for facility the same goes for quality of service because high importance might be linked with positive attributes. So if one believe good facilities are important one might also expect high levels of quality.

The strong positive correlation between facility and the number of conferences the corporation organizes tells us that both variables increases simultaneously, that high levels of importance of facility happens at the same time as the number of conferences organized increases. This could be an indication of that when the conference amount increases the importance of the facility also increases.

A medium positive correlation between facility and the number of delegates at the largest conferences tell us that the more delegates it is at the largest conferences the more important is the facility and vice versa. This indicates that the more delegates it is at the conference the more important is it to select the right facility and the evaluation of facilities will be important before selecting the destination. This is possibly because large conferences is dependent on large facilities and one cannot find that everywhere.

8.2.5 Correlation of the attractions and entertainment factor

The medium negative correlation between attractions and entertainment and the number of conferences the corporation organizes indicates that a higher number of conferences happen at the same time as the importance of attractions and entertainment decreases. This might show a tendency that the more conferences organized the less the meeting planners care about the attractions and entertainment at the destination, and this could be because many conferences during the year indicates they should be effective for the sake of costs as well as for the delegates if they attend many conferences on behalf of the corporation they might want them to be of professional relevance and not focusing on outside conference activities.

A strong positive correlation between attractions and entertainment and use of intermediaries tells us that as the importance of attractions and entertainment increases the likelihood of using an intermediary increases at the same time. Maybe this is an implication that those wanting to organize extra activities are more likely to use the services of intermediaries or maybe that those using intermediaries gets affected by them suggesting and organizing extra activities and thereby the importance of the attractions and entertainment increases. A relationship between the destination factors and intervening factors is however implied.

8.2.6 Correlation of the number of conferences

A medium negative correlation between the number of conferences organized by the corporation and the number of delegates at the smallest conferences tells us that as one of the variables increase the other decrease at the same time. This correlation indicates that as the number of conferences organized increase the number of delegates at the smallest conferences decrease, maybe showing a tendency of corporations having many conferences have it for a small number of delegates.

A medium positive correlation between the number of conferences organized and the number of delegates at the largest conferences indicates that as the more conferences organized by the corporation the more delegates is it at the largest conferences. Because of the negative correlation between the number of conferences and number of delegates at the smallest conferences, this correlation might be because the corporations organizing many conferences have many small ones, but also very large ones because they might have many employees for example.

8.2.7 Correlation of the corporation size

The medium positive correlation between the number of conferences organized and the size of the corporation indicates that the larger the corporation is the more conferences they organize.

The medium negative correlation between size of the corporation and the number of delegates at the smallest conferences implies that the larger the corporation is the lower the number of delegates is it at the smallest conferences. This can be seen in relation to the correlation between larger the corporation is the more conferences they organize and the correlation between the more conferences organized the more delegates at the largest conferences and the lower number of delegates at the smallest conferences.

8.2.8 Correlations between intervening factors

The correlations between the intervening factors indicates that the larger the corporation the more conferences they organize, the more small conferences with low delegate numbers is organized and the higher delegate numbers it is at the large conferences.

8.2.9 Correlations between intervening and destination factors

The various correlations between the intervening factors of corporate and the destination factors show some tendencies of possible co-variance as well.

When the number of conferences organized increase it also indicates an increase in the importance of accessibility and facility, and a decrease in the importance of attractions and entertainment, maybe showing a tendency that a corporation organizing many conferences focus more on efficiency than on leisure.

As the number of delegates at the large conferences increases the importance of accessibility, facility and affordability also increase. And as the number of delegates at small conferences decrease the accessibility importance increase.

Corporation using intermediaries show a tendency that affordability and attractions and entertainment is then more important.

These correlations, seen against the correlations between the intervening factors of corporate features, show the tendencies that the larger the corporation is the higher is the importance of accessibility, facility and affordability and the lower is the importance of attractions and entertainment. These are however just tendencies and possibilities, as these correlations are not tested for possible third variables or as cause and effect analysis, so it is not so that if one of these variables occurs the other variable also has to occur.

8.2.10 Correlations between destination factors

As the importance of accessibility increases the importance of facility also increases, and as the importance of facility increases the quality of service importance increases, and as the quality of services increases on importance the image importance increases, and lastly as the image importance increases the attractions and entertainment importance increases.

Because the size of the corporation seems to affect the importance of the destination factors accessibility, facility, affordability and attractions and entertainment, these destination factors might increase the importance of the destination factors quality of service and image. These factors are however not correlating significantly with any of the intervening factors of corporate features, so they are most likely not affected by the corporate size.

The various destination factors correlating is neither checked for third variables affecting them. But the factors facility, accessibility and affordability are all linked with the number of delegates at the largest conferences organized, which may be indicating this is the reason for the correlations between the destination factors. Another correlation explanation can be the link with number of conferences organized, which might be the reason for both accessibility and facility increasing at the same time.

8.2.11 Implications for correlations

Our quantitative research is however based on a sample from the corporations with highest economic turnover during last year, implying that many of them are relatively large corporations. However, no significant correlations were found between the size of the corporations and the economic turnover. It was interesting to see however that the economic turnover had only small correlations with the other factors and with the destination factors it had mostly negative small correlations. Even though the correlations were not significantly strong this might be showing a marginal tendency that as the economic turnover increases the importance of the various destination factors decreases. It was a positive, but almost a zero correlation between economic turnover and affordability and attractions and entertainment.

Because of the small sample these correlation results can be used as implications and possible tendencies that could be investigated further, not as generalizable results for the population.

8.3 Discussion of the third question

The third question we need to discuss is whether there are differences in the importance levels of destination factors across the groups of the intervening factors. This question consists of several hypotheses. The first entail whether there are differences in the importance levels of destination factors across the groups of the intervening factors. The second hypothesis suggests that it is a significant difference between the importance levels of the destination factors across the seven groups of the number of conferences the corporation organize yearly. The third hypothesis suggests it is a significant difference between the importance levels of the destination factors across the three groups of the corporate size. The fourth hypothesis suggests it is a significant difference between the importance levels of the destination factors across the nine groups of the number of delegates at the largest conferences organized. The fifth hypothesis suggests it is a significant difference between the importance levels of the destination factors across the nine groups of the number of delegates at the smallest conferences. The final hypothesis suggests it is a significant difference between the importance levels of the destination factors across the three groups of using an intermediary or not or sometimes. Intervening factors means certain factors can occur or come between, and thereby affect how other factors are influenced.

8.3.1 Intervening factors

According to Crouch & Ritchie (1998), there are some intervening factors influencing the process of selecting a destination. This is the condition of the corporation, the nature and culture, the employee and management characteristics, past experience, knowledge, values, corporate policies, environmental conditions and the objectives for the conference (G. I. Crouch & Ritchie, 1998).

Intervening factors is something that have not received a lot of theoretical and empirical support. In the literature review we found that such research is necessary. Because these intervening factors often occurs in the preplanning phase and there can be questioned whether or not they can influence have meeting planners perceive the importance factors. One of the intervening factors we suggest may have an impact is the corporate economic turnover. For instance, corporations with high turnover may have a different view on the importance of quality of service and facilities than corporations with a low turnover. Furthermore, corporations with low corporate economic turnover may value the importance factor affordability higher than quality of service.

A second intervening factor we suggest might influence the importance factors is the size of corporations based on how many employees they have. According to the European Union's directives, corporations with more than 250 employees are considered to be large corporation, while corporations with less than 49 employees can be considered to be small corporations. The size of corporations based on number of employees can influence the importance factors in several ways. Firstly, we can suggest that large corporations may have a greater focus on facilities and locations at the conference venue, because they need to make sure there is enough capacity to cover all participating delegates. Smaller corporations, on the other hand, may not have a strong focus on facilities. It can be suggested that these corporations value the importance of entertainment and attractions higher, because they may have higher interest in having a good atmosphere around the conference with team building sessions and other activities include since they are small enough to do so.

A third intervening factor we suggest might influence the importance factors is the number of conferences the corporation organizes on an annual basis. Corporations that organize more than ten conferences yearly, may value the importance of accessibility and affordability higher than other importance factor such as quality of service. This may be because conferences provides high costs with regard to booking conference facilities, getting to the conference destination, and costs related to absence from work. When a corporation with lower economic turnover needs to organize several conferences a year, we suggest that the meeting planners become more price conscious rather than conscious about quality of service at the destination.

A fourth potential intervening factor that we suggest influences the importance’s factors, concerns with the size of conferences. The size of conferences is based on the number of delegates at largest conferences organized during a year. The size of conferences may be associated with the size of corporations based on number of employees, because more employees can lead to the need for organizing bigger conferences in order to create capacity for every delegate that wish to attend. Here we can suggest that size of conferences may influence the importance of facilities and location higher than other factors, such as entertainment and attractions.

The final intervening factor we suggest can have an influencing effect across the level of importance factors, involves the use of intermediaries. Intermediaries can be recognized as professional conference organizers, booking agencies and event companies that takes care of the conference organization on behalf of the corporation. The use of intermediaries can entail that the meetings planners positioned in the corporations, become less conscious about the importance’s factors such as affordability. The intermediary can for instance provide recommendations that can lead the meeting planner in a certain direction when it comes to selecting conference destination. It was suggested that the use of intermediaries may entail that the factor become less important, but the quality of service and easy accessibility is valued higher. The use of intermediaries can also influences in such a way that the importance factors become even more important than before, because they have the possibility to tailor the conference packages in accordance with customers demand. In this there might be suggested that the quality of service and facilities will gain a higher importance.

8.3.2 Intervening factor economic turnover

Results from the survey visualized several major patterns in the observation from the first hypothesis. The correlation measurement on the connection between corporate economic turnover and the importance factors, show that none of the importance's factors, which include accessibility, affordability, destination image, facilities, quality of service, security and entertainment, had significance below the level of 0.05. This implies that there is no difference between the levels of importance across the five groups of corporate economic turnover. However, a significant result does not identify where the differences are or how many that actually occurs. The results from the mean ranks showed that corporation with lower corporate turnover had the highest importance level on destination image as a factor. However, since the significance levels were above the recommended value of 0.05, there is a clear tendency towards that the various importance factors do not differ significantly across the corporate economic turnover. This means that we cannot claim that corporate economic turnover has an intervening effect towards influencing the importance factors in a positive or negative direction, based on the results from the survey.

However, if one look at results from the in-depth interviews we see that several of the respondents claim that especially quality of service can be considered as highly important among the corporate sector. There is a clear pattern among the interviews that the corporate sector are becoming more quality conscious, as they demand for more tailor made conference packages that are put together based on their individual requirements. The respondents from the destination management companies claimed that especially corporations within petroleum, finance and technology are demanding more quality of service and a wider range of attractions and entertainment to participate on outside the conference venue. These corporations within these sectors tend to have a high economic turnover, which is made visible from the corporation list the survey sample was taken from.

8.3.3 Intervening factor corporate size

Based on the previous literature from Crouch & Ritchie (1998), we suggested that size of corporation in accordance with the number of employees could function as an intervening factor across the level of importance's factors (G. I. Crouch & Ritchie, 1998). However, results from the questionnaire showed that there was a low degree of difference between size of corporation and each of the importance factors. Nevertheless, there was discovered some important tendencies, which implies among other things that accessibility and facilities are valued as a more important factors among large corporations. At the same time, quality of service gained the lowest importance rate in the same corporate group. The smallest corporations were less concerned with accessibility and were more concerned with affordability. The middle-sized corporations value quality of service as the most important factor for influencing destination selection. The tendency towards that the size of corporations can affect the importance of affordability is further supported in the in-depth interviews. One of the respondents argued that corporation size and corporate economic turnover influence the importance of affordability when it comes to price levels. This is may be because small corporations with a lower number of employees do not have the same access to financial resources as the largest corporations. According to Crouch & Louviere (2004), there is some evidence indicating that higher costs can damage the competitiveness of a destination. On the other hand can very inexpensive destinations also be unattractive because the customers consider the destination to be less capable in order to provide good quality of service. This is especially in regards to the price level of facilities (G. Crouch & Louviere, 2004).

8.3.4 Intervening factor number of conferences

In relation to the third intervening factor we suggest might influence the importance factors, is the number of conferences the corporation organizes on an annual basis. In this case the factors that include image, affordability, safety and security, attractions and entertainment and quality of service showed a higher significance level that 0.05. This indicates that there is no difference between these factors and the number of conference organized during a year. However, if one examines the factors accessibility and facility they performed a significance level below 0.05. This indicates that there actually exists and intervening effect from the number of conferences across these two importance's factors. The accessibility importance factor scored higher among those corporations that organize more than ten conferences on an annual basis, at the same time as the lowest difference occur between those organizing between nine and ten conferences a year. The facility importance factor showed highest difference among those corporations that organizes between three and four conferences annually.

Among those importance factors that did not have a documented difference, there were still some clear tendencies. The results from the survey shows for instance that entertainment and attractions had highest importance among the corporations that organize between one and two conferences and had the lowest importance among corporations that have more than ten conferences. From the interviews with the Sales Manager at Clarion Hotel Stavanger, which is a part of Nordic Choice Hotels, we found that the demand for attractions and entertainment has become increasingly important during the last years. According to Sømme (2012), there is a clear trend towards that customers are more demanding than before. There is no longer enough to offer good facilities and good location for conferences. Customers wants to an greater extent to be a part of the organization and planning of the event and they require more tailor-made packages where entertainment and good experience outside the conference constitute a more essential part of the overall conference package. Furthermore, all of the respondents claimed that the corporate sector values accessibility and facility as highly important. Especially the respondents representing the destination management claimed at if a destination does not have easy access to airports with direct flights and easy access to other transportation options, the destination is simply of the market. For corporate customers who often have limited time and organizes many conferences a year, accessibility is crucial. (Appendix A)

8.3.5 Intervening factor number of delegates

Through results obtained by the survey, it was discovered that within the hypothesis that suggest there is no significant difference between the importance factors across the size of conferences based on number of delegates yearly. All importance factors performed a significance level above the appropriate level. This means that, based on the survey itself, we cannot claim there exist a difference between largest conferences organized across the importance factors. However, some tendencies that is quite clear is that within the group of corporations that have up to 250 delegates at their largest conference, valued accessibility as the highest importance factor, while it became lowest among corporations with 150 delegates that their largest conference. Here it is conceivable that for large conferences with many delegates, corporations will prefer to choose destinations that are located close to major airports that have an extensive network of direct flights. The customer adviser in Innovation Norway argues that when it comes to the professional conference market, the time spent on transportation to and from the conference destination is more important than the price it costs to get there and reside at the site. If it takes a day to travel, this will result in substantial costs associated with absenteeism as participants at the conference incurs. Having too long traveling time is something many companies want to avoid because it results in total for the high costs for all members to be included.

Affordability, however, showed a higher importance among those corporations holding conferences with relatively few delegates, and became less important among corporations organizing large conferences. In accordance with the interviewee representing Region Stavanger, which is the destination management company in Stavanger, larger corporations is demanding more seriousness concerning accessibility and service of quality at the destination. Therefore, corporations are about to become more quality conscious rather than conscious about the price levels. In addition, the first interview with a Sales Consultant at a conference hotel in Trondheim, argues that many conference destinations in Norway have a standardized price levels, which is similar across the industry. Smaller corporations, on the other hand, may be slightly more price conscious, because they do not have the same access to financial resources compared to larger corporations that holds greater conferences.

8.3.6 Intervening factor intermediary

Finally we suggested that the use of intermediaries in corporations could function as an intervening factor that differs across the importance factors. Results based on the survey, suggests there is no difference in the importance levels in several of the factors after usage of intermediaries. There was only one factor, entertainment and attractions, which had a satisfactory level of significance in order to claim that a difference exists, and the mean ranking suggested that the group using intermediaries had the highest scores on importance for the factor. The results further showed that among those factors that did not have a significant difference the affordability factor was most intervened by intermediaries on importance levels.

If one studies the information from all the respondents in the in-depth interviews, there exists a broad consensus that intermediaries play a very important role in the relationship between the conference destination, the conference venue and the customer groups. However, there is a less consensus concerning whether they affect how meeting planners in corporations view the importance of factors such as accessibility and affordability.

The researchers Baloglu & love (2004), suggests that intermediary services were not very important as a destination selection factor, indicating that meeting planners use other information sources in the process (Baloglu & Love, 2004). This research was however focusing on associations instead of corporations and it concerned about five major cities in the US. Not generalizing it to the situation in the corporate sector. However, some other research also show that many meeting planners think that intermediaries do not have an interest in addressing requests and needs from small meetings and therefore they do not use their services, not even when they are for free (Weber, 2001). Other researchers believe that the use of intermediaries does not give enough value for money or that they get information too slow, do not get up-to-date information or that intermediary personnel are not qualified to arrange their conference or meeting (Kokkomäki, et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, even though we cannot fully claim that the importance level of factors differs when intermediaries are used, there is still quite clearly that the usage of intermediaries in the conference industry should be allocated more research. Furthermore, in this study the usage of intermediaries constitute only a part of the overall research. It is such a comprehensive phenomenon that it should perhaps be addressed more thoroughly in dedicated study. According to Kokkomäki (2009), it is little research on why meeting planners use intermediaries and how it affects the destination and facility section, so this should be a topic for further research.

8.4 Discussion summarize

We see from exploring and answering the three questions underlying for our research that the various results support each other.

The conclusion from the discussion around question one is that the ranking of the factors mostly affecting the destination selection is possible and that they are ranked with quality of service being most important, then accessibility, facility, affordability, safety and security, image and attractions and entertainment.

The similarities found between those two different research methods were however that accessibility and quality of service is ranked as highest on importance and safety and security is ranked relatively low on both. The main difference was image, which is ranked almost lowest for the quantitative and highest for the qualitative method. Facility is ranked among the highest on the quantitative and among the lowest on qualitative, together with affordability, which is ranked in the middle for the quantitative method. The attractions and entertainment is also ranked differently, being the least important in the quantitative and ranked in the middle for the qualitative method.

The quantitative ranking is different from the ranking made by the interview objects, but they are only reflecting what they have experienced the meeting planners to emphasize, and even though we told them the interview was in regards to the corporate sector, many of them have experience with meeting planners from the association sector and this might have affected their views. This is also implied by assessing the literature which suggests that attractions and entertainment, image and affordability is important factors for the conference destination selection especially for the association sector (Bonn, Ohlin, & Brand, 1994; Oppermann, 1996).

From exploring the relationships between the various destination factors and the intervening factors we found that the correlations showed some tendencies for relationships among the factors. The tendencies were that the larger the corporation the more conferences they organize, the more small conferences with low delegate numbers is organized and the higher delegate numbers it is at the large conferences. And the more conferences organized increased the importance of the accessibility and facility factor and decreased the importance of the attractions and entertainment factor. There were also relationships between the number of delegates at the largest and smallest conferences and the importance of the factors accessibility, facility and affordability. For the large conferences the importance increased on all three factors and when the delegates at the small conferences the accessibility importance increased. Those using the services of intermediaries for organizing conferences showed a tendency of affordability and attractions and entertainment being increasingly important. This is also suggested in the discussion of question one, where intermediaries found attractions and entertainment to be more important for the meeting planners they have experience with, than the mean ranking results directly from meeting planners through the questionnaire.

The results showed a tendency that larger corporations think the importance of accessibility, facility and affordability is high and the importance of attractions and entertainment is low. A positive relationship between the destination factors accessibility and facility, facility and quality of service, quality of service and image and image and attractions and entertainment.

These are however just tendencies and possibilities, as these correlations are not tested for possible third variables or by cause and effect analysis.

We see that the factors accessibility, facility, affordability and attractions and entertainment correlated positively or negatively with the number of conferences organized, the number of delegates at the large and small conferences and the use of intermediaries.

Attractions and entertainment correlated negatively in relation to number of conferences and thereby implying also to the size of the corporation, as the larger corporations seemed to have the most conferences.

For accessibility it was negatively correlated with the number of delegates at the small conferences. The use of intermediaries correlated with attractions and entertainment and with affordability.

The implication that the factors accessibility, facility and affordability was correlating with several intervening factors also suggests that these are mostly influenced by the intervening factors, maybe having a connection with being some of the most highly rated factors. Only quality of service as one of the most important factors in the rating was not correlating significantly with any of the intervening factors, neither was image or safety and security. Attractions and entertainment which was rated lowest on the ranking of the factors, correlated with several intervening factors, implying that this can be a substantially important factor as well, but depending somewhat on intervening factors like size of conference, intermediary use and number of conferences organized by the corporation.

The exploration of the third question regarding differences in the importance levels of destination factors across the groups of the intervening factors, also showed some interesting tendencies.

The economic turnover did not show any significant differences across the groups of size of economic turnover in relation to the destination factors. The same as it was for the correlation results not showing any significant tendencies of correlation between economic turnover and other variables.

Most of the destination factors did not vary significantly on importance in relation to the groups of sizes of the corporation. But some did show important tendencies, like accessibility and facility, which have the highest, rates on importance at the largest corporations and quality of service score the lowest across the same group. This relationship was also shown in the positive correlation between accessibility, facility and the number of conferences organized, as the number of conference organized was positively correlated to the corporation size. The quality of service did however not show any significant correlations.

The smallest corporations did not rate accessibility very high and were more concerned with affordability. The tendency that the size of corporations influences the affordability is also supported by the qualitative data, where the smaller corporations seem to rate affordability higher on importance. The accessibility was of higher importance for the small conferences with few delegates and of high importance for the large conferences with many delegates. The correlation between the size of the corporation and number of conferences and delegates at the small conferences, indicated that most large corporations had many conferences and that they usually had fewer delegates at the small conferences, indicating a high importance of accessibility on these conferences. This can be seen in relation to that the smallest corporations do not rate accessibility very high, as they might have the opposite variances, with smaller corporation having fewer conferences and more delegates at the small conferences, indicating a low rating on the importance of accessibility. The same goes for the positive correlation between affordability and larger number of delegates at the large conferences, as the large corporation often had many conferences with few delegates, the smaller corporations probably has the opposite with fewer number of conferences, but larger ones with more delegates, implying a high importance on affordability.

The number of conferences organized by the corporation did show significant differences across the groups on the factors accessibility and facility, which again can be seen in relation to the positive correlation results between accessibility, facility and number of conferences organized by the corporations.

There were no significant differences on the destination factors and importance levels across the groups of delegates at the largest conferences, however there were some tendencies that the largest group of delegates at the large conferences valued the factor accessibility highest of all the factors. This is also implied by the positive correlation between accessibility and the number of delegates at the largest conferences.

Across the groups of using intermediaries there was one significantly difference in ratings, being the attractions and entertainment factor being more important for the group that use intermediaries. The other factors did not show a significant difference, but there was still a tendency for the affordability factor being most important for those using intermediaries. The same results were found in the correlation analysis, where the use of intermediary correlated positively and strongly with attractions and entertainment and positive medium with affordability.

9. Conclusion

During this research we have investigated many areas of influence of conference destination selection. The process of selecting a destination is relatively complex as many factors influence the process and are complex relationships among themselves. The process going from the pre planning of the conference being influenced by intervening factors to the importance of the various destination factors assessed by multiple attributes, evaluation of what factors at the destination is most important for that specific conference and to the step of if expectations will be met when holding the conference giving positive post-evaluation of the destination and facilities, is a complex process with many aspects of influence. We therefore focused only on the importance of the factors shown to be of highest importance for destination selection in the literature and the relationship between the factors and between some intervening factors that could influence the importance levels of the destination factors. This was assessed by using a triangulation method, gathering data from literature, interviews with intermediaries and trough a questionnaire with meeting planners as respondents.

The relationship among the destination factors was assessed by looking at the mean rank order of the factors measured independently, measured by attributes and the suggested rank order from the interview objects on how important each of the factors were in relation to conference destination selection for the corporate sector. The rank order was quality of service ranked highest, then accessibility, facility, affordability, safety and security, image and attractions and entertainment. This was quite different from the rank from the interview objects as well as some of the literature, but assessing the possibility for differences on importance of the factors between the association and corporate market might be a reason for this.

Many of the relationship between the various destination factors and the suggested intervening factors were also medium and strongly correlated. This was tested by using the non-parametric Spearman`s correlation test. There were a number of medium and strong correlations, 17 in total and five of them positively strongly correlated. These were image and quality of service, facility and quality of service, accessibility and the number of conferences organized yearly by the corporation, facility and the number of conferences organized, and last the attractions and entertainment factor and use of intermediaries. These correlations and the medium ones showed a large tendency for correlation between several of the destination factors and between the chosen intervening factors, as well as between the intervening and destination factors. Which could imply that intervening factors do have an influence on the importance of destination factors as well as some importance levels of destination factors might influence some intervening factors, for example if attractions and entertainment is important it might be more likely for the meeting planners to use an intermediary for organizing the conference, implying that the process of destination selection might be more dynamic than static.

To explore closer if the intervening factors and destination factors related we conducted a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test to see how the levels of importance of the destination factors were different across the groups for each intervening factor. The intervening factors we chose to focus on was corporate size, economic turnover, use of intermediaries, number of conferences organized yearly and number of delegates at the largest and smallest conferences organized by the corporation. A significant difference was found between accessibility and number of conferences organized yearly, and facility and the number of conferences organized. The highest scores on the accessibility importance levels were for those organizing over 10 conferences and lowest for those with 9-10 conferences. Facility importance scores were highest for those organizing 3-4 conferences and lowest for those with 1-2. Another significant difference among groups was also found between attractions and entertainment and intermediary use. The group stating using intermediaries for organizing conferences had the highest scores on importance for attractions and entertainment. These two factors were also found strongly positively correlating.

The mean ranking shows the variance of importance for the destination factors across the groups, indicating the groups with lowest and highest scores on each factor. Even though no more significant relationships were found, many of the variances were similar to the correlation results obtained for answering questions two.

Asking these three questions above resulted in several significant and interesting results, giving us further insight into tendencies of relationships between the destination and the intervening factors that are large elements in influencing the conference destination selection.

Even though this research cannot generalize the results from the sample to the population, the results can be good indications of how the relationships are between the factors seen as most important in the literature on influencing the conference destination selection. Understanding these factors and the relationship between them could be a first step for intermediaries and others at destinations to attract more conferences by reaching the segments more effectively through marketing and meeting expectations, needs and wants, and thereby increase the economic turnover and other positive direct and indirect impacts from this substantially large market. It could also be valuable for meeting planners to know more about the decisions they take, being more pro-active in the selection process and maybe increasing the chances of meeting expectations and requirements of the conference and corporation as a whole.

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11.Appendices

Appendix A: A report from the in-depth interviews

A report from the in depth interviews

A conference hotel in Trondheim

This interview was conducted the 23rd of February 2012 at 14.00 pm. The interviewee is employed as a Sales Consultant at one of the most significant conference hotels in Trondheim city. This interviewee wishes to remain anonymous; therefore we will not mention the name of the interviewee or the name of the hotel.

Do you have any reflection on how important the meeting & conference market is for the hotel and destination Trondheim?

How important is it? Yes, it is very important because the guests that stay here in connection with weekends or bed and breakfast, that is, the leisure traveler, emphasis is again money on room and breakfast but do not have much money on other service facilities that the hotel can offer because they often leave the hotel after breakfast. These customer group, therefore, provide little room for increased sales and greater utilization of the hotel's facilities. The guests at the hotel in connection with the course and conference, however, spend more time on site and use more of the facilities and offers we have available. They eat all meals here, use the entire hotel and our course and conference facilities and thus generate more income and revenue to the hotel. They reside most of the hotel, especially during the day. This is course and conference guests the most valuable customer group for the hotel. Since this group of customers are using the hotel as much as they do, and thus contributes to a good additional sales, so this will be soon a very significant market for the hotel to compete within.

This mean the conference guests are mostly located at the hotel, especially during the daytime?

Yes, many of the guests can also have various excursions. This all depends on what type of event they are participating. However, for a meeting and conference hotel, it provides a higher economic value having residents staying at the hotel for conference and business purposes.

If you have questions concerning the destination of Trondheim, I will point out that during the spring of 2012 it will be opening a large conference hotel located at Brattøra in Trondheim city. This entails a great opportunity for the destination to become even more attractive, with even bigger events to the city, which will help all the hotels and service companies in the region. This will also be a major contributor to the destination as the types of events they will attract are congresses, conferences and traveling conferences. Since they won’t be able to accommodate all guests attending a congress, this might create benefits for other hotels in the city as well. This will finally result in that Trondheim as a destination will be put on the map that will attract even more conferences and cultural events that affects the business sector in a positive direction.

In terms of the relationship with the destination, the conference guests and customers who come to the hotel, are there a lot of regulars who come back to the city or the hotel? Whoever you talk to, who is the decision maker to select the destination, and are it often re-uses or do you frequently contact with new customers?

There is a lot of reuse, which means that earlier customers that were satisfied with our facilities often tend to come back to the hotel for new conferences. However, there are also many new customers at all times. So really it's a combination and I have not any number on this combination. If you are thinking in terms of guests who are here on a course or conference comes back, there are always a lot of new arrivals to the hotel, but we also have some companies who have been here on previous occasions and choose to come back. So it's really a combination of old and new conference guests. It must however be argued that it is easier to work with the returning guests and there is an easier process to get them to return than to constantly generate new ones.

What are the challenges of getting into contact with and attract new business customer to the hotel and Trondheim in general?

If one considers the basis of this hotel and sells the hotel and the city has to offer as a package, so we work with selling the property itself has to offer and not necessarily what the rest of the city has to offer. Usually when we talk to potential customers, it is a specific event they want and when we try to adapt based on what we can offer at the hotel. We must find different aspects of our facilities that are well suited to the type of event that the customer wants to keep as well as adapt as best as possible to their requirements and expectations. We try to find aspects that we see fit very well to their event.

In the case of new companies and conference attendees, we work hard to look at the needs of each group. Is there such a specific event they want to put the conference in parallel with, we are working to adapt our products and facilities to suit the client best. From this site and the destination as a whole, we are most concerned with what the hotel itself can offer the customer and try to adapt to customer requirements in light of the resources we have available.

Now we shall move into the various factors, which to varying degrees attract customers to the hotel or city:

The first factor is about accessibility and how easy it is for customers to come here. This means access to the city and the infrastructure in Trondheim. First and foremost, we ask, are there most Norwegian or international clients who come here?

In relation to the course and conference market, it is largely Norwegian clients who come to the hotel. There are also some international clients who have business with us periodically. But most are companies within their borders. When we talk about companies located in Trondheim, as is generally smaller meetings and conferences held in the city, most come in connection with conferences or the like and is then largely outside Trondheim, and is spread throughout the country. We do attract a few international customers to have their conference at our hotel, however it is the Norwegian customers, we emphasize the most. For example, when trade unions in health is to have conference with us, the visitors from all over the country. It is largely customers from state companies, municipalities and businesses in the health sector who have the conference here.

Do you have the most courses and conferences or other events are held here as well?

It is within the course and conference market, we are by far the largest and it is the market area that are most emphasized at the hotel. This is because we have the most expertise in this area. That said we also have a few events a year for example in the form of concerts. Nidaros Blues Festival has concerts at the hotel every year, in addition to local bands in the region.

Next factor is based on the extent to which the meeting facilities affecting the course and conference clients in the decision to choose a destination rather than another:

Yes, it is of course important. If we assume that there is a medium sized company that has good financial resources are often the standard of the facilities more important than price. However, compared to the standard the price is fairly similar around. The hotels that have roughly the same facilities and quality of course and conference services have also similar price.

Some are of course concerned about price, but it also depends on what expectations the customer has the type of event to be held. We can go up and down the price, but basically we have a standard price that is determined on the basis of what we can offer and compete with. I assume that the prices on the facilities, compared to the quality of service offered are fairly similar both within Trondheim and Norway as a whole. The price is certainly important and competition for customers becomes more difficult all the time. For example, some companies choose to add the conference to other countries because the event is often cheaper to produce and arrange. Those companies who choose this solution includes special pharmaceutical companies and auditor firms that go abroad regularly, and these companies will often mean the price more than quality of services offered. Nevertheless, most companies have no opportunity or time to travel abroad and often choose destinations within the country.

Does this entails that the price is thereby not the most decisive factor?

It is of course important, but there are an increasing number of conferences for each day that passes, which are made visible both at the hotel and in the city in general. Thus, this will indicate that all in all not the most important factor for the selection of conference destination.

Now we shall move onto the image and how the image of the conference destinations affects customer choice of a particular conference destination?

To some extent it has a fairly large impact. As I see it. it is more crucial for course and conference customers in Trondheim, which conference facilities and locations that hotels can offer, and whether these are in anticipation for the size and type of event that the customer wants to keep. What's around the city and what can be experienced is not really that important, I think. Because most course and conference guests will spend most of their time at the hotel or where the event is held anyway, so it will not be much time left for other things. On the other hand, I believe that the image customers have of destination may seem like a push or pull factor, that is, if there is a lot of cultural activities going on at the destination, then it will be attractive to some customers. It is often thick and fast and it is therefore not so much free time to experience other things. Therefore, it is my experience that the image does not have as much significance.

This hotel has a very central location right in the heart of the city and it is fairly easy to get to the hotel from the airport or from elsewhere in the region. This is a factor I think many customers appreciate. A central location has a great importance for many people.

With regard to the organization and performance of the actual conference, do you cooperate with an intermediary, or do you to a large extent organize the conference based on your own resources?

We cooperate with the destination companies to a certain extent. I work a lot with the in detailed planning of the course and conference, but within the sales department, there are some sellers who have contact with Visit Trondheim. We have, on the other hand, a larger collaboration with the so-called PCO , which let us say, does the job for customers. These work almost like a travel agent, but planning and putting together conferences, for example, a customer who wants to hold the conference at this hotel. They put together conference packets based on what the customer wants in relation to the event they wish to hold. They take care of the whole arrangement for us, and they are often present at the actual conference to quality assure that everything are held professionally. We most often use professional conference organizers to reduce the focus among our sellers concerning this particular planning process. We do not have further contact with the client itself to any significant extent. The term PCO is shortened and stands for Professional Conference Organizers.

Which PCO's do you exploit in order to organize the conference?

For instance is NTNU Widerøe a professional conference organizer that we work a lot with, and who organize a major amount of the events place at our hotel. In addition, we can mention a company called Hotel Megleren AS. Both of these companies are highly significant for the hotel and we have a close relationship towards them. Expert forum for health and social services is a third example of a PCO. They organize courses and conferences in the health sector. When these types of organizing companies, that works within specific trade unions, we have to pay a certain percentage commission into these companies.

Does this mean it is relatively important to have a good contact with the various PCO's?

Yes, it is certainly very important. The PCO's makes a great proportion of the organizing efforts for us and saves the hotel employees for the considerable amount of work.

Are these PCO's often present during the event and observe that the event is conducted in a professional manner?

The PCO's are often present both prior to and during the event. They often have the responsibility to recognize that the precursor program to properly organize the various aspects of the way. This is somewhat depends on whether it is the PCO's that accounts for whole or parts of the planning. There is often a combination.

In the relationship between the PCO and the companies that wants to buy a conference package, do you have some thoughts about whether they have a great influence or not on the customer in terms of the hotel or conference center they should choose, or whether they are objective?

There are many customers who come to the PCO's and expect a well-planned program for them and take therefore the responsibility to find suitable premises and facilities to hold the conference. So working with a particular PCO is then quite important because it is easier that the choice falls on our hotel.

Is there anything you would like to add at the end of the interview?

In the coming future it will be opened a number of new hotels here in Trondheim and then I think especially on the new convention hotel, which are located in the central area of Trondheim. This will give Trondheim as the destination and the hotels located in central Trondheim greater opportunity to receive even larger and more conventions and congresses. They get the opportunity to make agreements with customers they previously have not been able to arrange for. For now, we have the capacity to accommodate larger events and I believe this might affect the image of Trondheim in a quite positive manner. It will of course be a tough competitor for us, but will also entail access to a new and exciting market area for the city as a whole. This can contribute to the city of Trondheim will seem much larger and more attractive for many new customers. Given the large national gatherings, Trondheim has never had the possibility to organize before based on the size of these events, but we will have the opportunity in the future. At the same time, this type of conferences often becomes more iterative, meaning that they will return at a more consistent basis.

Visit Trondheim AS

This interview was conducted with Visit Trondheim AS. Visit Trondheim AS is an non-profit destination company, where the company's goal is to promote Trondheim and to make the city attractive for potential national and international visitors.

First of all, how can you describe your position in the company and what are your main activities about?

I am the International Sales Manager for meetings and incentives at Visit Trondheim AS. I have been the Congress Manager for many years, but the position has recently been reorganized into two new positions. This means that I am responsible for meetings and incentives in Trondheim city and the surrounding region. The new position will therefore require a new manager having congresses as their primary focus. This is what we call a project for Event Tourism.

The primary task is to get international clients to Trondheim for meeting, conferences or incentives, and present to them what meeting facilities, hotel and experience the city can offer. We work almost exclusively abroad. We work a lot through the NCB - Norway Convention Bureau, a national company that works against the international meetings and incentives market. The Norway Convention Bureau helps us to get in touch with and arrange for exhibitions, workshops and sales points internationally, and they pave the way in order for us to meet and build relationship with future customers. Visit Trondheim pay a very large portion of money to be a partner with Norway Convention Bureau. This cooperation is necessary because Norway is neither well known nor particularly attractive enough to be able to compete at the international conference market. In addition to making the fieldwork an easier process for us, one is stronger when representing Norway as a whole, because the Norwegian market is not as well known beyond the borders. When one is placed on a Norwegian exhibition stand, so we become much more visible to customers. We therefore represent Norway as a country and thereafter focus on our own city, which in this case is Trondheim.

How is the relationship and cooperation between Visit Trondheim and the Municipality in Trondheim city?

We do not collaborate with the municipality because Visit Trondheim is established as a corporation. Therefore are most of our partners and contributors that we are working actively with, first and foremost, hotels within the destination. We have several different companies, among them a number of service companies that benefits from getting more visitors for instance through conferences are coming to the city. These service companies make a economical market contribution to Visit Trondheim AS at a annual basis, which puts them in a position were they can contribute and be included when the destination is promoted. The municipality is responsible for operating the tourist information office, which means that the economic contribution we receive from the municipality is earmarked for the operation of the office.

NCB is working to create conditions in order to ensure that the national destination companies meet potential customers. Furthermore, they work to make us more visible at the international conference and congress market. When Visit Trondheim is working together with NCB at the different workshops and sales exhibitions in Germany, France and United Kingdom, we promote Norway as a whole. The main focus is therefore to sell in the country towards potential customers before we can sell into the various destination cities and regions.

Visit Trondheim is a non-profit company, so our financial shall therefore go to zero. There is no point in it for Visit Trondheim having financial profit by the end of the year, because then we have not done our work and appreciated our responsibility for the destination. The economic contribution that we receive from the service companies shall be used exclusively on destination marketing activities.

Do you collaborate with Innovation Norway?

Innovation Norway is a company we cooperate well with through the partnership with NCB and they delegate an amount of financial resources to Visit Trondheim. For instance, when we now in a short matter of time are attending a sales exhibition in United Kingdom, it is Innovation Norway that is responsible for holding the exhibition in collaboration with NCB.

Innovation Norway has one position, which is employed in order to work mainly with the "meeting project" as we call it. This position includes an employee that is mainly responsible for working with conferences, congresses and incentives and the employee works with facilitating the conditions especially in Germany, France and United Kingdom. Through this position, Innovation Norway supports NCB with a large amount of financial resources in order to maintain satisfactory conditions throughout the international conference market.

How large conferences have Trondheim been able to accept and accommodate before the new congress hotel now are opening?

I have been in this position for quite a long time, and in 2007 we had a conference with 2300 delegates sited in Trondheim. This conference is by far the biggest event Visit Trondheim has ever arranged, and it was much too large for the city. The conference was held at Trondheim Spectrum, so in regard to the actual location and the conference facilities there is a great challenge in arranging such a conference. However, in terms of accommodation and housing delegates during the days the conference was held, Trondheim was not in reality able to handle such a conference. We had to use private housing, and those delegates housed furthest away from the conference centre, lived at Levanger, about one hour drive from Trondheim.

All though it must be mentioned that Visit Trondheim was not responsible for organizing the accommodation related to the conference.

Visit Trondheim constitute the first point of contact, which contributes with bringing new and more conferences to the destination. However, after this point we entrust the remaining process further to the different event companies and booking companies.

With regard to the importance of having conferences to Trondheim, do you have any thoughts concerning this issue?

First of all I would like to say that having conferences to Trondheim are of very high importance. This has several aspects with it, but if one looks at the financial side of having conferences in Trondheim, we got various trade unions and associations it is those who attract the majority of conferences to the city. The trade unions and associations have therefore quite high value for us. Researchers and academic members are often well placed in the associations, and these often function as decision makers for their members. As decision makers they are placed in a position where they can plan and book conferences for their members, they have great influential power with regard to the choice of site selection, and can bring their association to the city perhaps every second year or every third year. This entails that they often return on a consistent basis if they are satisfied with what the destination has to offer with regard to conference facilities and so forth. This is actually what we call a congress.

A congress has some designated international criteria to be able to call a congress. For instance, there must be a minimum of 50 participants and there may be up until 30 000 participants depending on the size of the various trade unions. Another requirement is that they must be rotating, which means that the destinations were the congresses are held changes in a specific pattern around in different countries in Europe and Scandinavia. In addition, there must be delegates attending the congress for at lest four different countries, and the congress must me organized and held by an international organization. When these criteria are held you can call it an actual congress, and it is something that not many are aware of. It may of course be less than 50 participants, however, the event will not be enrolled in the statistics as a valid congress.

With regard to the relation between customers who comes to the destination and the actual destination where the event is held, is there a tendency towards that people return to the destination after an event?

Yes there is a tendency for some people to do so. If we return to the discussion about congresses, there are actually the trade unions and associations that determine whether or not their members will come back to a destination for more congresses. However, when it comes to regular conferences it really depends on for instance how satisfied the customers were when they first visited the destination. Nevertheless, we do not keep any record or system concerning re-use of destinations first visited for conference purposes.

Do you have any personal thoughts about, for instance, people that have been to Trondheim in connection to conferences purposes has returned because they liked the destination and the city?

When it comes to the conference facilities, location sites and the hotels, it is something that you can get in every destination you choose and it does not determine whether you select the conference site or not. Therefore, this is no conclusive factor that makes customers return for new conferences at the same destination. These are the facilities that constitute the market, and make the conditions for us to have a market for conferences and other events. The most decisive factor that makes customers coming back to a particular destination, is determined of what that can be experienced outside the actual conference or congress. This factor applies ultimately unless the trade unions decide.

Previously the meetings, incentives, conferences and events were gathered under a common descriptive term, namely as the MICE market. This term is however become old-fashioned and outdated. Thereby, there is now a distinction between the corporate meeting market and the incentives market. The MICE as a term is not often used in a professional manner and is about to be outbound.

Now, we will turn the focus towards the different factors that in various degrees can influence the site selection among decision makers within the conference market.

First factor concerns about access to the city, availability and infrastructure:

The most important aspect is to have as many direct flights as possible, which are an aspect where Trondheim shows a high degree of excellence about. Visit Trondheim has a good collaboration with Avinor that helps us a lot in the planning and in the establishment of new direct flights in and out of Trondheim Airport. The aspect of having more direct flights to Trondheim is decisive in terms of attracting more customers to Trondheim city for conference purposes, especially for the meetings & incentives market. It becomes an easier process to make sales agreements with customers if the transportation time is lowest possible.

What about other cities in Norway?

Bergen is perhaps the city behind Oslo that attracts decidedly the highest number of meeting & conferences to the city. The background for this statement is that many international visitors associate Bergen city with the beautiful fiords and nature the region has to offer. The Norwegian nature and cleanness we have here, is often essential for visitors that choose to visit Bergen or Norway in general.

A trend that has been increasingly prominent is that visitors are setting higher requirements and correct an greater emphasis towards sustainability and environmentally friendly tourism. There are more focus on the term “ green city” and is very upcoming trend.

Are the decision makers concerned about this factor just mentioned?

Yes, at least at the starting point, however, I cannot ensure whether these trends ultimately determine their site selection.

Quality of service and price: There is an impression that the price standard in Norway is quite high. How does this affect the site selection if you compare it towards the quality of service offered?

I am of the opinion that Norway is not so expensive as many seem to think. Within the conference world we are actually not that expensive. The main reason for this image comes from the price standard on alcohol and tobacco. When it comes to the Norwegian hotel rates, there was made a statistical document in the United Kingdom during last year. The findings from this document showed that if one asked the customer how expensive they think Norway is, we came on second place of the most expensive countries to visit. However, when the researchers went to the realities and checked how expensive Norway really was, we ended up at second last place. So the image of Norway being expensive is only a perception placed in the minds of people because of the high prices on alcohol and tobacco.

The decision-makers you meet, are they concerning with quality standards when they focuses the attention towards Norwegian destinations?

Yes, we have noticed that international customers pay far more attention to quality of service than Norwegian customers do. When we for instance invite international customers to viewing tours in Trondheim, we often receive comments on different aspects and details that Norwegians never would have noticed.

Do you have any examples?

We had a viewing tour with a group of customers from Germany. During this toru we were out in the city and presented different hotels, conference venues and facilities offered. At on of the hotels we entered a conference room, which from our point of view is according to appropriate standard equipped with all the necessary facilities. One of the customers asked why the hotel had not painted the ceiling. There had been a water damage that had been repaired but the hotel had not been able to cover it up. In such situation, the customer's first thought is; when they have not managed to that, what else is wrong with the hotel? Once they see, and they see everything, they add a lot more attention to errors and details that must be corrected than Norwegians do. It is often small things that will be remembered, but it will remain in the minds of people and will be included in the overall image.

Do you return to the hotels with feedback you receive from customers?

Yes, we do so in order to secure a higher quality before the next viewing tour or conference. It is important for the city that everything functions well. Otherwise. the customers will be left with negative perceptions and a poor image of the destination. The customers pay attention to everything. Even small details or mistakes will be noticed and remembered when they are to make major decisions regarding the selection of the next conference destination.

Who are the customers you bring on inspection trips to Norway?

They are often from incentive houses, which is companies that work and arrange events and programs for other companies. It could also be conference houses and so forth. These companies are often very professional and different from the event companies you find in Norway.

How about entertainment as a factor influencing destination selection?

On conferences, when it comes to international happenings in Trondheim, the conditions are amazing here because for every customer who comes we offer a free concert in Nidaros Cathedral where the Mayor of Trondheim is present. We usually use this concert as introductory sales angle or competitive advantage for customers we reach contact with. The fact that the Mayor welcomes customers with a free concert is a major selling point. Moreover, we use festivals and other cultural events as a selling point because the city has a lot to offer when it comes to music, art, culture and so forth. The difficult part by using festivals as selling point is that you do not always know which artists are coming and what music they are playing and the customers we talk with often plan their events long time ahead. The customers often demand to know their possibilities several months in advance, which is often difficult to achieve. We have a customer in Germany that brings his underlying companies to gospel concerts. Here we could have offered the annual summer festival in Trondheim, but since the artists are revealed in late spring it is often too late for the customer to decide. It is more often the incentives market that is interested in activities and entertainment during their stay. Conference guests, on the other hand, often have their own happenings included in the conference package at the venue.

June is the most extreme month for conventions and conferences, and the city's capacity for holding conferences reaches it maximum level. September is also a hectic period for conferences. For conferences and other events there is a high coating rate all year around excluding the summer months July and August, but June and September is extremely attractive for congresses.

How about security as a factor influencing site selection?

Yes, Norway is seen as a very safe country to visit. We have received feedback from customers that homeless people, drug addicts and criminals are not very visible in the cityscape and that they feel very safe in this destination. We have also received comments about that Trondheim seems like a very young and vibrant city because of the academic environment and the students.

How about the image as a factor influencing site selection?

Yes, especially in the term of image one must include technology, the young environment, the students and the innovativeness. Moreover, many customers get impressed with the local food served and we use local food as competitive advantage attracting customers to the destination. Many restaurants in Trondheim use local food and ingredients that are locally produced, which makes a good impression and a excellent selling point through for instance food courses.

Innovation Norway has always been focused on promoting Norway through nature with mountains, fiords and rivers, but we see that customer more often want to participate and desire to do more during their stay. So in the future the focus should be moved towards Norwegian tradition, farming history and food because the popularity of this area is increasing.

Does this mean that the amount of tourists to the destination is increasing?

Yes, according to the statistics (statistikknett.com) it does increase in a quite good direction. On the international level Trondheim is equal to Bergen when it comes to the total number of conferences and number of delegates attending, but Stavanger is at a lower level. They gain a great deal of their conferences because of the petroleum industry.

The interview with Region Stavanger AS

The interview was conducted the 8th of March 2012, starting at 12:30 pm.

We can start the interview by asking about your position in Region Stavanger and what your main activities and responsibilities are.

My name is Per Morten Haarr. My position is Sales Manager at congresses in Region Stavanger, meaning the destination company in Stavanger city and the surrounding region. This position includes solicitation, which means that through this type of sales activities we find and reach into contact with professionals. Once these professionals are found, we make contact and perform a consulting meeting with them. Through these meetings we inform about the opportunity that exists when a professional choose to add a conference or congress to our region. Concerning the opportunities that occur when adding a conference to our region, we have in mind the academic environment and the trade unions within the various sectors. These sectors include the academies, the petroleum industry, the aquaculture, the agricultural industry and so forth, which are sectors quite important for the region. In addition, we run a number of projects that aims to highlight our role and inform about the importance of having and adding more conferences in our region and city in particular.

Do you work local, regional and national in order to find new customers?

Yes, you mention a good point here. We are not so concerned about the local activities and whether the hotel chains within the region compete with each other the gain more customers and attention from the county council, therefore we do not get involved in this manner. However, our main focus is directed at the national and international level, and our goal is first and foremost to attract more customers to our region.

What do you think of the importance of having meetings and conferences to the region?

We consider this importance as quite high. What one immediately thinks about are the economical benefits that the conference attendees leave behind. These advantages will benefit everyone, both the conference venue in particular but also the surrounding businesses and the inhabitants in the region. This means that a delegate will often pay several thousand kroner for a hotel accommodation in Stavanger, something that is beneficial for the local business life. This represents one side of the important role the conference market plays. The other side, which is quite more interesting to look at through our eyes, is that seen in a long-term perspective we will experience a strengthening of the competence for the trade union hosting the conference. By showing the strength and competence possessed by trade union, will make them more visible in their market. Furthermore, they receive an increased competence by showing their area of expertise. There is also an opportunity for the trade union to visualize their role in the local community, something that thereby can be used to add their own agenda either for political, business or for commercial purposes. This side is quite essential because this is related to the university environment and the local community as well as the ambitions that form the basis for tourism in the region. Seen from a national perspective, the tourism is an area of priority and constitutes the part of tourism industry that we in Region Stavanger work with.

Do you use any kind of intermediaries, in terms of professional conference organizers (PCO) and to which extent do you cooperate with these?

We have a close collaboration with about 200 stakeholders. These stakeholders have bought them selves into the destination company and constitute our members. Many of the large hotel chains within the Stavanger area, pay rather high rates, often up to several hundred thousand Norwegian kroner. While the smaller stakeholders, such as museums and service providers are paying considerable lower rates approximately around five to six thousand kroner. On behalf of this contribution to the destination company, we represent and work together with these stakeholders, as long as it benefits towards increased guest traffic to the region. Then we have a significant role, which entails our relationship towards the professional conference organizers (PCO's). We have four PCO's located in Stavanger, in addition to a fifth PCO that has their basis in Oslo. This is a type of PCO that works at a more national level, where they divides the country into different regions and sends the customers to the part that is most suitable for their demands. We have a strong cooperation towards this particular PCO, because they contribute a great deal through their membership in Region Stavanger and they work a lot nationally to provide new customers to the Stavanger area. The four conference organizers located in Stavanger, work mostly within the regional market, but are also positioned in both the national and international market. The professional conference organizers we work together with, exerts a high standard and are between the most competent PCO's within the Norwegian conference industry. The main reason for this professionalization comes from that they for many years have specialized them selves and working with clients through petroleum and energy related meetings. They have certainly developed a high degree of competence in this area and have made great progress in their market shares. The PCO's are therefore highly significant when it comes to attracting more conferences and congresses to Stavanger and the surrounding region.

How do you use the cooperation with these conference organizers?

This process is sufficiently simple that if one of the academic communities in which we have stimulated over a long period of time, determines that the want to add their conference to Stavanger, they must participate in a tender process. Once they have won the tender process, we in Region Stavanger automatically pull back and leave the responsibility to the conference organizers. On behalf of these tender rounds, we set up meetings with the PCO's where they in a period of 15 minutes must present their customers and show their areas of strength and competence. The dynamics involves that we are predominantly present and active in what happens in divided in two sections until the decision is taken. Then we thereafter surrender the responsibilities to the tourism industry, which in reality entails the PCO's and meeting planners. Afterwards we move the focus onto new projects to be solved.

It has to be mentioned, that most of the decision makers who comes to us often choose on behalf of conferences from a hundred delegates and upwards.

What about those conferences that find them selves below hundred delegates?

Many of the decision makers in charge of these conferences, utilize Region Stavanger in order to get information concerning relevant meeting and conference venues, excursions, what services that can be used and what facilities the different hotels and conference centers can offer the customer and so on. Thereafter they often go directly to a conference organizer or other smaller event companies. Here we have an equivalent company that provides information and marketing services and is a type of stakeholder who have their main focus on smaller meetings and other types of events.

The fundamental thought is that they should have certain financial benefits from being a partner with Region Stavanger.

When it comes to the factors that affect which customers that ultimately choose to come to Stavanger. Do you have any ideas concerning what factors that are important?

Yes, some of the factors are quite obvious. This means that major meetings and conferences often follow a certain rotating pattern. If we are talking about an international conference that recently has been held in Scandinavia, there often go several years before they choose to be candidates for Scandinavian countries again. The most important factor is therefore, that you have to fit into one of those demographic rotating models placed by the international organizations hosting such a conference. If we then see that a meeting has been held in a

Norwegian or Scandinavian city recently, it may take quite a long time before we it becomes appropriate for us to get into track again. In the meantime we use our time to search for other potential customers we can position ourselves against.

Firstly, we have this rotation system, and secondly, there must be a major initiative from the local communities and the academic communities in the region. It is pointless to invest heavily on meetings and conferences unless the academic communities and environments are locally anchored. We are dependent on having some local customers who want this market and who are welcoming this type of market development in the region. If a PCO comes to Region Stavanger who wish to organize a large conference in Stavanger, this stakeholder will receive the equivalent help they need. Most often, there is either a doctor, professor or a qualified professional, who are well positioned in a academic environment or organization, that has the authority to decide to hold the conference somewhere else than in Stavanger or Norway the next time.

How about in terms of the price frame here in Norway in general and Stavanger in particular, in which degree does the price affect the choice of conference destination?

The profitability of arranging a conference, are as I have mentioned earlier, both large and economical beneficial. The challenges in relation to the price standard is, as you may already be aware of, that Norway are seen as a high cost country. This image of Norway may be functioning as a stern point for adding conferences in the country. We are therefore at any given time engaged in finding productive solutions towards this challenge. We have found several solutions, and one of them involves filling up the weekends with conference guests instead of midweek days. The midweek days are often filled up corporate or business travelers and are highly attractive days for many customers. The hotels will therefore take particularly good charge for these days. However, on Saturdays and Sundays the hotel rates will be in line with the price standard that applies to the majority of European big cities.

Are there many international customers that consider Norway as too expensive?

Yes, therefore we must enter the market at an early stage in order to convince that the impression of Norway being an expensive country is a myth and simultaneously appear as realistic as possible.

Do you have to do much outreaching work in connection with this?

That is something we probably have to do. If we look at Norway as a potential host country for international conference, there are not many that considers Norway as an obvious first choice of selection, When decision makers in international companies choose where their conferences should be held, they do not even include Norway in decision process. Traditionally, the conferences are added frequently to large and attractive European cities such as Frankfurt, Barcelona, Vienna, etc. If anyone assesses Norway in the decision process, it is clearly a positive thing. So assessing Stavanger afterwards does not happen very often. Thus, we must as a destination company go into the market in order to seek those who are interested in adding conferences to Stavanger and convince them that we are the right choice. Then we need to confront and convince with our environmental friendliness, the high safety we can provide, accessibility and the fact that we can offer great value for money that customers leave behind and last but not least attracting customers with our fiords and clean nature.

It can in other words be claimed that there is a high quality in the services offered here in Stavanger?

Yes, without a doubt. Besides, we are a destination that is easy to anticipate. That means if there is a meeting planner that adds a conference or meeting five years ahead, we can ensure and the customer can have the confidence that the conference will be carried out and completed.

What about the facilities as a potential impact factor for destination selection?

The facility opportunities in Stavanger in comparison with many other cities at a national level are actually quite good. Firstly we have extremely good flight connections as a key point in this discussion. If you do not have an international airport with good connections, we are simply out of the market. Due to the fact that Stavanger has a strong position globally in terms of our petroleum and energy industry, it has formed a very good flight network that enables us to already have a competitive advantage in the market.

Point number two to be included in this discussion, is that after quite a few years of affluent customer and quality-conscious customers, we have facilities to maintain a very high standard. This includes everything from hotels to exhibition and conference centers, transporters and service providers in the local community. It provides us with a pretty high level of expertise that is a competitive advantage and a good selling point.

We have seen that there exist a difference between conference customers connected to the corporate market, which entails customers from companies, and customers from the association market that are connected to various trade unions and academic communities. The biggest difference is that customers from the corporate market are more financially powerful and trustworthy. While for instance the Norwegian association for nurses often have a smaller budget dedicated to holding conferences and meetings. It must however be noted that other aspects may play a role in such situations.

Earlier, we talked about the petroleum and energy industry and how it has played a significant role in Stavanger, in light of infrastructure, road standards, flight connections, and so forth. Have the petroleum and energy industry affected the conference market in Stavanger in any way?

Yes, in connection with that a large part of the Norwegian petroleum and energy sector is placed in the Stavanger region, we organize and hold a major international oil exhibition, called ONS, every second year. This oil exhibition consists of a conference, a trade show and festival, and it is one of the most attractive and major conferences that are held within the global petroleum and energy industry. Therefore, the quality standard that form the basis for the ONS exhibition, will have positive influence for other conferences and events that are held in Stavanger. The backside by holding this exhibition occurs if other customers choose to add their conferences to Stavanger in August, it is virtually impossible because the ONS exhibition fills up the entire city, especially when it comes to accommodation. However, relatively spoken I would say that the petroleum and energy industry gives us a positive trend we must take advantage of.

How many hotel rooms are there in Stavanger?

When it comes to the accommodation in Stavanger, it must be taken into account approximately 4400 hotel rooms in Stavanger city and the surrounding region, and 2500 rooms in the center of Stavanger. So we have a good number based on the size of the city. Recently, the number has actually increased in such a direction that we do not have the same problems, which was the case before. Some years ago we had a lack of hotel rooms in order to cover the demand, which constituted a major challenge for us. Here we come back to the issue concerning great pressure on midweek days, where we have worked hard with moving the focus towards filling weekends.

Are there a lot of empty hotel rooms in Stavanger at the current time?

Yes, I believe it is. However, there are increasingly fewer empty hotel beds then it used to be. Especially in the summer time, we have experienced a good and satisfying rate of growth within traditional tourism, meaning holiday and leisure travelers. This means that the hotels have a much greater coating now than before, in the holiday season.

So your main segments include trade unions and associations, and petroleum and energy industry. Are there any other major stakeholders worth mentioning?

In addition to the segments you have summed up, we also have a great interest within sectors such as the food industry, agriculture, aquaculture, breeding which contain several important stakeholders. Other segments to be mentioned are all the sectors within energy, petroleum, oil and gas, in addition to some stakeholders' emergency medicine.

When it comes to the need among the different sectors, are there any differences and do you manage them on a similar basis?

We basically use the same model in order to manage the different sectors. Still, we can see that if the conference is focused on food and agriculture, then their interests concerning location will be headed towards Jæren, which is geographically placed in the south of Stavanger. If however the conference is focused on fishing and fish farming their interest will be mainly aimed at Ryfylke, which is geographically placed in the north of Stavanger.

Do you travel around on national and international basis in order to promote Stavanger to potential customers?

Yes, we have a membership in a national company called Norwegian Convention Bureau. Through this membership we attend and participate on a various amount of trade fairs and sales exhibitions in Frankfurt. In addition, we have a strategy to have a fairly close relationship with academic communities and trade unions, particularly within sectors such as food and petroleum. Here we for instance participate an oil exhibition in Houston, in addition to several gas exhibitions and food fairs. The main purpose for this participation is to create a contact point towards new potential customers and create lucrative connectors within international academic environment and organizations.

Is there anything you would like to add, that we have not asked about?

Yes, it is a topic that we have not discussed regarding the seriousness within the conference market. Previously it was enough that a professor stood up and said welcome to Stavanger and this was satisfactory to bring new customers to add their conferences in our city. Now we can see that companies often have an administrative employee who takes care of and are more involved in the financial terms around the organization of conferences. This means that the introductory sales phase has become increasingly difficult to manage and requires more competence than earlier. There is a trend in the whole industry where you have to convince quite thoroughly that your candidacy is anchored often all the way up against the mayor level. There is furthermore required that you can financially guarantee for the content in the conference stay, especially when it comes to welcome buffets, conference facilities and venues. This shows that the seriousness in this industry has become increasingly more important.

What do you think this comes from?

I believe that a part of the organization use this involvement as an instrument for gaining financial advantages and to avoid unnecessary losses.

Otherwise, we experience that the importance of being environmental friendly is huge upcoming trend. There is a great focus on highlighting the meetings that are most green and sustainable. Regarding this trend, the countries in Scandinavia have a huge competitive advantage. Our neighboring countries have already distinguished themselves through so-called summits. Which means they are able to facilitate a high degree of sustainability in the organization and execution of conferences.

The interview with Clarion Hotel Stavanger

This in-depth interview was conducted the 8th of March 2012, and our interviewee was Eli Sømme, which is Director of Sales at Clarion Hotel Stavanger. Clarion Hotel Stavanger is a part of the Nordic Choice hotels, which is a hotel chain with strong positioning in the Scandinavian countries and they have focused heavily on the conference market in the recent years.

What we write about are the factors that influence the choice of destination in the conference market. We have previously talked with key people in Trondheim, so our main focus is on Norway with further light on Trondheim and Stavanger.

We can begin the interview with you describing your position and main activities at Clarion Hotel Stavanger:

I am the Director of Sales at Clarion Hotel Stavanger, thereby I got the responsibility for all the positions in the sales department, which in reality includes does below me. I work more actively with introductory sales, which entails bringing new guests to the hotel. Furthermore my position involve an increasingly degree of administrative role and my responsibility to coach and redistribute competence to the positions below me.

Within the sales department our main focus is first and foremost the meetings & conference market as well as the weekend market, which entails holiday and leisure travelers. This sums up the main activities that my sales department works with.

In addition, I work with the planning of strategic guidelines for projects carried out by my subordinates in the team, which as earlier mentioned entails a more administrative position for me.

Do you have any thoughts concerning how other hotels make their effort on in relation to the work you are carrying out?

Not everybody have the same department system as we have. In total we have an amount of seven employees in our sales department, and as long as we are sufficiently many there is highly necessary for this particular hotel to have an superior position that controls and manages the measures that comes at hand and the implementation of future projects. Seen from a general perspective, most hotels have only one employee that work mainly in the sales department. This depends on how large the hotels are in relation to their market shares, and within smaller hotels it is often the headquarters for the chains that manages sales-related tasks and activities.

What type of responsibilities does your subordinates in the team have?

Previously, we had a divided model in which one employee was largely aimed at the weekend market. Employee number two had the main focus directed against the corporate market, where the main responsibility was gaining interest from business travelers, and the third position had responsibility for the conference market and so forth. However, in the recent years there has been an amendment in the organization of responsible roles within Nordic Choice Hotels. This change entails that everyone employed at the sales team should be involved in every strategic planning of new project, in every activities and in every decision making process. We now work together on a similar level, with some team members positioned mainly against the conference market and creating conditions for introductory sales. Introductory sales are very important for us.

In terms of your involvement in the conference market, do you spend a lot of time in the marketplace in order to consult and create relationship with new potential customers on your own? Or do you transfer this responsibility to other agencies in the conference industry?

Yes, do a large extent we do a large part of the work ourselves. We are to a large degree present in order to pay attention to alterations and movements in the marketplace. We have developed strong competence in doing research online, through web sites such as Google, in order to attribute ourselves with new information concerning the different trends. Furthermore, we hold ourselves constantly updated on the news and other movements in order to thereafter facilitate the conditions to add new conferences to our hotel or to Stavanger and to promote innovation in the hotel. In addition, we do a large part of the work ourselves when it comes to international customers. In this part of the market we maintain a close collaboration with Region Stavanger. In the Nordic Choice Hotels we have our own employee positioned at the headquarters in Oslo that primarily work out against the international conference market. This employee takes care of all the meetings and sales exhibitions that happens in European cities such as Frankfurt, Barcelona and Vienna, and is present on behalf of all hotels included in the Nordic Choice Hotels. The employees positioned at the sales department in Clarion Hotel Stavanger thereby works mainly to attract the national meetings & conference market. This is where our strength of knowledge lies, therefore it is applicable to working extensively with Region Stavanger and Stavanger Forum, which is a major conference centre in Stavanger, in order to make the conditions for adding conferences to Stavanger and the surrounding region an much easier process.

So you can assume that the cooperation between the stakeholders is important?

Yes, definitely. This is because if we work together it will anyway benefit the local business community, especially in terms of restaurants, nightlife, cultural events and similar service providers in the region. If our intention is to come out ahead of the collaboration and gain financial and competitive advantages, we must be willing to give something back to the industry. The price standard in this city is quite high, especially in terms of hotel beds and food and beverages, so cooperation with other stakeholders in the region is essential in order to get on the same competitive level as other major cities in Norway and Scandinavia in general. Therefore, we often collaborate across the hotel chains.

Does the price constitute an essential factor when customers make their site selection?

It really depends on which stakeholders we are talking about. If the customer is fundamentally very price conscious then the price will be of great importance, while for others the price is less important. In the latter case the customer often have a greater interest in the overall experience and what the destination has to offer when they are outside the actual conference venue. In my experience, it is what we can offer outside the conference itself, which is the experience the customer receives during the stay disregarding the conference itself that matters most. The most important factor that influences site selection is therefore what we are able to do for the customer during his stay.

Considering the importance of having a meeting & conference market in Stavanger and the surrounding region, how much significance does this market entail for the city's development?

It certainly features a great importance. Here at the hotel, we have a quite high number of rooms, which at any given time should be filled up as much as possible in order to achieve economical gains. We see that the corporate market mostly fills up the majority of hotel rooms, that is, business travelers, in light of how the market has evolved in recent years. This means that there are generally full booked from Monday to Thursday. However in terms of the meetings & conference market, we see an increased need for more concentration and focus on this particular marketplace. This is because they generate more dinners at the site, are interested in getting more value for money they leave behind and contribute to more additional sales at the hotel than other segments. So it is something we have always focused on and there will be focused even more about in the future. Therefore, we have recently entered a closer cooperation with Region Stavanger in order to distribute more of the conferences over to the weekends.

In the interview with Region Stavanger they were talking about how the weekend market have improved a lot related to the effort they have put on moving conferences to the weekends. Do you have the same experience at Clarion Hotel Stavanger as well?

That is definitely a correct observation also at the hotel. We have spent the last ten months in order to fill up the weekends because we have failed a great deal on this market area before. The market has changed in such a way that you are dependent on having something in the bottom in terms of activities and entertainment, in order to provide weekend after weekend. The conference market is more individualistic in their needs and demands, but if nothing happens during the weekends that can attract customers to spend this particular amount of time away from their spare time, we will not be able to experience success and economical advantages from the weekend market. However, we have implemented a number of campaigns and initiatives in social media that really seems to be working, so we experience that the weekend market is growing in a very positive direction.

If you receive a conference that is too large for the hotel to able to handle, what do you do then?

If a conference is too large for us, we usually have a strategy within the Nordic Choice Hotels to continue to arrangement to other hotels in the region with membership within the hotel chain. However, as the situation unfolds in the region at the present time, if the conference is too large for us to manage, it is automatically too large for our second choice within the chain as well. Based on the amount of hotels within the Nordic Choice Hotels located in the Stavanger area, we have the largest conference facilities to offer. Therefore, we usually tend to give the responsibility for holding the conference to Stavanger Forum or other possible conference venues such as Stavanger Stadium or concert houses in the area. There is of course a certain degree of competition for the smaller conferences, especially during daytime because the majority of the competitors will have as many conferences as possible held at their hotels. However, in the larger extent it is important to assist with alternative premises since we place ourselves in a better light as well as financial and marketing advantages we gain from being helpful.

Now we shall move onto the usage of intermediaries, which entails PCO's, event companies and booking agencies. How much do you use them in sales related work?

When I do not work with administrative responsibilities at the hotel, I usually travel to other cities in Norway such as Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim in order to get in contact and establish relationships with new potential customers. In order for this fieldwork to be successful we are dependent on having a strong network and that the different stakeholders within the industry work together to attract more conferences to the different regions. We are in the principle interested in managing much of the process on our own terms, but we are not afraid of reach out to Region Stavanger or a conference organizer to help us in specific cases where help is necessary.

But do you cooperate with professional conference organizers (PCO)?

Yes, we certainly do. This is a part of a trend we have observed in the recent years that an increased number of companies choose to go through a PCO in order to plan and organize the conference on behalf of the company. This includes every type of events from meetings, conferences and Christmas events. Enquiries from national PCO’s are something we have experienced in an increasingly degree. In the light of this experience I will point out that companies and organizations that leaves the responsibility for planning their conferences over to professional conference organizers is a growing market and we consider this as a good trend to be captured. When it comes to Innovation Norway, we do not have a strong relationship with this organization, because we usually move directly to Region Stavanger or the conference organizers.

Do you experience that the conference market at the hotel consists of conferences from the corporate market or the association market?

The conference market does mainly consist of conferences from the corporate market. This is because the Norwegian petroleum industry is located in and around Stavanger, which attract a lot of companies to the city for conference purposes. However we do also have some associations as well. I believe the association market is a good trend that has not yet taken off.

Do you experience that the number of conferences within the association market is growing?

I have not observed that trend yet, so we probably have much to go on in related to the focus we put against this market area. We experience more trade unions and associations that add their conferences in the weekends and are involved in filling up the void within the weekend market, so I can point out that the trend is heading in a positive direction. The market is increasing.

What about Innovation Norway, do you cooperate with them?

We do not have a strong relationship with Innovation Norway, because mostly we go through Region Stavanger when we need some sort of help or guidelines in our work. However, the headquarters for Nordic Choice Hotels have a constant relationship with Innovation Norway.

Do you have some personal thoughts concerning Innovation Norway and Region Stavanger?

I have been participating in several meetings with both of these organizations, and their competence and skills in order to promote and position themselves in the market and make Stavanger and Norway attractive is quite good. However, I am not in a position to make a statement about Innovation Norway and Region Stavanger.

Based on theory, we have observed some factors that in varying degree can influence the choice of site selection in the conference market. The factors include accessibility, price, and service against quality, entertainment and security.

We are in a position at Clarion Hotel Stavanger in that we have a high price standard to work from. Therefore we focus very strongly on maintaining high quality in every service we deliver to our customers. When we hence employ new persons to our positions at the hotel, then we conduct a mandatory audition for all potential applicants. It is no longer enough to have a flawless resume; you must also prove your worth in practice. We have implemented this audition in order to improve the competence among employees and have a quality assurance that the service provided is at a maximum level at any given time. We want to find does personalities that are able to provide that little extra. There is a reason for the price standard being at a high level, and it is because we want to offer the equivalent level of service quality.

When it comes to the facilities we offer to our conference guests, it is something the Nordic Choice hotels has good strength on and the hotels included in the chain has developed conference facilities in quite a professional manner.

When it comes to the image of Stavanger as a conference destination, do you have any statements concerning have customers view this image?

I believe that many possess a perception that Stavanger is a very difficult city to place their conferences and visits in. This is because there is not always that many hotel rooms available, which leads to high hotel rates at a general level in Stavanger. Since business travelers and conferences from the corporate market make up the majority of customers to the market, these customer groups contributes to the hotels in Stavanger being mostly full booked during the week. The high demand along with the lack of enough hotel rooms leads to a generally high price standard. This means that new customers cannot get access to the destination because there are simply too difficult to add a conference to the city. In recent years we have, however, focused strongly on making it simpler for all types of visitors to move easily around in the Stavanger area. Within the centre of Stavanger we have hotels, various service providers and conventions centers such as Stavanger Forum located very close together and we promote ourselves for being within reach. For many conference guests and business travelers the transportation time must go as effective as possible and accessibility is therefore a very important factor for being able to even have a healthy market.

So if I summarize the image of Stavanger as a conference destination, I would say that visitors tend to think that it is always full booked, the prices are too high, we have short distances between the different hotels and service providers within the industry. In addition, the accessibility is satisfactory and the safety meets the requirements from the market. When it comes to the latter, I believe that many customers take safety for granted.

It is important to mention that we have a focus to become the number one congress destination in Norway, and with Stavanger Forum we are in a good position to do so. However, from my point of view I believe there is a need for new hotels, especially in Stavanger and also in Trondheim. Trondheim will gain competitive advantages with regard to the new congress hotel that is opening during spring 2012, but Stavanger and Trondheim are two cities that have to work harder in order to get more visible on the market.

We see that customers are more demanding than before. There is no longer enough to offer good facilities and good location for conferences. Customers wants to an greater extent to be a part of the organization and planning of the event and they require more tailor-made packages where entertainment and good experience outside the conference constitute a more essential part of the overall conference package.

When it comes to the cities in Norway, I believe all cities are fairly similar competition-wise. However, Oslo and Bergen already have a strong position in the conference market because of their attractiveness, and they only need to maintain their position. Stavanger and Trondheim, on the other hand, must put even more effort when it comes to finding a good position where market growth can be promoted and long-term sustainability can be maintained in order to be able to compete with Oslo and Bergen.

Are there any other factors that could be mentioned, that we have not discussed?

There is very important that you as a provider within the industry are able to provide the little extra when it comes to service quality. That is a factor that we benefit very strongly from. As I have mentioned earlier we observe an upcoming trend, which entail more tailor-made packages for our clients. The clients are demanding more, especially when it comes to what they can experience of cultural events and entertainment outside the actual conference site. You must be able to offer more, in order to be attractive. Therefore, the professional conference organizers (PCO), has become more present and visible in order to put together products based on customers wants and demands. The customer must feel that they can receive something new and exciting, in other words the little extra.

Innovation Norway

This interview was conducted 26. March 2012, with Per Eivind Voie. This respondent is employed in Innovation Norway, which constitute the organization at the top of the conference industry together with Norway Convention Bureau.

In the beginning of the interview we asked the interviewee to consider any particular area of the conference industry where more research is necessary. This is an open question he can consider during the interview and the question was raised again at the end of the interview.

About the interviewee:

My name is Per Eivind Voie. I am employed in Innovation Norway and my position is as customer adviser in the company's department in Trøndelag County. In this position, I work mainly with travel and tourism businesses in the county, the destination companies are included here, as well as culture and experience industry, and companies within this area. My job is to advise companies that want to increase market share in the area. Within the culture industry I advise companies within film, music and theater, and the experience industry is strongly linked to the traveling industry and my work is linked to the tourism industry in order to provide content to the tourism industry through the use of activities such as dog sledding and activity parks.

Do you have a strong cooperation with companies such as Visit Trondheim?

Yes, we have a strong relationship with several companies. What is special with the tourism industry in comparison to other cooperating industries is that we are pursuing a facilitating effort instead of an business-oriented effort against the members. There is none of the destination management companies, neither Visit Trondheim nor the destination management companies in Røros and Oppdal, which has any interest in gaining financial benefits through our cooperation with them. In order for companies In principle we normally have a set of requirements, which entails companies that has interest in being partners with Innovation Norway must have economical benefits as a part of their purpose.

Considering the importance of having meetings & conferences in Trondheim, do you have any thoughts concerning this topic, especially in the view of the corporate market in Trondheim?

As earlier mentioned, we prefer to perform a proper facilitating work rather than business-oriented work when it comes to the tourism industry. Therefore, we have a close relationship with the destination companies in the county, such as Visit Trondheim, Destination Røros and Destination Oppdal, where we have high standards when it comes to degree of participation.

We ask, how do you see the importance of having meetings in Trondheim and the surrounding areas in Trøndelag County?

It is obvious that the meetings & conferences is very important for both the city of Trondheim in itself as well as the rest of Trøndelag county because conference guests generate a lot of money for hotels and external service companies. These customers contribute a lot more to the destination. Conference guests are responsible for a quarter of the number of rooms in the city and which represents an important income source to the destination. Trondheim city has a vital connection to the university NTNU and St. Olav's Hospital, and therefore has a great appeal towards the academic communities.

Does this include different types of associations as well?

No, on this particular area, I believe that Trondheim as a destination falls behind due to competitive development. I personally have no perception of how Trondheim is positioned in the market in relation to other Norwegian cities. What I can say with certainty is when it comes to different kinds of associations, national conferences and political meetings; the stakeholders in Trondheim at a destination level have not been working seriously enough. This part of the industry has not been managed professionally in order to make successful progress concerning this particular customer group in the conference market.

Have other Norwegian cities distinguished themselves better in this area?

No, I have no particular view of what is happening in other cities in Norway. We only know that this is a market where it has not been working hard enough with in relation to the corporate market. However, it is quite clear that the associations constitute a more price-sensitive market than the corporate market.

Do you have certain collaboration with the different departments in Innovation Norway that is located around the country?

We have a close cooperation within the different instances in the organization. In Innovation Norway, we have our own employees who work exclusively with the MICE market, which entails meetings, incentives, conferences and events. These employees are positioned centrally in our headquarters in Oslo, where they have a strong relationship with Norwegian Convention Bureau. Together they initiate new projects and strategic in order to promote Norway in the international meetings & conference market. It usually involves bringing new potential customers from abroad especially in terms of conventions and conferences. It is here we create an overall growth. In terms of associations and trade unions from international academic communities, we focus firstly on getting new customers to Norway and thereafter decide which department that receives the internal market shares based on where in Norway the customers want to add their conferences. Regarding international congresses we work mainly with activities that can bring us new customers.

Considering the relationship customers establish during their visit in Trondheim, are there many who return to Trondheim in terms of conference or leisure purposes?

On the first hand, we have those companies that has been to Trondheim in a conference or meeting that are so satisfied with the destination and wish to return for new conferences, we have a great deal of these customers. On the other hand, we experience that many are conscious in experiencing new places and in having meetings at other destinations where they have not been before. Especially in relation to internal seminars and similar types of meetings, we see that the customers has bigger expectations for what they want to experience next in terms of cultural events and entertainment outside the actual conference venue. The conference market also generates a number of holiday and leisure traffic, especially from the business market. We see that if you have been to a certain city or country with your company and enjoyed the destination, it is more likely for those delegates to return with their family and friends. This market has great importance to our destination and there are clear signs that this includes both the national and international market.

Could it also be inversely, which means that if a person comes to Trondheim on vacation it increases the interest for adding conferences to Trondheim in the future?

I have no statistics to state an opinion about it, but one can assume that if you have been somewhere and had a good experience it establish a desire to bring your company the next time. This is actually an area we focus on in Innovation Norway. We organize something called Trondheim’s eve, which is situated in Oslo. This arrangement is aimed at customers who have great interest in adding conferences to Trondheim or the surrounding region. We invite all who book and organize meetings and conference within Norwegian companies.

These meeting planners constitute the decision makers with medium-sized and large enterprises, and are usually employed as secretaries, office ladies, administration officers and so forth. The companies are normally from the area of Oslo. During the Trondheim's eve the decision makers get presented various destinations and conference venues in Trondheim and Trøndelag county. They receive detailed information of what the destination has to offer, what service the different venues can provide and what can be experienced during their conference stay. If you manage to convince one decision maker to consider Trondheim as a good destination to add their conferences to, it is most likely that their choices are made in connection to this particular event. Thereby I believe it can have the same effect for those who have been to Trondheim for vacation purposes.

When you talk about the decision makers, who are these secretaries and office employees and what relevance do they have considering the choice of site selection?

These positions have a lot of power and authority in the decision making process that is pertaining the conference planning. Within large enterprises these positions constitute an almost essential role for the decision making process because much of the responsibilities that comes with organizing conferences and meetings are mainly handled by these employees and top management is rarely involved whatsoever. The secretaries and administration officers receive more responsibility within larger enterprises. In smaller companies it may be that the manager himself who takes care of such decisions, since these companies often may not have secretarial functions. However, I have no knowledge of whether or not companies are starting to establish their own teams or departments where conference planning and organization are the primary task.

We have looked at various factors based on theory we have found, considering to which influence they have in relation to the selection of conference destinations and venues.

The first factor we want to discuss concerns access to the destination, infrastructure and availability:

This is something we see has become increasingly important. Especially in connection with the financial crisis and in the aftermath of this crisis, which struck many companies, a greater focus was held against shortening the transportation time to the conference destination. Many companies adopted a strategy that included a so-called hour belt, which means that you should not have to travel more than one hour in order to get to the conference site. It is obvious that this hour belt to a large extent favors the big cities because they have more direct flights that do not exceed the one-hour limit. One of the results from this strategy involves many companies adding their conferences to hotels and venues situated near the major airports. For instance is Stjørdal located closest to Trondheim airport, and it receives an increasingly number of companies that add their conferences to hotels in the area. Rica Hell Hotel is worth mentioning in this case, and is particularly attractive because of the hour belt. Having a satisfactory infrastructure and accessibility is therefore quite essential for how the conference market moves as well as it is essential for your survival in the market.

Does this include both national and international travelers as well?

It is quite apparent that if you should have the ability to attract international clients, it is important to have a short and effective accessibility to Trondheim, because the travel time is a major issue for many international companies.

If we make a comparison between accessibility to the destination and the price standard at the destination, which factor constitute the most important factor that may influence site selection?

I want to point out that when it comes to the professional conference market, the time spent on transportation to and from the conference destination is more important than the price it costs to get there and reside at the site. If it takes a day to travel, this will result in substantial costs associated with absenteeism as participants at the conference incurs. Having too long traveling time is something many companies want to avoid because it result sin total for the high costs for all members to be included.

Do you think Trondheim is well enough organized in relation to the standard, or is this an area the destination can be improved on?

There are certainly enough potential for improvement. For instance, it takes far too much time to travel from Trondheim Airport to the city itself. The shuttle buses are the most convenient means of transportation, alternatively there are trains running, but this involves local trains that run only once an hour. This is definitely not satisfactory in terms of the requirements we receive from the market. Therefore, to establish a shorter and more efficient transportation time from the airport to Trondheim city would certainly be an advantage.

Does Innovation Norway have cooperation with transport companies, such as the Norwegian Railway Company (NSB)?

We have entered a number of transport-related forums, both in terms of normal transport companies, such as bus companies and railway companies, and air transport companies. This happens at all levels, that is, locally, nationally and internationally. Among other things, we are within the Aviation forum for Trøndelag County centered in Central Norway, where we work thoroughly to establish new routes and simpler access to Trondheim airport. It is important for us to have many direct flights, for example, to Berlin in order to create better access to the market we work with there. It is important because it strengthens our ability to compete on an equal footing with other major cities both nationally and internationally.

Considering the facilities offered by the conference sites in Trondheim and Central Norway in general, how does this affect the choice of site selection in the conference market?

It has a lot to say on such a destination that you are able to provide enough facilities based on high quality in order to satisfy our customers through this offer. What we have problems with, is to provide enough single rooms in order to accommodate all delegates attending meetings or conferences. We are in short supply of hotel rooms, which is particularly evident within rural hotels that are not located in central of Trondheim. In addition to the requirement of enough single rooms to the participants, is the demand of having access to their own shower and bathroom essential. Without a satisfactory number of hotel rooms you have simply not enough capacity to compete at the conference market at all. This situation entails that many hotels are forced to compete with each other internally, because they are dependent on having conferences in order to survive. However, in central of Trondheim city we are experiencing a large improvement and increasingly number of hotel rooms, so the demands are soon to be met here. With this development it makes Trondheim as a destination well equipped to accommodate more and larger conferences and congresses. This will largely be visualized when the new congress hotel opens in Trondheim during the spring 2012, because it will open the doors for a new market that enables the destination to host congresses. This is something that Trondheim never has been able to manage before, so the development is quite good seen from a destination perspective.

Is there any network or collaboration between the different hotel chains in Trondheim and surrounding region in order to help each other to solve challenges with the capacity?

To some extent there exist a level of collaboration. The hotels in Trondheim cooperate with each other through their membership with Visit Trondheim. If they are planning to hold large conferences and congresses, respectively with more than 3000 participants, we are dependent on working together. Along with our requirements in Innovation Norway, we expect those companies that want a partnership with us, to collaborate with each other on certain projects. We have a limited possibility to provide financial support if great events are happening in Trondheim. Most of the funds that Innovation Norway is in disposal of should be mainly directed towards districts outside the city. This leads to that one in Trondheim want to run projects aimed at the international market, so we set a requirement that it should cooperate with other destinations in the county. This is particularly relevant in the incentive market, that is, when you travel for four to five days with the company in connection with team building and so it must be made to allow, as many destinations in the county to be visited during your stay.

When it comes to your requirements for collaboration, are there other areas Innovation Norway make requirements about in order for companies in the county to be aloud to participate?

This varies greatly from project to project and we have no specific list of our requirements. It is clear that we also work with individual companies and we shall not share confidential information about the companies. Nevertheless, when we are working on projects where cooperation at a destination level is necessary, it is incredibly important that the companies are willing to actually participate. We require cooperation in terms of how they work on the market and we demand that either Innovation Norway or Visit Trondheim shall be informed about every activity that occurs. In addition, we are present in the work with establishing Online Booking, which is an online booking system for the whole county. Regarding the latter, we try to establish a portal system where all service providers and tourism companies are aloud and required to participate. Online Booking is a portal where customers are able to put together their own packages and book excursions, hotels, events and conferences through the website. In order for the service companies to get financial support they have to participate on the project. However, the booking system is mainly aimed at tourism and leisure to begin with, so it may not be within relevance for the conference market yet.

Trondheim is known for being a technology capital in Norway since it is connected to NTNU and many technology companies are located in this city. Do you have any knowledge of how this affects Trondheim as a conference destination?

We are probably not very far ahead at this present time, but we are fighting in the forefront with an online booking system for all service providers and tourism companies in the county to be included. This booking system, which is called Online Booking, are in the forefront as one of the most innovative booking systems in Norway. When the online portal opens in April 2012, it will provide over 300 products and it has a great potential to improve competitive conditions in the market.

Service and quality of the service offered as a factor influencing site selection within the conference market:

Generally in Norway we have a very good service level, there is no doubt about that. Norway is about to distinguish our selves at an international level, which means that Norway is the Scandinavian country that attracts the most congresses. Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go and we are not where we should be when it comes to quality of service and hospitality. This is something we focus strongly on within Innovation Norway and therefore we run a number of hospitality courses, in order to improve the destination as a whole when for instance hosting a major congress. For a conference guest who does not want to be situated at the hotel, but rather wants to experience, eat at a restaurant, make visits to different shops, visit cultural sites and is seeking information, it is important for the customer to receive an overall good impression. It is the overall impression that matters most and is something that the customer will remember, therefore will a bad experience with a service provider affect the overall impression of the destination. When we are running the hospitality courses we are concerned that you should think about latitude in the business sector and not only focus the courses on tourism companies. Every service provider that customer may get in contact with, should be able to provide information and good service quality to the customers. We have among other things run hospitality courses for 300 people at Røros, which included employees from hotels, information offices, gas stations and shops. There is a deductible of 1500 Norwegian kroner in order to be able to attend the course and is something that the companies usually pays for. Anyone who has attended the course receives a horseshoe mark for being an approved destination host. Generally, the course is very popular and is being run on a regular basis. It is of course easier to conduct hospitality courses at small destination because you get a better overall in the development system, but it has, however, been run in Trondheim as well.

The combination of accessibility and good facilities along with being able to provide activities and entertainment becomes more important for such a market and Norway has a competitive advantage at this area.

Price as a factor influencing site selection within the conference market:

It is clear that Norway is an expensive country to visit, but in an area we are not so expensive is the hotel rooms offered. The hotel beds are not so expensive if you compare with other countries in Europe. However, even food and beverages are included, we are not competitive on price. The fact that Norway is an expensive country and appears to be slightly upscale is something many companies appreciates. The customers appreciate being able to afford something you usually cannot afford. Therefore, instead of being competitive on price it is important to promote Norway as an exclusive destination to visit where you can expect good quality on service.

Do you meet any of the international decision makers before they decide to choose Norway as a destination?

We are participating in trade fairs and exhibitions every year to see how things work, but beyond this we have no contact with potential customers. It is the headquarters in Oslo that holds that responsibility.

Entertainment and activities as a factor influencing site selection within the conference market: To which degree does entertainment influence the decision making process when a conference destination is chosen in front of another?

The entertainment as a factor is something we see are becoming increasingly important. That is emphasized to a greater extent when deciding on a particular conference destination. When customers are traveling on conferences, the actual workday will be used to attend the event. After the conference, attendees will not be able to go home and get their spare time, but will have to spend down time at the hotel room or on other things outside the hotel. There are a growing number of attendees who want to exploit this down time in form of entertainment, cultural events or activities. To have the opportunity to participate in something outside the conference is about to become a decisive factor for many companies. In Trondheim and the surrounding region there is a lot to offer when it comes to activities, but in order to meet the upcoming demands, the collaboration between destination management companies become particularly important in order to provide good packages and solutions for customers in the future.

Security as a factor influencing site selection within the conference market: How do you evaluate the level of security in Trondheim and Norway at a general level?

Outside the coastline we have had a number of tourists involved in accidents related to saltwater fishing, something that never create an positive image of the destination. It is not preferable to be associated with low security and accidents. However, there is not that many of these activities within the conference market. Security is something that everyone demands that destinations take seriously, but I have no indications that the security is not on a satisfactory level, both in Trondheim and in Norway.

Image as a factor influencing site selection within the conference market: What type of image or picture does people have of Trondheim as a destination?

The hallmarks that often are the first aspects to be noticed or remembered by potential customers include Rosenborg, the Football club in Trondheim, Trondheim Cathedral and Trondheim city in itself in terms of historical or academically sites. These constitute the three aspects that appear in people's mind when Trondheim city is mentioned. In earlier years we have been known for having pleasant and jovial inhabitants, but we have recently tried to consciously remove ourselves from this image.

How should the destination appear as an image?

We have not been able to reach an agreement concerning how we desire to be perceived. During a brainstorming session we came up with four areas we want to profile Trondheim and Trøndelag County on. The first brand is "creative Trøndelag", which refers to Trondheim city. The second brand is " adventurous Trøndelag", which mainly is referred to Røros. The third brand is " uninhibited Trøndelag", which is referred to the coastline outside Trøndelag. The fourth and last brand is " historical Trøndelag", which is referred to attractions such as Nidarosdomen and Stiklestad.

Which effect does the academic environment with students and NTNU entail for the overall destination image of Trondheim?

The students constitute a great significance for Trondheim, because students who come here and receive a good experience from their stay will be good ambassadors for the city. Students who gets a positive impressions are in a much more visible position to share their positive impressions to others through word of mouth.

When it comes to the usage of intermediaries among hotels and destination management companies in Trondheim, do you have any cooperation with them?

Innovation Norway cooperates a lot with intermediaries during our projects, especially in terms of the destination management companies such as Visit Trondheim. Vi prefer to cooperate at a destination company level, rather than cooperating directly with hotels and service providers that has relationship with the customers, because we work with the destination companies on the basis of all companies linked up to Innovation Norway or Visit Trondheim. Then it is easier for us to be involved without affecting the distortion of competition, which is an important principle for Innovation Norway.The destination management companies we cooperate with are Visit Trondheim, Destination Oppdal, Destination Røros and Destination Trøndelag coastline.

How is the cooperation between the destination management companies?

Within this cooperation there is a company called Trøndelag Tourism that plays an important role. Trøndelag Tourism have earlier been involved in a turbulent period with low degree of support and participation from the destinations and service companies. Within the last three years the cooperated has changed a lot and has improved the fellowship between the destination companies. Trøndelag Tourism is now conducting meetings on a regular basis where all destination management companies are brought together where they analyze the market.

We have discovered that the demand for more activities and entertainment is an increasing and upcoming trend, where research is about to become more necessary. For instance, it would have been useful to know how much time the conference participants are willing to use on activities an how strong the interest and requirement really is. Furthermore, it would be interesting to know how much money that can be generated through developing more access to this particular type of market. This trend is particularly noticeable on the international market.

Are there any other trends you would like to mention?

We have a trend that embraces the demands for environmental and sustainable tourism, and Innovation Norway focus heavily on certifying destinations. This is not a decisive factor for chosen one conference destination in front of another, but it matters in a positive direction. Røros as a destination has improved very strongly in terms of promoting their sustainability and environmental friendliness. They have won several international awards for having a sustainable tourism.

Are there any other factors that are more important than those we have discussed during this interview?

No, I believe you have covered up the most important factors in terms of site selection. I want to emphasize transportation time and accessibility as the most decisive factors to be included in the decision making process. This requires that you have good facilities to offer and everything in the package under control. You will not be able to claim your place in the market if you cannot offer wireless network, projectors and other conference equipment on the conference venue.

Appendix B: Template for in-depth interviews

Vi ønsker gjerne et intervju som er mer som en flytende samtale, der vi vil avdekke tanker rundt eksisterende teori og eventuelt finne nye relevante meninger og ideer som bør tas med i forskningen. Hovedfokus vil være på faktorer som påvirker beslutningstagers valg av destinasjon for kurs- og konferansefasiliteter. Beslutningstager vil i denne sammenheng være møteplanleggere for ulike bedrifter (både konkrete stillinger som innehar denne jobben og de som eventuelt får det som en ekstraoppgave). Intervjuguiden kan brukes ved intervju av både møteplanleggere, møteselgere og eksperter på området.

Viktigheten av kurs- og konferansemarkedet

For brukere og industrien

For selgere

For destinasjonen

Relasjon til destinasjon

Beslutningstagers enerett på avgjørelse

Uprofesjonelle relasjoner til destinasjon

Profesjonelle relasjoner til destinasjon

Påvirkningsfaktorer

Tilgang

Fasilitetsmuligheter

Service og kvalitet

Lønnsomhet

Underholdning

Sikkerhet

Image

Mellomledd i destinasjonsvalg

Bruk av mellomledd

Viktigheten av mellomledd

Påvirkning fra mellomledd

Mellomledd og påvirkning på de andre påvirkningsfaktorene

Selgere og destinasjonsvalg

Kontakt mellom selgere og møteplanleggere

Viktigheten ved selgerrelasjonen

Påvirkning av selgere

Selgere og påvirkning på de andre påvirkningsfaktorene

Andre tanker rundt valg av destinasjon i kurs- og konferansemarkedet

Appendix C: Correlations

Correlations

			Totalimage	accessibility scale	affordability importance scale	safety & security scale	Location & facility scale	attraction scale
Spearman's rho	Totalimage	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.104	-.199	.294	.237	.459*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.613	.329	.129	.225	.016
		N	28	26	26	28	28	27
	accessibility scale	Correlation Coefficient	-.104	1.000	.223	-.270	.377*	-.219
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.613	.	.274	.165	.048	.273
		N	26	28	26	28	28	27
	affordability importance scale	Correlation Coefficient	-.199	.223	1.000	.033	.035	-.049
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.329	.274	.	.866	.861	.806
		N	26	26	28	28	28	28
	safety & security scale	Correlation Coefficient	.294	-.270	.033	1.000	-.003	.142
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.129	.165	.866	.	.989	.462
		N	28	28	28	30	30	29

Location & facility scale	**Correlation Coefficient**	**.237**	**.377***	**.035**	**-.003**	**1.000**	**-.148**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.225**	**.048**	**.861**	**.989**	**.**	**.445**
	N	**28**	**28**	**28**	**30**	**30**	**29**
attraction scale	**Correlation Coefficient**	**.459***	**-.219**	**-.049**	**.142**	**-.148**	**1.000**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.016**	**.273**	**.806**	**.462**	**.445**	**.**
	N	**27**	**27**	**28**	**29**	**29**	**29**
quality of service scale	**Correlation Coefficient**	**.559****	**-.067**	**-.155**	**.210**	**.502****	**.247**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.002**	**.741**	**.440**	**.273**	**.006**	**.206**
	N	**28**	**27**	**27**	**29**	**29**	**28**
Corporate economic turnover	**Correlation Coefficient**	**-.265**	**-.209**	**.010**	**-.229**	**-.234**	**.028**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.172**	**.286**	**.961**	**.223**	**.213**	**.887**
	N	**28**	**28**	**28**	**30**	**30**	**29**
Size of corporation	**Correlation Coefficient**	**-.040**	**.167**	**-.060**	**-.123**	**.184**	**.150**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.839**	**.395**	**.762**	**.518**	**.331**	**.438**
	N	**28**	**28**	**28**	**30**	**30**	**29**

Correlations

			quality of service scale	Corporate economic turnover	Size of corporation	Number of conferences organized by corporation	Delegates at largest conference	Delegates at smallest conference
Spearman's rho	Totalimage	Correlation Coefficient	.559	-.265	-.040	-.245	-.250	.042*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.172	.839	.227	.199	.834
		N	28	28	28	26	28	28
	accessibility scale	Correlation Coefficient	-.067	-.209	.167	.503	.390*	-.428
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.741	.286	.395	.009	.040	.023
		N	27	28	28	26	28	28
	affordability importance scale	Correlation Coefficient	-.155	.010	-.060	-.163	.345	.212
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.440	.961	.762	.427	.072	.279
		N	27	28	28	26	28	28
	safety & security scale	Correlation Coefficient	.210	-.229	-.123	-.155	.122	.163
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.273	.223	.518	.430	.522	.391
		N	29	30	30	28	30	30

Location & facility scale	**Correlation Coefficient**	**.502**	**-.234***	**.184**	**.505**	**.360**	**-.118**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.006**	**.213**	**.331**	**.006**	**.051**	**.534**
	N	**29**	**30**	**30**	**28**	**30**	**30**
attraction scale	**Correlation Coefficient**	**.247***	**.028**	**.150**	**-.367**	**.096**	**.114**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.206**	**.887**	**.438**	**.060**	**.619**	**.557**
	N	**28**	**29**	**29**	**27**	**29**	**29**
quality of service scale	**Correlation Coefficient**	**1.000****	**-.237**	**.006**	**.136**	**.123****	**.062**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.**	**.216**	**.973**	**.499**	**.527**	**.750**
	N	**29**	**29**	**29**	**27**	**29**	**29**
Corporate economic turnover	**Correlation Coefficient**	**-.237**	**1.000**	**.104**	**-.174**	**-.186**	**.111**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.216**	**.**	**.586**	**.377**	**.324**	**.560**
	N	**29**	**30**	**30**	**28**	**30**	**30**
Size of corporation	**Correlation Coefficient**	**.006**	**.104**	**1.000**	**.334**	**.050**	**-.385**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.973**	**.586**	**.**	**.082**	**.791**	**.036**
	N	**29**	**30**	**30**	**28**	**30**	**30**

Correlations

			Use intermediaries for conference org
Spearman's rho	Totalimage	Correlation Coefficient	.195
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.321
		N	28
	accessibility scale	Correlation Coefficient	-.049
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.806
		N	28
	affordability importance scale	Correlation Coefficient	.444
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.018
		N	28
	safety & security scale	Correlation Coefficient	.273
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.144
		N	30
	Location & facility scale	Correlation Coefficient	.118
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.535
		N	30
	attraction scale	Correlation Coefficient	.510*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.005
		N	29
	quality of service scale	Correlation Coefficient	.071**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.716
		N	29

	Corporate economic turnover 2011	Correlation Coefficient	-.009
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.964
		N	30
	Size of corporation	Correlation Coefficient	.253
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.177
		N	30

Correlations

			Totalimage	accessibility scale	affordability importance scale	safety & security scale	Location & facility scale	attraction scale
Spearman's rho	Number of conferences organized by corporation	Correlation Coefficient	-.245	.503	-.163	-.155	.505	-.367*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.227	.009	.427	.430	.006	.060
		N	26	26	26	28	28	27
	Delegates at largest conference	Correlation Coefficient	-.250	.390	.345	.122	.360*	.096
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.199	.040	.072	.522	.051	.619
		N	28	28	28	30	30	29
	Delegates at smallest conference	Correlation Coefficient	.042	-.428	.212	.163	-.118	.114
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.834	.023	.279	.391	.534	.557

		N	28	28	28	30	30	29
	Use intermediaries for conference org	Correlation Coefficient	.195	-.049	.444	.273	.118	.510
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.321	.806	.018	.144	.535	.005
		N	28	28	28	30	30	29

Correlations

			quality of service scale	Corporate economic turnover	Size of corporation	Number of conferences organized by corporation	Delegates at largest conference	Delegates at smallest conference
Spearman's rho	Number of conferences organized by corporation	Correlation Coefficient	.136	-.174	.334	1.000	.440	-.462*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.499	.377	.082	.	.019	.013
		N	27	28	28	28	28	28
	Delegates at largest conference in	Correlation Coefficient	.123	-.186	.050	.440	1.000*	.104
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.527	.324	.791	.019	.	.585
		N	29	30	30	28	30	30
	Delegates at smallest conference in	Correlation Coefficient	.062	.111	-.385	-.462	.104	1.000

		Sig. (2-tailed)	.750	.560	.036	.013	.585	.
		N	29	30	30	28	30	30
	Use intermediaries for conference org	Correlation Coefficient	.071	-.009	.253	-.087	.318	.121
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.716	.964	.177	.659	.086	.524
		N	29	30	30	28	30	30

Correlations

			Use intermediaries for conference org
Spearman's rho	Number of conferences organized	Correlation Coefficient	-.087
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.659
		N	28
	Delegates at largest conference	Correlation Coefficient	.318
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.086
		N	30
	Delegates at smallest conference in 2011	Correlation Coefficient	.121
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.524
		N	30
	Use intermediaries for conference org	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.

	N	30

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

****. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Appendix D: Descriptive statistics

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Gender	30	1	2	1.33	.479	.230	.745	.427	-1.554	.833
Age	30	1	5	3.10	.923	.852	.355	.427	.668	.833
Level of education	30	1	6	3.30	1.264	1.597	.596	.427	.203	.833
County corporation is located in	30	1	19	11.00	4.085	16.690	-.969	.427	1.491	.833
Corporate economic turnover	30	1	5	4.73	.907	.823	-3.580	.427	12.352	.833
Size of corporation	30	1	3	2.27	.785	.616	-.524	.427	-1.153	.833
Sector corporation is in	30	1	2	1.10	.305	.093	2.809	.427	6.308	.833
Branch corporation is in	30	1	12	6.90	4.262	18.162	-.003	.427	-1.701	.833
Job title of respondent	30	1	5	2.67	1.561	2.437	.542	.427	-1.331	.833
Department responsible for conference destination selection	30	1	6	3.20	1.627	2.648	.477	.427	-.779	.833

Position responsible for conference destination selection	29	1	5	2.34	1.396	1.948	.852	.434	-.466	.845
Has the corporation a specific conference group	30	1	3	1.87	.434	.189	-.786	.427	2.009	.833
Is the conference group the same for every conference	30	1	3	1.90	.403	.162	-.883	.427	3.270	.833
Number of conferences organized by corporation	28	2	7	4.79	2.007	4.026	-.276	.441	-1.492	.858
Number of conferences organized with intermediary	28	1	7	2.54	1.732	2.999	1.387	.441	1.412	.858
Delegates at largest conference	30	2	9	5.13	2.874	8.257	.371	.427	-1.543	.833
Delegates at smallest conference	30	2	4	2.17	.531	.282	3.159	.427	9.017	.833
Selects destination before facility	30	1	3	2.23	.935	.875	-.503	.427	-1.728	.833
Selects facility before destination	28	1	3	2.43	.690	.476	-.817	.441	-.420	.858
Valid N (listwise)	25									

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Positive feeling of destination	**30**	**2**	**5**	**3.40**	**.621**	**.386**	**.406**	**.427**	**.148**	**.833**
Positive atmosphere at destination	**30**	**2**	**5**	**3.67**	**.661**	**.437**	**-.284**	**.427**	**.270**	**.833**
Attractions at destination	**30**	**1**	**5**	**2.87**	**.973**	**.947**	**.523**	**.427**	**-.121**	**.833**
Destination reputation	**30**	**2**	**4**	**3.37**	**.669**	**.447**	**-.586**	**.427**	**-.589**	**.833**
Safety reputation at destination	**30**	**1**	**5**	**3.40**	**.968**	**.938**	**-.185**	**.427**	**.155**	**.833**
Climate at destination	**30**	**1**	**4**	**2.37**	**1.066**	**1.137**	**-.084**	**.427**	**-1.306**	**.833**
Perceived quality image	**29**	**2**	**4**	**3.41**	**.568**	**.323**	**-.266**	**.434**	**-.812**	**.845**
Personal experience from destination	**30**	**1**	**5**	**3.40**	**.894**	**.800**	**-.607**	**.427**	**.625**	**.833**
Professional experience from destination	**30**	**1**	**5**	**3.60**	**.968**	**.938**	**-1.035**	**.427**	**1.890**	**.833**

Ease of local transportation at destination	**30**	**1**	**5**	**3.60**	**1.163**	**1.352**	**-1.106**	**.427**	**.617**	**.833**
Time of travel to destination	**30**	**2**	**5**	**3.93**	**.691**	**.478**	**-1.253**	**.427**	**3.089**	**.833**
Ease of transport to destination	**29**	**2**	**5**	**3.90**	**.772**	**.596**	**-.816**	**.434**	**1.119**	**.845**
Accommodation at site of conference facility	**29**	**3**	**5**	**4.14**	**.693**	**.480**	**-.189**	**.434**	**-.787**	**.845**
Price on transportation to destination	**30**	**1**	**5**	**3.17**	**.950**	**.902**	**-.354**	**.427**	**.628**	**.833**
Price accommodation	**30**	**2**	**5**	**3.57**	**.817**	**.668**	**-.229**	**.427**	**-.269**	**.833**
Price on food and beverage	**28**	**1**	**4**	**3.32**	**.819**	**.671**	**-1.553**	**.441**	**2.908**	**.858**
Price on conference facility	**30**	**2**	**5**	**3.63**	**.669**	**.447**	**-.155**	**.427**	**.090**	**.833**
General price level at destination	**30**	**1**	**5**	**3.30**	**1.022**	**1.045**	**-.868**	**.427**	**.801**	**.833**

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Perceived safety and security	**30**	**2**	**5**	**3.57**	**.858**	**.737**	**.305**	**.427**	**-.609**	**.833**

Official information on safety and security	**30**	**1**	**5**	**3.13**	**1.042**	**1.085**	**-.479**	**.427**	**.138**	**.833**
Capacity on conference space	**30**	**2**	**5**	**4.00**	**.871**	**.759**	**-1.006**	**.427**	**.938**	**.833**
Technology facility	**30**	**3**	**5**	**4.30**	**.596**	**.355**	**-.189**	**.427**	**-.482**	**.833**
Restaurants	**30**	**1**	**5**	**3.63**	**.850**	**.723**	**-1.350**	**.427**	**2.393**	**.833**
Cultural attractions	**30**	**1**	**4**	**2.57**	**.858**	**.737**	**.305**	**.427**	**-.609**	**.833**
Nightlife	**30**	**1**	**4**	**1.90**	**.960**	**.921**	**.713**	**.427**	**-.524**	**.833**
Shopping	**30**	**1**	**4**	**1.53**	**.819**	**.671**	**1.498**	**.427**	**1.631**	**.833**
Perceived quality of service at destination	**30**	**3**	**5**	**4.27**	**.640**	**.409**	**-.291**	**.427**	**-.554**	**.833**
Cleanliness at destination	**30**	**3**	**5**	**4.37**	**.615**	**.378**	**-.404**	**.427**	**-.567**	**.833**
Friendly people at destination	**30**	**3**	**5**	**4.37**	**.556**	**.309**	**-.074**	**.427**	**-.796**	**.833**
Valid N (listwise)	**25**									

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Affordability	**30**	**2**	**5**	**3.40**	**.770**	**.593**	**.116**	**.427**	**-.152**	**.833**
Accessibility	**30**	**1**	**5**	**3.97**	**.765**	**.585**	**-1.924**	**.427**	**7.293**	**.833**
Destination image	**29**	**1**	**5**	**3.31**	**.712**	**.507**	**-.541**	**.434**	**3.328**	**.845**
Location facility	**30**	**2**	**5**	**3.83**	**.791**	**.626**	**-.132**	**.427**	**-.444**	**.833**
Quality of service	**29**	**3**	**5**	**4.41**	**.682**	**.466**	**-.753**	**.434**	**-.475**	**.845**
Attractions and entertainment	**29**	**1**	**5**	**2.69**	**1.198**	**1.436**	**.118**	**.434**	**-.730**	**.845**
Safety and security	**30**	**1**	**5**	**3.40**	**1.003**	**1.007**	**-.255**	**.427**	**-.143**	**.833**
Valid N (listwise)	**28**									

Appendix E: Reliability statistics

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.904	.906	7

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	Contact intermediaries before selecting destination	Contact intermediaries after selecting destination	Use intermediaries for conference org	Use intermediaries at unfamiliar destinations	Use intermediaries at familiar destinations	Intermediaries offer better packages than selforg	Risk limited when using intermediaries
Contact intermediaries before selecting destination	1.000	.344	.707	.760	.666	.783	.758
Contact intermediaries after selecting destination	.344	1.000	.493	.509	.588	.236	.349
Use intermediaries for conference org	.707	.493	1.000	.511	.835	.599	.454
Use intermediaries at unfamiliar destinations	.760	.509	.511	1.000	.592	.706	.704
Use intermediaries at familiar destinations	.666	.588	.835	.592	1.000	.472	.343

Intermediaries offer better packages than selforg	.783	.236	.599	.706	.472	1.000	.742
Risk limited when using intermediaries	.758	.349	.454	.704	.343	.742	1.000

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Inter-Item Correlations	.579	.236	.835	.599	3.543	.028	7

Scale: total importance scale

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	**Valid**	**28**	**93.3**
	Excluded[a]	**2**	**6.7**
	Total	**30**	**100.0**

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.513	**.480**	**8**

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Affordability	**3.39**	**.786**	**28**
Accessibility	**3.96**	**.793**	**28**
Destination image	**3.32**	**.723**	**28**
Location facility	**3.86**	**.803**	**28**
Quality of service	**4.39**	**.685**	**28**
Attractions and entertainment	**2.64**	**1.193**	**28**
Safety and security	**3.39**	**1.031**	**28**
Intermediary advice	**2.68**	**1.307**	**28**

Appendix F: Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks

	Use intermediaries for conference org	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
	no	**10**	**7.00**	**70.00**
attraction scale	**yes**	**11**	**14.64**	**161.00**
	Total	**21**		

Test Statistics[a]

	attraction scale
Mann-Whitney U	**15.000**
Wilcoxon W	**70.000**
Z	**-2.860**
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	**.004**

Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	**.004[b]**

Ranks

	Number of conferences organized by corporation	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
accessibilityscale	1-2	7	4.57	32.00
	Over 10	8	11.00	88.00
	Total	15		

Test Statistics[a]

	available scale
Mann-Whitney U	**4.000**
Wilcoxon W	**32.000**
Z	**-2.805**
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	**.005**
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	**.004[b]**

Ranks

	Number of conferences organized by corporation	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Location & facility scale	1-2	7	4.64	32.50
	Over 10	9	11.50	103.50
	Total	16		

Test Statistics[a]

	Location & facility scale
Mann-Whitney U	**4.500**
Wilcoxon W	**32.500**
Z	**-2.935**
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	**.003**
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	**.002[b]**

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
attraction scale * Use intermediaries for conference org	**29**	**96.7%**	**1**	**3.3%**	**30**	**100.0%**

Report

attraction scale

Use intermediaries for conference org	N	Median
no	**10**	**11.0000**
sometimes	**8**	**12.5000**
yes	**11**	**14.0000**
Total	**29**	**12.0000**

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Location & facility scale * Number of conferences organized by corporation	28	93.3%	2	6.7%	30	100.0%

Report

Location & facility scale

Number of conferences organized by corporation	N	Median
1-2	7	11.0000
3-4	1	14.0000
5-6	4	11.0000
7-8	4	12.0000
9-10	3	11.0000
Over 10	9	13.0000
Total	28	12.0000

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent

accessibilitye scale * Number of conferences organized by corporation a year	**26**	**86.7%**	**4**	**13.3%**	**30**	**100.0%**

Report

accessibility scale

Number of conferences organized by corporation	**N**	**Median**
1-2	**7**	**18.0000**
3-4	**1**	**21.0000**
5-6	**3**	**19.0000**
7-8	**4**	**18.0000**
9-10	**3**	**18.0000**
Over 10	**8**	**21.5000**
Total	**26**	**19.5000**

Appendix G: Kruskal Wallis test

Ranks

	Corporate economic turnover 2011	N	Mean Rank
Totalimage	0,- - 10 000 000,-	1	28.00
	10 000 001,- - 20 000 000,-	1	25.50
	30 000 001,- - 40 000 000,-	1	7.00
	Over 40 000 000,-	25	13.82
	Total	28	
available scale	0,- - 10 000 000,-	1	21.00
	10 000 001,- - 20 000 000,-	1	16.00
	30 000 001,- - 40 000 000,-	1	21.00
	Over 40 000 000,-	25	13.92
	Total	28	
afford importance scale	0,- - 10 000 000,-	1	7.50
	10 000 001,- - 20 000 000,-	1	12.50
	30 000 001,- - 40 000 000,-	1	24.00
	Over 40 000 000,-	25	14.48
	Total	28	
safety & security scale	0,- - 10 000 000,-	1	30.00
	10 000 001,- - 20 000 000,-	1	6.50
	30 000 001,- - 40 000 000,-	1	27.50
	Over 40 000 000,-	27	14.85
	Total	30	
Location & facility scale	0,- - 10 000 000,-	1	27.00
	10 000 001,- - 20 000 000,-	1	21.50
	30 000 001,- - 40 000 000,-	1	15.00
	Over 40 000 000,-	27	14.87
	Total	30	
attraction scale	0,- - 10 000 000,-	1	26.00
	10 000 001,- - 20 000 000,-	1	11.00
	30 000 001,- - 40 000 000,-	1	4.50
	Over 40 000 000,-	26	15.13
	Total	29	
quality of service scale	0,- - 10 000 000,-	1	26.50
	10 000 001,- - 20 000 000,-	1	26.50
	30 000 001,- - 40 000 000,-	1	8.00
	Over 40 000 000,-	26	14.38
	Total	29	

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Totalimage	available scale	afford importance scale	safety & security scale	Location & facility scale	attraction scale	quality of service scale
Chi-Square	5.543	1.435	2.145	5.916	2.438	3.491	4.604
df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.136	.697	.543	.116	.487	.322	.203

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Corporate economic turnover 2011

Ranks

	Number of conferences organized by corporation a year	N	Mean Rank
Totalimage	1-2	7	16.71
	3-4	1	22.50
	5-6	4	9.75
	7-8	3	13.17
	9-10	2	13.00
	Over 10	9	11.89
	Total	26	
available scale	1-2	7	9.07
	3-4	1	19.00
	5-6	3	12.83
	7-8	4	10.75
	9-10	3	8.00
	Over 10	8	20.38
	Total	26	
afford importance scale	1-2	7	13.50
	3-4	1	25.00
	5-6	3	14.33
	7-8	4	16.38
	9-10	3	9.17
	Over 10	8	11.94
	Total	26	
safety & security scale	1-2	7	16.36
	3-4	1	22.00
	5-6	4	10.13
	7-8	4	18.75
	9-10	3	12.67
	Over 10	9	12.89

	Total	28	
Location & facility scale	1-2	7	9.50
	3-4	1	25.00
	5-6	4	10.00
	7-8	4	12.63
	9-10	3	13.00
	Over 10	9	20.56
	Total	28	
attraction scale	1-2	7	17.43
	3-4	1	14.50
	5-6	4	16.88
	7-8	4	13.75
	9-10	3	11.83
	Over 10	8	10.44
	Total	27	
quality of service scale	1-2	7	13.36
	3-4	1	12.00
	5-6	4	11.13
	7-8	3	17.50
	9-10	3	11.33
	Over 10	9	15.72
	Total	27	

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Totalimage	available scale	afford importance scale	safety & security scale	Location & facility scale	attraction scale	quality of service scale
Chi-Square	4.044	11.650	4.213	3.992	11.195	3.745	2.036
df	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	.543	.040	.519	.551	.048	.587	.844

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Number of conferences organized by corporation in 2011

Ranks

	Use intermediaries for conference org	N	Mean Rank
Totalimage	no	10	14.05
	sometimes	8	11.00

	yes	10	17.75
	Total	28	
available scale	no	11	14.82
	sometimes	7	14.86
	yes	10	13.90
	Total	28	
afford importance scale	no	9	9.94
	sometimes	8	14.25
	yes	11	18.41
	Total	28	
safety & security scale	no	11	11.73
	sometimes	8	18.38
	yes	11	17.18
	Total	30	
Location & facility scale	no	11	14.27
	sometimes	8	15.69
	yes	11	16.59
	Total	30	
attraction scale	no	10	10.00
	sometimes	8	14.50
	yes	11	19.91
	Total	29	
quality of service scale	no	11	14.64
	sometimes	8	14.19
	yes	10	16.05
	Total	29	

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Totalimage	available scale	afford importance scale	safety & security scale	Location & facility scale	attraction scale	quality of service scale
Chi-Square	3.072	.085	5.320	3.362	.407	7.287	.253

df	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.215	.959	.070	.186	.816	.026	.881

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Use intermediaries for conference org

Ranks

	Size of corporation	N	Mean Rank
Totalimage	1-49	6	10.75
	50-250	9	19.39
	Over 250	13	12.85
	Total	28	
available scale	1-49	6	12.92
	50-250	9	13.44
	Over 250	13	15.96
	Total	28	
afford importance scale	1-49	6	16.25
	50-250	9	13.56
	Over 250	13	14.35
	Total	28	
safety & security scale	1-49	6	17.25
	50-250	10	15.85
	Over 250	14	14.50
	Total	30	
Location & facility scale	1-49	6	11.00
	50-250	10	16.90
	Over 250	14	16.43
	Total	30	
attraction scale	1-49	6	12.42
	50-250	10	15.20
	Over 250	13	16.04
	Total	29	
quality of service scale	1-49	6	12.83
	50-250	10	17.10
	Over 250	13	14.38
	Total	29	

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Totalimage	available scale	afford importance scale	safety & security scale	Location & facility scale	attraction scale	quality of service scale
Chi-Square	5.005	.797	.400	.445	2.083	.767	1.099
df	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.082	.671	.819	.800	.353	.681	.577

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Size of corporation

Ranks

	Delegates at largest conference yearly	N	Mean Rank
Totalimage	1-49	7	16.29
	50-99	3	18.33
	100-149	3	18.50
	150-199	4	11.25
	200-249	1	1.00
	250-299	1	28.00
	Over 349	9	11.94
	Total	28	
available scale	1-49	8	11.38
	50-99	4	13.25
	100-149	3	8.50
	150-199	3	13.33
	200-249	1	27.00
	250-299	1	21.00
	Over 349	8	18.56
	Total	28	
afford importance scale	1-49	7	7.50
	50-99	4	20.38
	100-149	3	17.83
	150-199	4	13.50
	200-249	1	12.50
	250-299	1	7.50
	Over 349	8	18.06
	Total	28	
safety & security scale	1-49	8	12.63
	50-99	4	20.50
	100-149	3	13.83
	150-199	4	15.13

	200-249	1	2.50
	250-299	1	30.00
	Over 349	9	16.39
	Total	30	
Location & facility scale	1-49	8	11.00
	50-99	4	16.00
	100-149	3	14.50
	150-199	4	15.63
	200-249	1	7.00
	250-299	1	27.00
	Over 349	9	19.22
	Total	30	
attraction scale	1-49	8	14.50
	50-99	4	14.25
	100-149	3	13.83
	150-199	4	12.75
	200-249	1	15.50
	250-299	1	26.00
	Over 349	8	16.00
	Total	29	
quality of service scale	1-49	8	12.69
	50-99	3	15.83
	100-149	3	19.83
	150-199	4	13.63
	200-249	1	1.50
	250-299	1	26.50
	Over 349	9	16.00
	Total	29	

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Totalimage	available scale	afford importance scale	safety & security scale	Location & facility scale	attraction scale	quality of service scale

Chi-Square	8.663	7.949	10.074	7.437	6.737	2.224	6.351
df	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Asymp. Sig.	.193	.242	.122	.282	.346	.898	.385

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Delegates at largest conference in 2011

Ranks

	Delegates at smallest conference in 2011	N	Mean Rank
Totalimage	1-49	25	14.38
	50-99	1	16.50
	100-149	2	15.00
	Total	28	
available scale	1-49	25	15.70
	50-99	1	1.50
	100-149	2	6.00
	Total	28	
afford importance scale	1-49	25	13.92
	50-99	1	17.00
	100-149	2	20.50
	Total	28	
safety & security scale	1-49	27	15.04
	50-99	1	19.50
	100-149	2	19.75
	Total	30	
Location & facility scale	1-49	27	15.85
	50-99	1	7.00
	100-149	2	15.00
	Total	30	
attraction scale	1-49	26	14.67
	50-99	1	19.50
	100-149	2	17.00
	Total	29	
quality of service scale	1-49	26	14.83
	50-99	1	16.50
	100-149	2	16.50
	Total	29	

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Totalimage	available scale	afford importance scale	safety & security scale	Location & facility scale	attraction scale	quality of service scale
Chi-Square	.073	5.272	1.297	.767	1.035	.437	.107
df	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.964	.072	.523	.681	.596	.804	.948

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Delegates at smallest conference in 2011

Appendix H: Company list sampling size

1	Statoil ASA Hovedkontor
2	Telenor ASA Hovedkontor
3	Norsk Hydro ASA Konsern
4	Yara International ASA
5	Reitangruppen AS
6	Orkla ASA Hovedkontor
7	Norgesgruppen ASA Hovedkontor
8	Helse Sør-Øst RHF
9	Storebrand ASA Hovedkontor
10	Total E&P Norge AS Contracts

11	Aker Solutions ASA Konsern
12	DNB ASA
13	ExxonMobil Exploration and Production Norway AS
14	A/S Norske Shell Hovedkontor
15	ConocoPhillips Norge Konsern
16	SAS Scandinavian Airlines Norge AS
17	Statkraft SF Konsern
18	Coop Norge SA
19	Seadrill Norge AS
20	Posten Norge AS
	National Oilwell Varco Norway AS
22	ExxonMobil Production Norway Inc
23	Stx Europe AS
24	Helse Vest RHF
25	Norske Skogindustrier ASA Hovedkontor
26	Tine SA
27	Gjensidige Forsikring ASA
28	Laco AS
29	Ica Norge AS Hovedkontor
30	Eni Norge AS
31	Nortura Sa
32	Oslo Universitetssykehus HF Ullevål Sykehus
33	Wilh. Wilhelmsen Holding ASA
34	Atea ASA Hovedkontor
35	Hafslund ASA Hovedkontor
36	Veidekke ASA Hovedkontor
37	Møllergruppen Bil AS
	Kongsberg Gruppen ASA Hovedkontor

39	Marine Harvest ASA
40	Norsk Tipping AS
41	Helse Midt-Norge RHF
42	Marathon Petroleum Company (Norway) LLC
43	Renewable Energy Corporation ASA
44	Schibsted ASA Konsern
45	Elkjøp Nordic AS
46	Rolls-Royce Marine AS Head Office
47	Austevoll Seafood ASA
	Helse Nord RHF
	Jotun AS Hovedkontor
50	Awilhelmsen AS
	If Skadeforsikring Norsk Avdeling Av Utenlandsk Fo
52	Nordea Bank Norge ASA Konsern
53	Aktieselskapet Vinmonopolet
54	Norges Statsbaner AS
55	Bertel O Steen AS Hovedkontor
56	Felleskjøpet Agri Sa
57	Scandinavian Bunkering AS
58	SpareBank 1 Gruppen AS
59	O. N. Sunde AS
60	Cermaq ASA
61	Expert AS
62	Det Norske Veritas Stiftelsen Hovedkontor
63	Skanska Norge AS Hovedkontor
64	Ferd Holding AS
	Agder Energi AS Konsern
66	Bonheur ASA
67	Varner-Gruppen AS Hovedkontor
	Livsforsikringsselskapet Nordea Liv Norge AS Hovedkontor

	Bama Gruppen AS
	Lerøy Seafood Group ASA
71	Norwegian Air Shuttle ASA Hovedkontor
72	Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace AS
73	Norsk Medisinaldepot AS Hovedkontor
74	Avinor AS
	FMC Kongsberg Subsea AS
76	ABB Holding AS
77	BP Norge AS
78	Aker ASA
79	Talisman Energy Norge AS
80	Odfjell Se
81	Helse Bergen HF
82	Thon Gruppen AS
83	Teliasonera Norge AS
84	Statnett SF
85	Moelven Industrier ASA Hovedkontor
86	Tryg Forsikring Avd Haugesund
87	St Olavs Hospital Hf
88	Petroleum Geo-Services ASA
89	Kongsberg Automotive Holding ASA
	Apokjeden AS
	Sparebank 1 Sr-Bank ASA
92	Aibel AS
93	ISS Facility Services AS
94	Fred Olsen Energy ASA
95	Umoe Gruppen AS
96	AF Gruppen ASA Konsern
97	Eksportfinans ASA
98	Norges Råfisklag Hovedkontor
99	GC Rieber AS

100	Dong E&P Norge AS
	DOF ASA
102	Alcoa Norway ANS
103	Brødrene Dahl AS Hovedkontor
104	Universitetssykehuset Nord-Norge HF
105	Ruter AS
106	Lyse Energi AS
107	M-I Swaco Norge AS
108	Home Invest AS
109	Grieg Maturitas AS
	GDF SUEZ E&P NORGE AS
111	Nexans Norway AS Hovedkontor
112	Optimera AS Hovedkontor
	Norsk Rikskringkasting AS Hovedkontor
114	Eidsiva Energi AS
115	Fjordkraft AS
116	A-pressen AS
117	Rieber & Søn ASA Hovedkontor
118	Skretting AS
119	Akershus Universitetssykehus Hf
120	Halliburton AS
121	Mesta Konsern AS
122	Torvald Klaveness Rederiaksjeselskapet
123	Ineos Norge AS
124	Helse Stavanger HF
125	Byggmakker Norge AS
126	Sørlandet sykehus HF

127	Archer Norge AS
128	Siemens AS
129	GE Healthcare AS
130	Idemitsu Petroleum Norge AS
131	Visma AS
132	Coop Øst Sa
133	Validus AS
134	H & M Hennes & Mauritz AS Hovedkontor
135	E-co Energi Holding AS
136	Sykehuset Østfold HF
137	Grieg Star Shipping AS
138	Eltek ASA Hovedkontor
139	Fesil AS
140	Nord-Trøndelag Elektrisitetsverk Holding AS
141	Ahlsell Norge AS Hovedkontor

142	Folke Hermansen AS
143	Det Stavangerske Dampskibsselskab AS Konsern
144	YIT AS
145	Komplett AS
146	Hurtigruten ASA
147	Toyota Norge AS
148	Stiftelsen Norsk Rikstoto
149	Bergenshalvøens Kommunale Kraftselskap AS Hovedkontor
150	Fokus Bank
151	Statsbygg
152	Husbanken
153	Boots Norge AS
154	NCC Construction AS Konsern
155	Mazda Motor Norge
156	Bilia Personbil AS
157	Tide ASA
158	Schenker AS
159	Løvenskiold-Vækerø AS Hovedkontor
160	Tomra Systems ASA

161	Proffice AS
162	TGS Nopec Geophysical Company ASA
163	Salmar ASA
164	Plantasjen ASA
165	Santander Consumer Bank AS Hovedkontor
166	Travel Retail Norway AS
167	Jason Shipping ASA
168	Troms Kraft AS
169	Kjedehuset AS
170	Europris AS
171	Farstad Shipping ASA
172	Bergen Group ASA
173	Adecco Norge AS Hovedkontor
174	Norsk Gjenvinning Norge AS
175	Tts Group ASA
176	Trondos Sa
177	Kleven Maritime AS
178	Alliance Healthcare Norge AS
179	Lundin Norway AS
180	Dolphin Drilling AS
181	Manpower Norway Holdings AS
182	SpareBank 1 Nord-Norge Hovedkontor
183	Kollektivtransportproduksjon AS
184	Siba Norge, Filial Av Siba Ab Sverige
185	Kruse Smith AS

186	Kverneland ASA
187	DOF Subsea AS
188	Fjord1 AS
189	Odfjell Drilling AS
190	Nammo AS
191	Bergen Bunkers AS
192	Bwg Homes ASA
193	Nordlandssykehuset HF
194	Hess Norge AS
195	Ventelo Holding AS
196	Widerøe's Flyveselskap AS
197	Aker Seafoods ASA Konsern
198	Ekornes ASA Hovedkontor
199	Reinertsen AS
200	Borregaard Industries Limited Norge
201	SINTEF
202	SpareBank 1 Boligkreditt AS
203	Torghatten ASA
204	Infratek ASA
205	AE-TV Holding AS
206	Apply AS
207	Bauda AS Konsern
208	I. K. Lykke AS Konsern
209	Steen & Strøm AS
210	Norgesenergi AS
211	Hewlett-Packard Norge AS Hovedkontor
212	Caiano AS
213	

	Solstad Offshore ASA
214	Norway Pelagic ASA
215	Agra AS
216	Kuehne + Nagel AS
217	Saferoad AS
218	Volvo Personbiler Norge AS
219	Tollpost Globe AS
220	Tele2 Norge AS
221	SpareBank 1 SMN Hovedkontor
222	Ulsmo AS
223	Fatland AS
224	Technip Norge AS
225	E.on E&p Norge AS
226	Seglem Holding AS
227	Norsk Scania AS Hovedkontor
228	Coop Orkla Møre Sa Hovedkontor
229	Ford Motor Norge AS Konsern

230	E A Smith AS Hovedkontor
231	AGR Group ASA
232	Thrane-Steen Gruppen AS
233	Grieg Seafood ASA
234	Motor Gruppen AS Konsern
235	Motor Forum Management AS
236	Laerdal AS
237	Ving Norge AS
238	Bladcentralen ANS
239	Helse Sunnmøre HF
240	Peab AS
241	Gk Konsern AS
242	Ikm Gruppen AS
243	AS Backe
244	Mestergruppen AS Konsern
245	Handicare AS
246	Automobil Holding AS
247	Panasonic Norge Branch Of Panasonic Nordic Ab
248	Seaborn AS
249	Elektroskandia Norge AS
250	Norconsult AS Hovedkontor
251	Rica Hotels AS
252	Johan G Olsen AS
253	Helse Nord-Trøndelag Hf
254	BioMar A.S.
255	AS Fjellinjen
256	Felleskjøpet Rogaland Agder Sa
257	Sparebanken Vest Hovedkontor
258	Norwegian Energy Company ASA
259	Sykehusapotekene Hf

260	Coop Hordaland Sa
261	KB Gruppen Kongsvinger AS
262	Onninen AS Hovedkontor
263	Kuoni Nordic Ab
264	Scancem International DA
265	Hent Holding AS
266	Kavli Holding AS Hovedkontor
267	Norsildmel AL
268	Norway Royal Salmon ASA
269	H. I. Giørtz Sønner AS
270	SG Finans AS Hovedkontor
271	Istad AS Hovedkontor
272	XXL Sport & Villmark AS
273	Relacom AS
274	Oslo Bolig og Sparelag Hovedkontor
275	Ulstein Verft AS Hovedkontor
276	Energiselskapet Buskerud AS
277	Helse Førde HF
278	Bravida Norge AS
279	Helse Nordmøre og Romsdal HF
280	Innovasjon Norge
281	

	Expert Norge AS
282	Bunker Oil Holding AS
283	Zulu Holding AS
284	Pareto AS
285	Aegis Media Norge AS Hovedkontor
286	Network Norway AS
287	Ernst & Young AS Hovedkontor
288	Nordic Paper AS
289	Sør-Norge Aluminium AS
290	Tech Data Norge AS
291	Chc Helikopter Service AS
292	Coop Nord Sa Hovedkontor
293	Terra-Gruppen AS
294	Clas Ohlson AS
295	Nordic Opportunities AS
296	Polaris Media ASA
297	Sparebanken Sør Hovedkontor
298	Byggma ASA
299	Kraft Foods Norge AS Hovedkontor
300	Heli-One Norway AS
301	Glamox ASA Konsern
302	Cardinal Foods Bryn Asa
303	

	Scana Industrier ASA Hovedkontor
304	Nordfjord Kjøtt AS
305	Solar Norge AS
306	Ishavskraft AS
307	Coop Økonom BA Hovedkontor
308	Norsk Stål AS Hovedkontor
309	Södra Cell Tofte AS
310	PriceWaterhouseCoopers AS
311	Nycomed Pharma AS Hovedkontor
312	Ruukki Norge AS
313	Nets Norway AS
314	Gyldendal ASA
315	Nergård AS
316	Wenaasgruppen AS
317	Rezidor Hotels Norway AS
318	Gard Marine & Energy Limited
319	InfoCare AS
320	Kitron ASA
321	Pronova Biopharma ASA
322	Arcus-gruppen AS
323	Nordek AS

324	NCC Roads AS Hovedkontor
325	Mills DA Hovedkontor
326	Entercard Norge AS
327	Leonhard Nilsen & Sønner - Eiendom As
328	NordlandsBanken ASA Hovedkontor
329	Jackon Holding AS
330	Denofa AS
331	Selvaag Gruppen AS
332	Star Tour AS Hovedkontor
333	Bolig- og Næringskreditt AS Hovedkontor
334	Findus Norge AS Hovedkontor
335	Sparebanken Hedmark Hovedkontor
336	Det Norske Diakonhjem
337	Entra Eiendom AS
338	Brødr. Sunde AS Hovedkontor
339	SAS Ground Services Norway AS
340	Store Norske Spitsbergen Kulkompani AS
341	Gartnerhallen Sa
342	Westcon Yard AS
343	Arendals Fossekompani ASA
344	Assuranceforeningen Skuld (Gjensidig)
345	Esso Energi AS Konsern
346	Sevan Marine ASA

347	Eramet Norway AS Avd Kvinesdal
348	Coop Vestfold og Telemark Sa
349	Henkel Norden AB
350	Malorama AS
351	Cappelen Damm Holding AS
352	Sandnes Sparebank Hovedkontor
353	Accenture AS
354	Trient AS
355	Coop Vest Sa
356	Sparebanken Pluss Hovedkontor
357	Beerenberg Corp AS
358	TrønderEnergi AS Hovedkontor
359	Alstom Norway AS
360	Euro Sko Norge AS
361	HelgelandsKraft AS Hovedkontor
362	Volvo Maskin AS Hovedkontor
363	Copeinca ASA
364	Coop Haugaland Sa
365	Egersund Fisk AS
366	Sparebanken Sogn og Fjordane Hovedkontor
367	BIS Production Partner AS
368	Salten Kraftsamband AS
369	Treschow-Fritzøe AS Hovedkontor

370	Heidenreich Holding AS
371	Hca Melbye Holding AS
372	Coop Innlandet Sa
373	Johs. Rasmussen AS Hovedkontor
374	Brødrene Kverneland AS
375	Jysk AS Hovedkontor
376	Jm Byggholt AS Konsern
377	Nille AS
378	LeasePlan Norge AS
379	Viken Skog BA Konsern
380	Securitas AS
381	Norges Røde Kors
382	Helgelandssykehuset HF
383	Abg Sundal Collier Holding ASA
384	Unibuss AS
385	Stiftelsen Flyktninghjelpen
386	AS Nestlé Norge Hovedkontor
387	ESS Support Services AS
388	Sogn og Fjordane Energi AS

389	Handelshøyskolen BI
390	Royal Caribbean Cruise Line AS
391	Multiconsult AS
392	Glava AS Hovedkontor
393	Dno International ASA
394	K. A. Rasmussen AS
395	SCA Hygiene Products AS Hovedkontor
396	Framo Engineering AS
397	Nokas AS
398	Skanem AS Hovedkontor
399	Anthon B Nilsen As
400	AS Uglands Rederi Konsern
401	Egmont Hjemmet Mortensen AS
402	Boreal Transport Nord AS
403	EuroPark AS
404	

	Bis Industrier AS
405	K. Sperre AS
406	Reservoir Exploration Technology ASA
407	Fredrikstad Energi AS
408	Rambøll Norge AS
409	Frydenbø Group AS
410	Sunnhordland Kraftlag AS
411	Aller Media AS
412	Borg Invest AS
413	Hansa Borg Holding AS
414	Sparebanken Møre Hovedkontor
415	Sparebanken Øst Hovedkontor
416	Mantena AS
417	Harris Norge AS
418	Nova Sea AS
419	Mitsui & Co Norway AS
420	Tafjord Kraft AS
421	Egil Stenshagen Holding AS Konsern
422	Fornebu Utvikling AS
423	Kappahl AS
424	Eniro Norge AS
425	Kronos Norge AS Konsern

426	Hafslund Varme AS
427	COOP NORDLAND SA
428	Gumpens Auto AS
429	St1 Norge AS
430	SpareBank 1 Buskerud-Vestfold Hovedkontor
431	Kommunalbanken AS
432	Volvo Aero Norge AS
433	NHST Media Group AS
434	Xstrata Nikkelverk AS
435	Lemminkäinen Norge AS Hovedkontor
436	Jakob Hatteland Holding AS
437	Sweco Norge AS Hovedkontor Lysaker
438	Fagforbundet Hovedkontor
439	Neumann Bygg AS
440	Lindex AS Hovedkontor
441	Eidesvik Offshore ASA
442	Protector Forsikring ASA
443	Selmerholding AS
444	KAEFER ENERGY AS
445	Grenland Group AS
446	Sibelco Nordic AS
447	Pon Equipment AS Hovedkontor
448	Fjordlaks Holding AS

449	Norwegian Property ASA
450	Deloitte & Touche DA
451	Würth Norge AS
452	Opel Norge AS
453	Bestseller AS
454	Scandinavian Business Seating AS
455	Apply Sørco AS
456	Malorama Hovedkontor
457	Dsv Road AS
458	Infratek Entreprenør AS
459	Berner Gruppen AS
460	Staples Nordic AS
461	Rs Platou ASA
462	Strand Unikorn AS
463	Aspelin Ramm Gruppen AS
464	NextGenTel AS
465	Tieto Norway AS
466	Saint-Gobain Byggevarer AS
467	Norsk Sjømat Holding AS
468	Telecomputing AS
469	Elixia Holding Ii AS
470	Østfold Energi AS
471	G4s Secure Solutions AS

472	Aktiv Kapital ASA
473	West-Norway AS
474	Moelsa Industrier AS
475	Atlantic Pelagic AS
476	Coop Høyland og Jæren Sa
477	Oslo Børs Vps Holding ASA
478	Oslo T-banedrift AS
479	Espira Gruppen AS
480	Coop Romerike Sa
481	Akershus Energi Vannkraft AS
482	KPMG AS Hovedkontor
483	Jordan AS Hovedkontor
484	Nor Lines AS Hovedkontor
485	Franzefoss AS
486	Nordnet Bank AB
487	Conceptor AS
488	COWI AS Hovedkontor
489	Bristow Norway AS
490	Green Reefers ASA
491	Rikstv AS
492	Norges Idrettsforbund og Olympiske Komite
493	Br Industrier AS
494	Lindorff AS Hovedkontor
495	Toyota Kreditbank GMBH
496	BA Holding AS
497	As Spar Kjøp

498	Teller AS
499	Bergene Holm AS
500	AS Sigurd Hesselberg Hovedkontor

Appendix I: Questionnaire

We are two students from the Hotel management school in Stavanger, writing our master thesis now. Our focus area is about how corporations select a conference destination and factors influencing this choice. In regards to the master thesis, we have made a questionnaire that we want a meeting planner in your corporation to answer. It would really help our master thesis if we get an answer from your corporation. Everything is anonymous and the results of the research can be sent to you if you send a request back to us.

Please answer questionnaire before Wednesday 23. of May.

Link to questionnaire: https://web.questback.com/isa/qbv.dll/SQ?q=

Thank you!

Regards,

Jeanette Hagen & Marianne Jøraandstad

Conference destination selection

Thank you for taking the time to respond on our questionnaire, we very much appreciate it.
The questionnaire is divided in 3 sections;
Section 1 concern about your demographic and corporate information.
Section 2 includes a set of attributes that we want you to consider the importance of.
Section 3 concerns firstly about the corporation's use of intermediaries and secondly about a set of factors we want you to consider the importance of.
With the concept "Destination" we mean a place, like a city or region, not specific facilities like accommodations or conference locations.
We appreciate that you answer the questionnaire honestly and the results will remain anonymous.

Section 1
In this section we have questions about demographic and corporate information.
With the concept "destination" we mean the place (city/region) and not the specific facility hotel, convention center etc.

1) Gender

- Female
- Male

---

2) Age

---

3) What level of education do you have?

- Elementary school
- Upper secondary school (vgs)
- Bachelor degree
- Master degree
- Ph.D.
- Other

---

4) In what county is your corporation located? (Where you work from)

- Akershus
- Aust-Agder
- Buskerud
- Finnmark
- Hedmark
- Hordaland
- Møre & Romsdal
- Nordland
- Nord-Trøndelag
- Oppland
- Oslo
- Rogaland
- Sogn & Fjordane
- Sør-Trøndelag
- Telemark
- Troms
- Vest-Agder
- Vestfold
- Østfold
- Other

5) What is the economical turnover of your corporation during the last year? (Approximately)

- 0,- - 10 000 000,- NOK
- 10 000 001,- -20 000 000,- NOK
- 20 000 001,- -30 000 000,- NOK
- 30 000 001,- -40 000 001,- NOK
- Over 40 000 001,- NOK

6) How many employees is it in your corporation?

- 1-49
- 50-250
- Over 250

7) What sector is your corporation in?

- Private
- State
- Association
- Franchise
- Self employed

8) What branch is your corporation in?

- Finance
- IT

- Health care
- Oil & Gas
- Crafts
- Agricultural
- Consulting
- Maritime
- Tourism
- Marketing & Sales
- Retail
- Other

9) What is your job title?

Please choose one or more of the following options

10) Which department is responsible for selecting a conference destination for your corporation? (Destination meaning region/city)

- Board of directors
- Top management
- Sales department
- Administration department
- Secretary

- [ ] Conference project group
- [ ] Other

---

11) Which position is responsible for selecting the conference destination?

---

12) Does the corporation have a specific conference project group?

( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) Other

Answer this if you answered, "yes" on question 12.

13) Is the conference project group the same for every conference?

( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) Other

---

14) How many conferences does your corporation organize on a yearly basis? (Approximately)

( ) 0

( ) 1-2

( ) 3-4

( ) 5-6

( ) 7-8

( ) 9-10

- Over 10
- If over 10, how many?

---

15) How many conferences are organized in cooperation with an intermediary on a yearly basis? (Approximately)

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-6
- 7-8
- 9-10
- Over 10
- If over 10, how many?

---

16) On a yearly basis, how many delegates are present at the largest conference organized by your corporation?? (Approximately)

- 0
- 1-49
- 50-99
- 100-149
- 150-199

- 200-249
- 250-299
- 300-349
- Over 350
- If over 350, how many?

---

17) On a yearly basis, how many delegates are present at the smallest conference organized by your corporation? (Approximately)

- 0
- 1-49
- 50-99
- 100-149
- 150-199
- 200-249
- 250-299
- 300-349
- Over 350
- If over 350, how many?

---

18) Our corporation selects the destination before the facilities

○ Yes ○ No ○ Sometimes

---

19) Our corporation selects the facilities before the destination

○ Yes ○ No ○ Sometimes

Neste >>

20 % fullført

Conference destination selection

Section 2.
Questions in section 2 are on destination attributes and their importance in the selection of a conference destination.
Please select one answer on the importance scale for each attribute.
With the concept "destination" we mean the place (city/region) and not the specific facility hotel, convention center etc.
Image
20) Positive feeling of destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

21) Positive atmosphere at destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

22) Local attractions

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important

- Very important
- Extremely important

---

23) Destination reputation

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

24) Destination safety reputation

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

25) Climate

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important

- Extremely important

---

26) Perceived quality image of destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

27) Personal experience from destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

28) Professional experience from destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

Information

29) Information from friends & family about the destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

30) Official information about the destination (from web pages, magazines, television etc.)

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

31) Commercial information about the destination from intermediaries (CVB, PVC, travel agencies etc.)

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

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40 % fullført

Conference destination selection

Accessibility

32) Ease of local transportation at the destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

33) Time of transportation to destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

34) Ease of transportation to destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

35) Accommodation on site of conference facilities

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

Affordability

36) Price on transportation to destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

37) Price of accommodation

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

38) Price on food & beverages

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

39) Price on conference facilities at destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

40) General price level at destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

Safety & Security

41) Perceived safety & security at destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

42) Official information on safety & security at destination (from web pages, magazines, television etc.)

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

Location & facilities

43) Capacity of conference space at destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

44) Technological facilities at destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

Attractions/Entertainment

45) Restaurants at destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

46) Cultural attractions at destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

47) Nightlife at destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

48) Shopping facilities at destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

Quality of service

49) Perceived quality of service at destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

50) Cleanliness at a destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

51) Friendly people at destination

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

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60 % fullført

Conference destination selection

Section 3
In this section we have questions about the usage of intermediaries in your corporation.
Intermediaries (mellomledd)
In question 55 to 60, we ask you to answer the question statements on a scale from totally disagree to totally agree. Please consider the statements carefully.
Intermediaries
In the term intermediary we include professional conference organizers, event companies, booking agencies, destination management companies and the like.

52) We contact intermediaries before we select a destination for a conference

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

---

53) We contact intermediaries after we select a destination for a conference

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

---

54) Our corporation use intermediaries for organizing conferences

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

---

55) We use an intermediary when we are organizing a conference at an unfamiliar destination

- Totally disagree
- Disagree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Totally agree

---

56) We use an intermediary when we are organizing a conference at a familiar destination

- Totally disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Totally agree

---

57) Intermediaries offer better conference packages than we can organize ourselves?

- Totally disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Totally agree

---

58) The risk of making a wrong choice is limited when I buy through an intermediary

- Totally disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree

- Agree
- Totally agree

---

59) How does your corporation first come in contact with intermediaries?

- They contact us via phone, e-mail or web page
- We contact them via phone, e-mail or web page
- We meet at an national convention
- We meet at an international convention
- Other

---

60) Does your corporation have a long-term agreement with an intermediary? Why/why not?

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80 % fullført

Conference destination selection

Section 4

Please rate the following factors individually. Consider carefully the importance of each factor in selection of a conference destination.

61) Affordability

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

62) Accessibility

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

63) Destination image

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important

- Extremely important

---

64) Location facilities

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

65) Quality of service

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

66) Attractions/Entertainment

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

67) Safety/Security

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

68) Intermediary advice

- Not important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

---

69) Do you think any other factors than those mentioned affects the selection of a conference destination? If so, which factors and why?

<< Tilbake   Send

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