

# **SUCCESS FACTORS OF A LEADING MEETING INDUSTRY DESTINATION**

**with a special focus on Vienna**

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by

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## STATUTORY DECLARATION

*"I declare in lieu of an oath that I have written this bachelor thesis myself and that I have not used any sources or resources other than stated for its preparation. I further declare that I have clearly indicated all direct and indirect quotations. This bachelor thesis has not been submitted elsewhere for examination purposes."*

Date

Signature

May 21, 2010

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABCN	Austrian Business and Convention Network
ACB	Austrian Convention Bureau
ACV	Austria Center Vienna
CAT	City Airport Train
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CVB	Convention and Visitor Bureau
DMC	Destination Management Company
DMO	Destination Management Organization
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAEM	International Association of Exhibition Management
IAPCO	International Association of Professional Congress Organizers
ICCA	International
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
MPI	Meeting Professional International
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PCMA	Professional Convention Management Association
PCO	Professional Conference Organizer
UIA	Union of International Associations
VCB	Vienna Convention Bureau

## **ABSTRACT**

The meeting industry market is increasing rapidly as new meeting industry destinations appear globally. Therefore, competition is increasing and many destinations need to improve their services for the meeting industry in order to stay competitive in the market. There are a few destinations that have had incredible development within the industry and became very successful as a meeting industry destination. This paper investigates the success factors of a leading meeting industry destination and a special focus has been put on a destination that has been very successful within the meeting industry, Vienna. Vienna is a city rich with cultural offers and meeting facilities. However, this is not the only success factor of the city. In Europe, there are many other cities that can offer similar buildings and cultural offers and yet Vienna has been successful for quite some time and has therefore been carefully analysed.

A literature review helped to identify the structure of the meeting industry, the important players within the industry and some terms that are used to describe the meeting industry. A great emphasis has been placed on expert interviews which were conducted with important and experienced personalities within Vienna's meeting industry. With the knowledge and experience of those experts, a range of general success factors that a destination, which seriously wants to compete on the meeting industry market, needs to have were identified. Since almost all experts have been working in Vienna's meeting industry for quite some time, they demonstrated extensive knowledge about this industry and its developments during the last years. This helped to understand how Vienna was able to become so successful as a leading meeting industry destination. The findings of the research, the so called success factors of a leading meeting industry destination, can be a great help for many destinations who seek to improve their offer to the meeting industry and who want to create a competitive advantage for their destination.



# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1. Problem Statement**

The meeting industry is a rather young and vibrant industry which is growing at a fast speed on a global basis (Rogers, 2008, p. 1). Many destinations invest heavily in meeting facilities, infrastructure and service offers because they have realized that the economic impact of this industry can be extremely beneficial to the local economy (Rogers, 2008, p. 80). The competition therefore grows rapidly as well and new meeting industry destinations emerging, wanting to compete on the global market. This can especially be witnessed when considering rankings for leading meeting industry destinations by various associations within the meeting industry (Davidson & Rogers, 2008, p. 32).

“For many years [now], Vienna has been ranked among the top cities for business tourism, in particular for the number of conferences and other types of meetings held there.” (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 145) The meeting industry has quite an importance for Vienna’s economy (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 145). “Vienna is one of the world’s foremost international conference cities, boasting three convention centers, 131 event locations, and over [...] [400] hotels, all of which are interconnected by an excellent public transport network.” (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2007, p. 7)

ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association) ranked Vienna as the number one destination in the industry, equal to Paris, with the most meetings held in a city worldwide. “For the first time in three years, Vienna shares the top with Paris as the most popular city in 2008.” (ICCA, 2009a, p. 15)

Vienna’s meeting industry’s development has been quite spectacular since 2003. Between 2002 and 2008 the number of national and international congresses rose from about 400 to more than 700 congresses while corporate events had an increase from 1,000 to 2,500 events (Vienna Tourist Board, 2009, p. 11). “In 2008, Vienna hosted a total of 3,257 congresses and corporate events, which generated a total of 1,261,494 overnight stays and EUR 654.39 million in induced gross domestic product.” (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008a, p. 10)

The Vienna Convention Bureau already suggest several reasons why the city is so attractive to host conferences, meetings, and conventions, such as the tradition, the standard of living, and Austria’s rather dependable economy. There are no restrictions to enter Austria and Vienna’s airport is easily accessible with almost 18

million passengers arriving each year as well as, being a great gateway to the east (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2010g, para. 3-12).

## **1.2. Research Question and Research Aim**

The research aim of this bachelor thesis is to identify general success factors of a leading meeting industry destination as well as the factors that make Vienna so successful in the meeting industry on a global level. The research question “What are the success factors of a leading meeting industry destination?” allows the further examination of the top meeting destination, Vienna, in more detail. Once the general success factors have been identified, the research question “What are Vienna’s success factors as a leading meeting industry destination?” can be identified and explored in more detail. Sub-questions created to find out about Vienna’s success factors will include questions regarding Vienna’s image as a meeting industry destination, Vienna’s USP that makes the city attractive to host so many meetings and events, as well as Vienna’s offer to this industry. The identified success factors will be able to support the reader in understanding which factors are essential for a destination in order to compete on a global meeting industry market. A destination can then use those factors to improve the destination’s demand for meetings and become successful.

## **1.3. Research Method**

In order to answer the research questions several research methods have been used. Qualitative research has mainly been conducted throughout the process of producing this bachelor thesis.

Secondary data has been collected through the literature review which was necessary in order to create a basis of knowledge of the subject under investigation and refers to data that already exists. This means that data was “collected for some other (primary) purpose but which can be used a second time in the current project.” (Veal, 2006, p. 147) Secondary literature sources such as journals, books, newspapers, websites, and statistical reports have been used for this research paper. Quantitative data research has not been conducted but analysed during the process of the literature review.

An important focus has been placed on collecting primary data using the qualitative approach of expert interviews. “An interview can be defined ‘as a face-to-face verbal interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit

information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person”’. (Dunk, 2005, p. 79 cited following Maccoby and Maccoby, 1954, p. 499)

Experts of different fields within the industry were asked about general, and particularity about Vienna’s success factors as a leading meeting industry destination. These included experts from conference centers, destination management companies, professional conference organizers, meeting planners, destination marketing institutions and hotel chain representatives.

## **1.4. Chapter Outline**

The first chapter provides important background information and the main idea behind the thesis, including the problem statement, the research aim and the research questions. Chapter two describes vital terminology and will explain the main concept of the meeting industry, how it works, how it is structured, and who is involved as well as a brief historical background of the industry.

The third chapter is dedicated to Vienna’s meeting industry. First, a historical background is provided followed by some key statistics and Vienna’s offer to the meeting industry as well as its demand in terms of markets and seasons. Additionally, institutions which are the key players for Vienna’s marketing activities as a meeting industry destination will be presented and a special focus is placed on the Vienna Convention Bureau.

The fourth chapter presents the empirical research method that has been used in order to answer the research questions. A detailed description of the research method including the research design, the description of the expert interviews, and the main topics asked in the questionnaire are provided in this chapter. The most important part of this chapter is the description of the research results. First, general success factors of a leading meeting industry destination are presented followed by a presentation of specific success factors on the example of Vienna. The chapter concludes with an overview of the important aspects and results of the findings and will summarise the most important success factors of a leading meeting industry destination.

## **2 DEFINITION**

The first part of this study deals with definitions and explanations of the terminology used in this thesis. This gives the reader insight into the field of study and explains all the necessary terms used in this research paper. It is vital to first define the term “business tourism” before discussing the concept of the “meeting industry”. In order to understand the concept of the meeting industry it is important to know where this industry belongs, what it entails, and how it has been used in this research paper. Once the principals of business tourism and a general introduction to the meeting Industry has been given, the history and the structure of this particular industry can be explained. This presents a first insight into the industry, how it is structured, who is involved, and how the industry functions.

### **2.1. Business Tourism**

Davidson and Cope (2003, p. 2) suggest two main motivations for people to travel: business and pleasure. However, travelling “for the purposes of trading in distant markets and attending meetings to discuss issues of common concern”, was already widespread many centuries before the rise of pleasure travel. Therefore, the earliest motivation for travelling was already “the need to meet and negotiate face to face with others”.

Today’s business travel includes “all trips whose purpose is linked with the traveller’s employment or business interest.” (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 3) This can mean that business travellers go on trips in order to carry out a specific task, to help them learn about how to carry out work more effectively, or to get rewarded by the employer when having done an outstanding job (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 3).

Davidson and Cope (2003, pp. 3-4) have defined business tourism as a part of the umbrella term business travel and divide business travel into two main forms: individual business travel and business tourism. Lawson (1982, p. 298) also refers to these as “individual travel” and “organized group arrangements”. However, Davidson and Cope have created an easy to understand graph (Figure 1 Business travel sectors) showing the structure of the business travel industry.

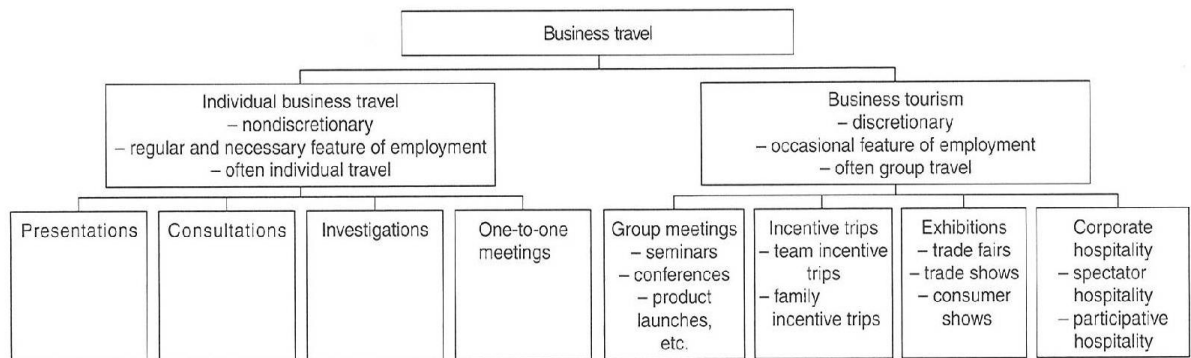


Figure 1 Business travel sectors

Source: Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 4

Individual business travel includes those trips that are undertaken by individuals to perform their job. This typically takes place regularly and is a necessity of the particular job. The destination is usually not chosen but rather demanded depending on the work to be done. Wherever the client, the problem to be solved, or the contract to be signed, is based, the traveller has to go to the predetermined destination. This can be referred to as the nondiscretionary business travel sector (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 4). Business tourism can be referred to as the discretionary sector, where a certain degree of flexibility in the decision-making process of where to meet can be found. Group meetings such as seminars, conferences or product launches, incentive trips, exhibitions such as trade fairs, trade shows, consumer shows, and corporate hospitality events are also included in this sector, which often means travelling in a group and is an occasional feature of employment (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 4).

However, it has to be mentioned that there are several forms within the business travel industry that only require little travel and are not related to any business. Very often, association conferences do not have anything to do with a profession, where “the motivation to meet is not to discuss issues related to the delegates’ jobs or professions” rather than to meet because the association members “share an interest in voluntary or charity work [...], the same faith [...] or the same hobby” (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 5).

## **2.2. Meeting Industry**

### **2.2.1. Terminology**

The meeting industry is a very large and diverse part of business travel. Davidson and Cope (2003, p. 70) mention that it is “our natural predisposition to congregate regularly in order to exchange our ideas and experiences, enhance our knowledge and skills, and celebrate our most laudable achievements.” Exchanging and distributing information is a typical “feature of the professional, political, spiritual and recreational lives of a significant proportion of the population.”

However, the terminology ‘meeting industry’ can be rather difficult to define, since there are many different interpretations available. Very often the acronym MICE (for meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions or events) is implemented (Rogers, 2003, p. 15). Therefore, Davidson and Cope’s (2003, p. 4) interpretation of business tourism will be referred to as the ‘meeting industry’ including all kinds of group meetings, incentives, exhibitions and corporate events.

### **2.2.2. History and Development**

As previously mentioned, people met and gathered in the early days of civilization in order to trade and for commerce. However, only during the last 50 years has the meeting industry reached an enormous scale, not only because of the expansion of globalization and easy accessibility, but also due to the need for better communication processes. The term ‘meeting industry’ is fairly new in its use, and not many people would have used this term in the 1950s (Davidson & Cope, 2003, pp. 70-71; Rogers, 2003, p. 2). One of the most well known high profile events, which some refer to as the launch event for today’s meeting industry, was the Congress of Vienna held from September 1814 until June 1815. This congress was organized to re-establish the territorial divisions of Europe after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. With representatives from all major world powers at that time such as Alexander I, Emperor of Russia, Prince Karl August von Hardenberg of Prussia, or the Duke of Wellington, one can imagine their expenses and the beneficial economic effect on Vienna the congress had at the time (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 71; Rogers, 2003).

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, universities started to make their facilities available for exchanging information within academic circles. At the same time, spa towns and resorts started to provide meeting areas in their larger public spaces. With the development of the railway network, hotels were constructed along with major

stations which had large spaces available to rent (Rogers, 2003, p. 3). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a major development took place in the USA, where the concept of conference and convention rose. "Trade and scientific associations, together with the political parties, began to organize large-scale gatherings" (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001, p. 17). Soon cities recognized the great economic impacts when hosting such events which lead to the establishment of convention bureaus to promote cities as convention destinations (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001, p. 17). There is no doubt that the origins of today's meeting industry "lie in the political and religious congresses of earlier centuries, followed by business meetings and, in the USA, trade and professional association conventions". (Rogers, 2003, p. 4) However, the growth and acknowledgement of a "proper 'industry' is a much more recent phenomenon, in Europe especially, effectively dating from" the mid to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The real formation of the industry, however, can be marked by the founding of trade associations such as the International Association of Exhibition Management (IAEM) in 1928, the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) in 1957, the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) in 1963, the International Association of Professional Congress Organizers (IAPCO) in 1968, or Meeting Professionals International (MPI) in 1972, just to name a few (Rogers, 2003, p. 4).

Since the 1960s, a sound increase of investment in infrastructure "that supports conferences, meetings and related events" resulted in a swift expansion during the 1990s. Major investments have been made not only throughout Europe, Australasia and North America, but much has also been done in the former East European countries such as the Czech Republic or Hungary, in the Middle East, and even in some African countries, especially in South Africa (Rogers, 2003, pp. 5-6). Rogers (2003, p. 7) suggests that the conference and business tourism claims "to be the world's largest industry. Conference tourism is now a truly global industry."

### **2.2.3. Structure of the Meeting Industry**

Davidson and Cope (2003), Rogers (2003), Swarbrooke and Horne (2001) as well as many other authors describe the meeting industry as being highly complex in its structure. Just as in most other industries, there are buyers, suppliers, and intermediaries which are described in detail in this chapter.

#### 2.2.1.1. Buyers

In the meeting industry one differentiates between corporate, association, public sector and entrepreneurial buyers.

##### a) Corporate

“The term ‘corporate’ is used to describe conference organizers”, often referred to as ‘meeting planners’ working for corporate organizations. Those organizations are mainly established “to generate a profit and thus provide a financial return for their owners [...]. They can be manufacturing or service companies” and can be found in various industry sectors such as “oil, gas and petrochemicals; medical and pharmaceuticals; computing/IT and telecommunications; motor manufacturing and other manufacturing; financial and professional services; food, drink and tobacco; travel and transport.” (Rogers, 2003, p. 28)

Some companies have their own event management departments that are dedicated to organizing various events. Due to cost cuttings, those departments sometimes get closed down and the former employees of this department work on a contract basis. They then work as freelancers and therefore are not considered a company overhead. However, on many occasions, corporate events are organized by departments such as sales and marketing, human resources or central administration. The decision-making bodies are usually the corporate conference organizers, line managers, the managing director or by a group of people with consulting functions. The decision-making process itself is fairly simple and instantaneous (Rogers, 2003, pp. 29-30).

There are many different types and sizes of corporate events and the most familiar ones are for example annual general meetings, board meetings, incentive travel or road shows, product launches, sales conferences, training seminars, technical conferences or team- building events (Rogers, 2003, p. 30). However, a distinction between internal and external meetings can be made (ICCA, 2009, p. 12). Participants of internal events are the company’s employees whereas external events’ participants are customers. External events are used as a tool to enhance the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strategies whereby companies try “to build a long-term relationship with their key clients. One way of doing this is to invite clients to be part of the company’s development process through attending events.” Those events are usually “new product launches, educational meetings explaining complex new products” (Rogers, 2003, p. 30).



Typical for corporate events is the rather short 'lead time' in comparison to association events. Corporate events usually have to be planned and staged within several weeks or a few months. Their peak seasons are spring and autumn; July and August are the low season months (in the northern hemisphere). The budget of corporate events is "expressed in terms of expenditure per delegate, [and] is generally much higher than that for many 'association' conferences, as it is the company that pays for delegate attendance, not the delegates themselves." (Rogers, 2003, p. 31) Selecting an attractive venue "coupled with a professionally produced conference will reinforce the importance of the event in delegates' minds and contribute to the successful achievement of its objectives" for motivational, informative or team building purposes (Rogers, 2003, p. 31).

#### b) Association

Association events are often among the largest and longest conferences held worldwide. The organizational buyers for such events include professional or trade associations (members share the same employment or profession), voluntary associations and societies (members share the same interest or hobby), charity associations, religious organizations, political parties or trade unions. They are frequently referred to as 'SMERF' groups, which are organizations that are not work-related and operate in the social, military, educational, religious or fraternal area. These conferences are repeatedly represented in the public media, in a way that corporate events are not and therefore need to be handled extremely professionally when it comes to press and media exposure (Davidson & Rogers, 2006, pp. 6-7; Rogers, 2003, p. 33).

Being an association usually means that the organisations are not-for-profit and only few generate a financial return. However, their conferences also need to cover costs and sometimes even need to generate a profit. Profit will enable the association to reinvest in administrative and promotional costs for any future events and conferences (Rogers, 2003, p. 33). Davidson and Rogers (2006, p. 6) mention that there is a "major difference between the corporate market and the association market". For a corporate buyer, conferences and meetings are a "cost to the company, for associations, conferences normally represent a source of funds." Companies do not charge their delegates to attend their events, whereas "associations depend on the income [...] to pay for many of the ongoing costs of running the association" (Rogers, 2003, p. 33). The not-for-profit associations' purpose is mainly to provide a service to members and to the community. The

trade and professional associations' function is to "help their members maintain the professionalism of the business or industry to which they belong." (Davidson & Rogers, 2006, p. 6) Meetings are typically held for different reasons on a regular basis, but frequently for the purpose of training and information exchange. Associations' annual conferences offer their "members the opportunity to meet for one or more days in order to discuss matters of importance to their profession or their common cause." (Davidson & Rogers, 2006, p. 6)

One has to bear in mind that participants of an association event have different characteristics than corporate delegates. As mentioned, association delegates choose to attend events rather than being asked to by their employer. They often have to pay for all their expenses themselves, which means costs need to be kept as low as possible to attract people to attend. Regarding participation numbers, association events have a higher participation rate than corporate events and often have high media attention (Rogers, 2003, p. 34).

Regarding the decision-making process for association events, it is rather different than in the corporate sector. Especially in regards to larger association, who very often have "dedicated conference organizers and, in some cases, event organizing units/departments". The decisions are made by the committee elected by the members, but the conference organizer will be the one who will do all the research first including creating a list with all destinations and venues that seem likeable and the committee will then choose from this list and make recommendations (Rogers, 2003, p. 35). Since there are many different associations in regards to their size, type and geographical location (local, regional, national or international), the location very often is determined by a host committee such as a local chapter of an association who will have a great influence on the site selection (Davidson & Rogers, 2006, p. 6; Rogers 2003, p. 35). Rogers (2003, p. 35) states that "internal 'politics' can also have a major influence within such organizations, e.g. the President or Chairman's wife wants to meet in Florida!"

Another difference between the corporate and the association sector is the lead time. Many association events have a high number of participants, which already makes it difficult for some destinations that do not have enough space available to host a big event. This is one of the reasons that it is quite common for associations to book their venues well in advance due to the limited choice and the difficulty to organize a conference with 1000 delegates. Therefore, lead times tend to be much longer than in the corporate sector (Rogers, 2003, p. 35; ICCA, 2009, p. 12).

Important to understand, especially for those destinations and venues who can stage such big events, is that many association events tend to rotate regarding the location of their conferences. This can occur on every level, but it is very common for national and international associations. It is essential to recognize the patterns of a particular association in order to bid for the most potential events for a destination. Furthermore, “peak seasons for association conferences are autumn and spring, but some conferences take place over the summer months and a limited number during winter.” (Rogers, 2003, pp. 36-40)

c) Governmental and Public sector

The public or governmental sector is very similar to the association sector and frequently included in the association sector. For example ICCA (2009, p. 12) distinguishes the association sector between “International Governmental Organisations” and “International Non-Governmental Organisations (associations)”. Davidson and Rogers (2006, pp. 6-7) suggest that governmental buyers include organisations “at all levels, from local municipalities to the international, intergovernmental scale, as well as public sector bodies such as those administering national health services”. It is quite common that at the international level an extensive media attention can be recognized due to their high profile status such as the European Union’s Intergovernmental Conferences.

d) Entrepreneurial

Rogers (2003, p. 43) has identified a fourth type of buyer, who is quite important for the meeting industry. An entrepreneurial buyer is “someone who identifies ‘hot topics’ in the business or academic world, and then plans and produces a conference at which the topic can be presented, discussed and debated by high-profile speakers and experts.”

#### 2.2.1.2. Suppliers

There are many different kinds of organisations that supply the meeting industry with facilities and services. Those include venues, destinations and many other service providers.

a) Venues

It can be said that there is a constant change in creating new venues and updating old venues to make them suitable for the meeting industry. Basically “any type of building could be promoted as a conference venue.” (Rogers, 2008, p. 56)

Rogers (2008, p. 56) claims that “hotels comprise over half of all [...] [meeting] venues, being particularly important to the corporate market sector.” Those are usually city center hotels, hotels close to an airport, a highway, or a motorway as well as hotels located in the countryside. Hotels close to a convention center benefit a lot from the meeting industry as accommodation providers for the delegates. Association conferences can be very beneficial for hotels as they sometimes choose a hotel as their head office hotel which can lead to great media coverage for the hotel.

Apart from hotels, there are four additional types of venues. These include purpose-built centers that are explicitly built for the meeting industry, which can be designed for large events with thousands of delegates or smaller events. Also, colleges, universities and other academic venues are often used during vacation periods for all kinds of meetings and events. Additionally, civic venues for instance include for instance council chambers and committee rooms or town halls which can serve as a meeting venue. The last type can be referred to as unusual or unique venues, which include a broad range of venues and cannot be classified as one of the previously mentioned types. Unusual venues are often very attractive since they add a certain charm to the event which can make the event more memorable. Many venues in this category have high quality facilities to offer, however, for those who are limited with their facilities; they can compensate their shortcomings with the attractiveness of their venue. Sporting, cultural and entertainment, tourist attractions or transport venues as well as venues like lighthouses count to this category and very often have a competitive advantage due to their uniqueness (Rogers, 2008, pp. 57-58).

#### b) Destination

Selecting a site for any type of event within the meeting industry is of great importance to the organizers. The location plays a major role in the decision-making process regarding where to stage an event. When referring to a destination, this can mean a town, a city, a region or a country. Every destination “must contain a range of venues, facilities, attractions, support services and appropriate infrastructure to help”, create a center of attention for the meeting industry. Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs) have to fulfill their tasks of promoting a destination for meetings, “highlighting all its strengths and facilities, generating and converting enquires into

confirmed business” and help “identifying [and eliminating] weaknesses in venues and facilities and in general infrastructure” (Rogers, 2008, p. 59).

c) Other

There are many different suppliers involved in the meeting industry who are essential for staging events. Rogers (2008, p. 60) has identified examples of key suppliers which include audio-visual and telecommunications companies, transport operators, interpreters and translators, speakers, entertainers, corporate events companies, speciality caterers, floral contractors, exhibition/exposition contractors, companies which develop specialist computer software and so forth.

### 2.2.1.3. Agencies and Intermediaries

Meetings or similar events can either be organized and run by employees of the buying organization, or by intermediaries or agencies hired by an organization to plan and run their events on behalf of them (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 113). Rogers (2008, pp. 60-74) as well as Davidson and Cope (2003, pp. 113-212) have identified a vast range of agencies and intermediary organizations, both on the supplier and buyer side, acting as the buyer on behalf of their clients. These include Professional Conference Organizers, venue finding agencies, conference production companies, incentive travel houses, destination management companies, corporate events companies, and exhibition organizers.

a) Professional Conference Organizer

A professional conference organizer or PCO is an event management firm that assists companies organize and run their meetings and events. Tasks include “researching and recommending a suitable venue, helping to plan the conference programme [...], marketing the conference and handling delegate registrations, booking accommodation [...], handling all of the conference finances”, and so forth (Rogers, 2008, p. 61).

b) Venue Finding Agency

Rogers (2008, p. 66) and Davidson and Cope (2003, p. 115) agree that venue finding agencies are limited in the services they can offer which usually are finding and proposing an appropriate venue for their clients. Such agencies put together a shortlist of venues that are suitable for their client’s needs and requests in terms of size, location, date and costs. When a client has made a final decision in choosing

a proposed venue, the agency will receive a commission from the venue. Therefore, services to their clients can be offered free of charge.

c) Conference Production Company

Conference production companies are companies providing support in designing and building conference sets and backdrops as well as audiovisual and special effects. These companies are often used for high profile and complex events such as product launches, which require superior technical equipment and know-how. It is common that these companies partner with PCOs or other meeting planners in order to add their expertise to the event (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 116).

d) Incentive Travel House

Incentive travel is often used by companies to motivate and reward their employees, distributors, and retailers. Incentive travel houses provide research, consulting, and organizing services to clients. They create incentive programmes that help companies reach their goals and motivate their employees. This also includes services like helping identifying objectives of the programme and the creation and management of incentive programmes (Rogers, 2008, pp. 69-70).

e) Destination Management Company

Destination management companies or DMCs are the so called the ground handlers of a destination, be it a city, a region or even a country. They are based at the destination where the event is held. They have a detailed and vast know-how of the destination, the local suppliers, language and customs, and often partner with PCOs, incentive travel houses or meeting planners to organise an event (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 116). Services of a DMC include proposing venues, organizing accommodation for the delegates, arrange transportation requirements, putting together itineraries and social programmes, and anything else the client may demand. This is why it is sometimes difficult to clearly distinguish between DMCs, PCOs and other similar organizations that provide similar services (Rogers, 2008, p. 71).

f) Corporate Event Company

Many organizations use corporate hospitality or entertainment, such as sporting and cultural events, to build up relationships with their clients or potential clients. Corporate event companies are hired to organize such events and even create whole programmes. They also put together packages around certain sporting or

cultural events for companies who are seeking to provide their clients with an exceptional experience at these events. Other services include team building activities put together for companies who want to strengthen the relationships to their clients and/ or employees (Rogers, 2008, p. 72).

#### g) Exhibition Organizer

Many exhibitions have conference programmes in addition to the exhibition while larger conferences have exhibitions additionally to their programme. Some conference organizers carry out the organization of the exhibition themselves, while others choose to hire exhibition organizer companies who are specialists in this field (Rogers, 2008, p. 73).

#### 2.2.1.4. Destination Marketing Organizations

Marketing activities are important to be carried out for any kind of product to be sold. Destinations also have to actively participate in marketing activities in order to attract business to their destination. This can take place on a local level, such as city, county or region by convention and visitor bureaus, conference offices and conference desks, or on a national level by the national tourist office or a national convention bureau (Rogers 2008, p. 135).

A convention and visitor bureau or CVB is a “nonprofit umbrella organization that represents a city or urban area in the solicitation, servicing and marketing of the city to all types of travelers to that city or area.” (Polivka, 1996, p. 214) In general, CVBs are funded by room taxes, governmental support, private membership, sponsorship, and cooperative trade activities with their members (Polivka, 1996, p. 214; Rogers, 2008, 136). They usually operate as an independent organization, as a department of the chamber of commerce, or as a department within the city government. Their tasks include bringing together the city government’s interests, “trade and civic associations, and individual travel/hospitality suppliers [...] in building outside convention and visitor traffic to the area.” (Polivka, 1996, p. 214) They are responsible for promoting the city, region, or area to attract meetings and events. Notably, they do not actually act as organizers; they only help meeting planners to learn more about the destination, its attractions and everything that the destination has to offer in services and facilities (Polivka, 1996, pp. 214-215). They are the “neutral starting point for anyone who wants to organize a meeting or a congress in a specific destination [...] [and are] a ‘one-stop-shop’ for independent

information and assistance and will give a planner unbiased and neutral advice". (ICCA, 2008, p. 4)

National tourist organizations are mainly responsible for promoting their countries to the leisure market but try to attract the business tourism market as well (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 117). Many countries also have national convention bureaus that are fully public sector organizations and are funded and managed by the central government (Rogers, 2008, pp. 140-141).

### **2.3. Rankings**

Every research conducted provides certain parameters for measurement purposes to evaluate an industry's performance. The meeting industry is rather young and rapidly growing and therefore still lacking in providing trustworthy data and research that can provide information on the industry's development, dimensions, and importance. However, there are two well recognized associations that produce statistical data on an annual basis, namely the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) and the Union of International Association (UIA) (Davidson & Rogers, 2006, pp. 219-220). Their research programmes' essential task is to "monitor the staging of international congresses and meetings, identifying trends and producing annual rankings of the most successful cities and countries". (Davidson & Rogers, 2006, p. 221) The information they provide is beneficial for competing destinations to see "which destinations are maintaining or increasing their market share, and which may be losing their position in the international meetings market." (Davidson & Rogers, 2006, p. 221) Those rankings can also have a valuable effect on destinations with a high ranking in terms of marketing and promotional activities (Davidson & Rogers, 2006, p. 221).

The International Congress and Convention Association or ICCA was founded in 1963 and currently has 850 members within 85 countries (ICCA, 2009, p. 5). ICCA gathers information on international association meetings such as information on their location and other characteristics. Criteria for association meetings to be included in the database are a minimum participation of 50 delegates, the meeting should be organized regularly, and the location where it is held should alternate between at least three different countries (ICCA, 2009, p. 12).

The Union of International Associations or UIA, founded in 1907, also undertakes studies on international meetings and collects statistical data according to various criteria. Only meetings that are "organized and/or sponsored by the international



organizations [...] [such as NGOs or IGOs] which appear in the UIA's 'Yearbook of International Organizations' and 'International Congress Calendar' and whose details are subject to systematic collection", on a yearly basis by the UIA are included in the research. (Rogers, 2008, pp. 13-14) These meetings have to meet the criteria of having a participation number of at least 300 delegates, a participation rate of 40% foreigners, with a minimum of 5 different nationalities attending and are to be held for at least three days (Rogers, 2008, p. 14).

## **3 THE MEETING INDUSTRY IN VIENNA**

### **3.1. Historical Background**

As previously mentioned, the Congress of Vienna is said to be the historic launch event for the meeting industry (Rogers, 2008, p. 3). This event was essential for Vienna's meeting industry, but more high profile events that mark the city's meeting industry followed, especially after World War II when Vienna's meeting industry started to develop rapidly.

A major political event for Vienna, and for the whole nation, took place in 1955 when the Austrian Independence Treaty was signed at the Belvedere, a high profile event that created a lot of media attention (Vienna Tourist Board, 2005, p. 38). In the same year, a Viennese tourism law made it obligatory for all organizers to provide details of their events to the Vienna Tourist Board upon request. This way, the Vienna Tourist Office not only influenced some of the dates but starting in 1958 also published a congress calendar which still exists today (Vienna Tourist Board, 2005, p.32).

In 1958, the Hofburg Congress Center and the "Wiener Stadthalle" opened their doors while Austrian Airlines started scheduled flights at the Vienna International Airport. In 1963, the Congress Center Vienna opened and the Winter Riding School was adapted as a conference center. Due to tourism branch complaints regarding the shortage of beds, lead hotels and travel agencies joined forces and created the "Congress Pool" which made large contingents of hotel beds for accommodating participants of congresses available (Vienna Tourist Board, 2005, p. 32).

1961, the U.S. President John F. Kennedy and his wife Jackie met with Soviet Premier Nikita S Khrushchev and his wife in Vienna, attracting a lot of international media attention to this high profile event. Such events took place on a continuous basis since Vienna was considered as the outpost to the Eastern bloc after the establishment of the Iron Curtain. The city continuously functioned as the turntable between east and west, especially until the opening of the east in 1989. Vienna has become a hub for staging summits on the highest level such as the meeting in 1979 between the U.S. President Jimmy Carter and the head of the USSR Leonid Brezhnev (Vienna Tourist Board, 2005, p. 8). In 1969, the Congress Center Hofburg became privatized and in the same year, the city and the chamber of commerce decided to provide funds for the promotion and advertisement of

congresses resulting in the creation of the Congress Bureau of the Vienna Tourist Office and a board of directors now known as the Vienna Convention Bureau. In 1972, the Vienna Tourist Board created a database of congress organizers electronically recoding all international organizers and sales incentive organizers. One year later, Vienna was voted “Congress City of the Year” by the International Congress Bureau in Paris (Vienna Tourist Board, 2005, p. 32).

Essential for Vienna’s meeting industry was the opening of the Austria Center in 1987, funded by the Republic of Austria. The construction of the center was not well perceived by many people and even a referendum found its support with 1.3 million signatures. However, in the end the Austria Center was built and today, the conference center is very important for the city’s meeting industry (Vienna Tourist Board, 2005, p. 33).

Since 1989, ICCA as well as UIA placed Vienna among the top ranks and in 1993 Vienna ranked number one for the first time in the ICCA statistics, ahead of Madrid and Paris. In 1997, the European Radiology Congress took place in Vienna with 60,000 overnight stays. One year later the city hosted the Cardiology Congress with 23,000 participants (Vienna Tourist Board, 2005, p. 33).

The Trade Fair Center Vienna opened in 2004, adding another value to the city’s meeting industry. In the same year, the Vienna Convention Bureau represented Vienna as a meeting destination at 36 trade fairs and catered to 240 congress and incentive decision makers from 11 countries at their site inspection in Vienna (Vienna Tourist Board, 2005, p. 33).

### **3.2. Vienna Meeting Industry Statistics**

Vienna has undergone a great development and has been ranked under the top 10 meeting industry destinations by UIA and ICCA a number of times in previous years. These rankings can be seen as an indication of how successful Vienna’s meeting industry is on a global basis.

The Vienna Convention Bureau is also very much involved in data collection and therefore releases a report every year with Vienna’s meeting statistics of the previous year as well as the developments since 1999 presented. This report gives essential insight into Vienna’s meeting industry’s dimension and its economic value as well as indications of the importance of the meeting industry for the city.

An interesting graph was created by the Vienna Convention Bureau showing the city's international rankings by ICCA and UIA between 1998 and 2007 as indicated in Figure 2.

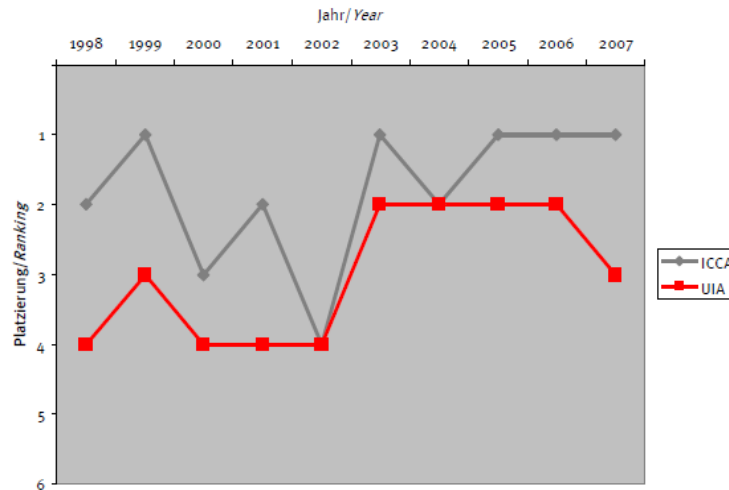


Figure 2 Vienna's international ranking

Source: Vienna Tourist Board, 2008a, p. 41

2008 was a very special year for Vienna as the city hosted the European Football Championship. However, due to this mega event, less international congresses were recorded than the year before. International congresses tend to avoid destinations hosting mega events and it was therefore no surprise that fewer international congresses were staged. Despite this fact, 2008 was still the second best congress year the city has ever had (Vienna Tourist Board, 2008a, p.38). With a total of 3,257 congresses and corporate events, a total of 369,894 participants and a total of 1,261,494 overnight stays, 2008 showed an increase of 18% in the total number of events. However, total overnights decreased by 11% which was the result of the short-term loss in international congresses in June 2008 as well as the trend of shorter events with less participants on average (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008a, p. 10).

Figure 3 shows the 2008 numbers of national and international congresses held in Vienna as well as corporate events and their increase or decrease of the previous year. It also indicates the overnights stays generated by congresses and corporate events.

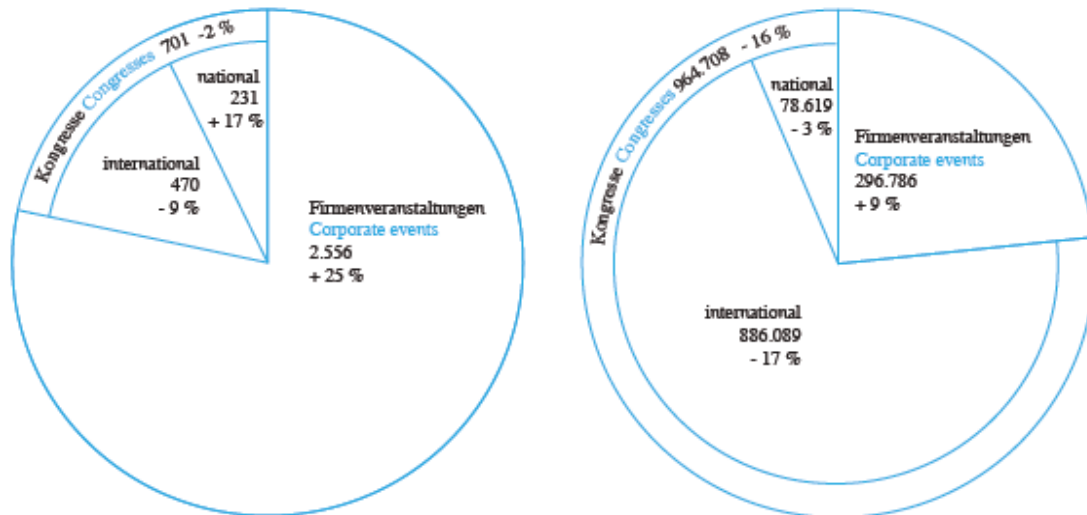


Figure 3 Congresses and Corporate Events 2008

Source: Vienna Tourist Board, 2008a, p. 38

When comparing congresses and corporate events, the meeting statistics report of the Vienna Convention Bureau also reveals that the contribution of the market share of the total overnight stays in Vienna has increased from 9.37% to 12.33% between 1999 and 2008. This is quite a remarkable amount which is very beneficial for Vienna's hotel industry (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008a, pp. 5-9).

Figure 4, produced by the Vienna Convention Bureau, shows the percentage of the international congresses' subjects. The figures of 2008 show a great number of congresses dealt with human medicine as well as economics and politics (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008a, p. 38).

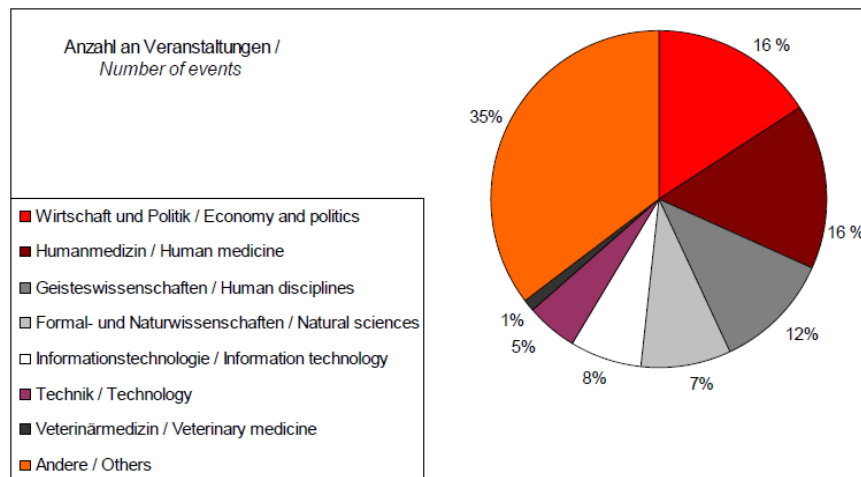


Figure 4 International congresses detailed analysis by subjects

Source: Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008a, p. 38

### 3.3. Vienna's Offer to the Meeting Industry

The Vienna Convention Bureau (2007, p. 5) claims that “Vienna is one of the world's foremost international conference cities, boasting three convention centers, 131 event locations, and over [...] [400] hotels, all of which are interconnected by an excellent public transport network.”

#### 3.3.1. Accessibility

Vienna is accessible via two airports, the Vienna International Airport and the M.R. Stefanik Airport in Bratislava. The Vienna Airport is located 16 km east of the city with 65 airlines that fly to and from 40 destinations in East Europe and 130 in West Europe and overseas. Vienna and Bratislava are about 60 km apart and therefore are the two closest located capital cities in the world. There are many bus and train connections between those two capitals, offering one of a kind accessibility (Austria Convention Bureau, n.d.a, para.5). Furthermore, the city has its own ‘City Airport Train (CAT)’ connecting the Vienna International Airport with Vienna's city center in only 16 minutes every 30 minutes on a daily basis. A great feature of the CAT is that passengers can already check in their luggage at the City Air Terminal in the city center (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2007, p. 18). Vienna's public transport network is “one of the most modern and efficient in the world [with] 5 underground lines, 33 tram routes [and] 104 bus routes (including 23 night services)”. (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2007, p. 19)

### 3.3.2. Venues

Vienna's offers regarding venues for hosting events are quite remarkable. There are a wide range of unique locations to choose from for all types of events. With three convention centers, various academic venues, palais, museums, hotels and unusual venues, Vienna's meeting industry is diverse in its offer.

In 2008, the Vienna Convention Bureau recorded 470 international congresses taking place in various venues throughout the city, of which 47 were held in the three conference centers. Figure 5 gives a statistical overview of how many international congresses were held in hotels, in congress centers, at universities and in palais, as well as the fluctuation of the quantities held in those venues between 1999 and 2008 (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008a, p. 34).

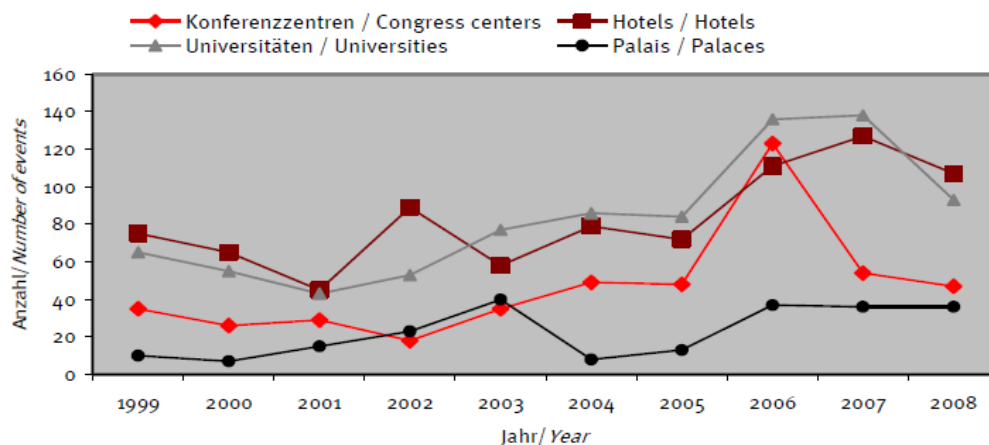


Figure 5 International congresses detailed analysis by venues

Source: Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008a, p. 34

#### 3.3.2.1. Convention Centers

Vienna has three major convention centers including the Austria Center Vienna, the Hofburg Congress Center Vienna, and the Reed Exhibitions Messe Wien – Congress Center. The Austria Center Vienna was the city's first convention center. The Hofburg Congress Center is rich in character due to its history of being a small part of the former Imperial Palace. The Reed Messe Wien Exhibition and Congress Center is Vienna's newest addition that opened in 2004 (Anonymous, 2009, p. 5).

The Austria Center Vienna, also referred to as ACV, has 17 halls on four levels with the capacity to seat 10,200 people in total; capacities can range from 100 to 4,320 persons (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2007, p. 31). The ACV is equipped with the latest technology when it comes to service, equipment and security (Austria Center Vienna, 2009a, para. 1). The current exhibition space is 22,000sqm and therefore counts as one of the top players on the international conference circuit. "The venue has excellent transport links thanks to the Donauinsel/Vienna International Center station on the U1 underground line and the nearby Danube embankment motorway." The ACV is operated by the IAKW AG and managed by the CEO Thomas Rupperti (Austria Center Vienna, 2009b, para. 15).

"The Hofburg Vienna is Europe's first address for conferences and events." (Hofburg Vienna, n.d.a, p. 1) As residence of the Habsburgs, the Hofburg Vienna has a history of 700 years and now serves as an impressive multipurpose event location that links the past with the present (Hofburg Vienna, n.d.a, p. 1). The Hofburg's owner is the Republic of Austria and is home to various prominent political and cultural institutions as well as the Hofburg Vienna Congress Center. With a total floor space of 17,000sqm, the center consists of 35 halls and rooms that can host between 50 and 4,900 persons (Hofburg Vienna, n.d.b, p. 1). The Congress Center Hofburg Vienna was founded in 1969 and today is managed by the managing director Mag. Renate J. Danler. Every year, the Hofburg Vienna hosts about 270 to 300 events attracting an estimated 280,000 to 300,000 guests (Hofburg Vienna, n.d.c, p. 1). The Imperial Palace is a valuable venue for Vienna's meetings industry where tradition and modernity meet, where original character is still maintained, and the venue provides modern technical equipment (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2007, p. 35). The newest additions to the Hofburg complex are the Rooftop Foyer and the Hofburg Gallery and Forum; architecture that links the present and the past with outstanding spherical structures (Hofburg Vienna, n.d.b, pp. 22-23).

Located right next to the Danube and the famous Prater Park, the Messe Wien Exhibition and Congress Center has two underground stations that make it easily accessible (Reed Exhibitions Messe Wien, 2009, p. 3). Messe Wien, formerly owned and run by the city of Vienna, has been run by the Reed Exhibitions since 2000, the largest organizer of trade fairs worldwide. The city of Vienna decided to invest in rebuilding the Messe Wien but now allows Vienna Reed Exhibitions to operate the Messe Wien, as part of the holding Reed Austria, a subsidiary of



Reeds Exhibition in London. Together, they transformed Messe Wien into a modern, top-quality venue with the latest technical features adding a multifunctional facility with a total space capacity of 73,195sqm to Vienna's meetings and events industry (Dobler-Jerabek, 2010, p. 28). Since the reopening of the new exhibition space in 2004, "the organisers of over 100 small, medium and large-scale third-party events per year have been making use of the possibilities offered by the Messe Wien." (Dobler-Jerabek, 2009, p. 4)

#### 3.3.2.2. Academic Venues

Vienna has a range of academic venues that can host meetings and events with rooms and areas of different size, capacity, and styles. Locations as such include the Vienna University of Technology, University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, the University of Vienna, the University of Vienna – Juridicum, the University of Vienna – University campus AAKH, or the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2007, pp. 47-52).

#### 3.3.2.3. Palais & Museums

The Vienna Convention Bureau (2007, pp. 55-84) lists 30 palais and museums in the Vienna Meeting Planners' Guide which are all suitable locations for meetings and events. This is a diverse range of venues to choose from and specialties for example include the Albertina Museum, the Schönbrunn Orangery, the Palais Festel, the Palais Niederösterreich, the Spanish Riding School, the Belvedere, the Museum of Fine Arts, and the Natural History Museum. All venues, traditional or modern, have a magnificent history to tell. Most of them have already hosted royal and political events and are unique in their architecture, history, and appearance.

#### 3.3.2.4. Unusual Venues

Unusual venues such as the Millennium Event Center, the Office Park at the International Airport Vienna, the Studio 44 of the Austrian Lottery, the Vienna State Opera or the Zeiss planetarium are only a few which can offer a unique experience for any meeting and event (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2007, pp. 87-109).

#### 3.3.2.5. Conference Hotels and Hotels for Small Meetings

Vienna offers a wide range of accommodation possibilities from "luxury hotels in former palaces, international and Austrian hotel chains and family-run establishments through to small, quaint pensions." (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2010a, para. 1) With 18 5-star, 154 4-star, 147 3-star, 72 2- and 1-star and

9 summer hotels, Vienna can offer 50,911 beds in 400 hotels (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2010a, para. 1). Names such as the Hilton Vienna Plaza, the Hotel Imperial, the Méridien Vienna, the Renaissance Hotel Vienna, the Grand Hotel Vienna, the DO & CO Hotel Vienna or any Austria Trend Hotel can offer a wide range of meeting and conference facilities as well as accommodation (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2007, pp. 111-171).

### **3.3.3. Cultural Offer**

Austria is a country that has a long history rich with cultural heritage and so is Vienna. As the capital of Austria, Vienna is well known for its historic city center, ranking among the most beautiful historic cities in Europe. The Habsburg emperor's former city of residence was shaped by three eras: the Middle Ages, the Baroque era, and the 'Ringstraßen' era at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008b, p. 27). Vienna's magnificent and historic architecture is well known around the world especially for the "unique imperial splendour with attractions including the imperial Hofburg Palace [...] the magnificent Schönbrunn and Belvedere Places, the Spanish Riding School the Treasuries, the glorious architecture of the Ring Boulevard" (Vienna Tourist Board, 2008b, p. 9).

However, apart from the magnificent architecture there is more to Vienna's cultural offer. Over 120 museums and collections are open to the public, showing works of the most famous international artists such as Klimt, Dürer, Brueghel or Schiele exhibited in museums such as the Albertina, the Belvedere or the Leopold Museum. Also, contemporary art finds a great audience in Vienna, particularly in the Museum of Modern Art for instance. The Mozarthaus Vienna, Sigmund Freud Museum, and Hundertwasser's KunstHausWien are also very appealing to many visitors (Vienna Tourist Board, 2008b, p. 56). As the capital of classical music, Vienna benefits from prestige when it comes to music. Names such as Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven, Haydn, Strauss or Brahms are preformed in the city every day. The State Opera is one of the world's top opera houses and boasts a daily changing program on 300 evenings per year. International celebrities such as Anna Netrebko or Rolando Villazon make appearances at the opera house on a regular basis. Vienna also stages many outstanding musicals as well as mega rock and pop concerts attracting all age categories (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008b, p. 28; Vienna Tourist Board, 2008b, p. 8).

### **3.3.4. Gastronomy**

“The Viennese Cuisine is the only cuisine in the world named after a city – it is known all over the world to please the palate.” (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008b, p. 29) Typical Viennese dishes are available at hundreds of so called ‘Beisls’ (traditional Viennese inns) and restaurants. However, many exotic specialties have broadened Vienna’s gastronomy by offering food specialties such as Chinese, Indian, Mexican, Italian, Thai or African (Vienna Tourist Board, 2008b, p. 108). Viennese coffeehouses have a long history and still count to the places where people retreat to, meet, enjoy themselves and take a time out. The coffeehouses might be old, but they still represent youth and vitality (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008b, p. 29).

## **3.4. Vienna’s Demand**

The Vienna Convention Bureau (2008a, p. 13) has recorded that Vienna’s demand as a meeting destination has increased greatly between 2003 and 2008. In the year 2003, Vienna hosted 1,416 events including national and international congresses and corporate events. In the year 2008, a total number of 3,257 events were held in the city, an increase of 17.91% from the previous year. Also, a special increase could be noted in the corporate events sector with an increase of 24.62% in 2008. The Vienna Convention Bureau (2010b, para. 5) states that “[c]onferences, corporate meetings and incentives play an important part in Vienna's tourist industry, and account for 12.3% of all overnight stays.”

### **3.4.1. Markets**

It is rather difficult to allocate Vienna’s meeting industry to their market origin. However, the Vienna Convention Bureau (2008a, p. 52) states that when looking at international corporate events and the participants’ overnight stays, Germany dominates the ranking in 2008 followed by Great Britain, USA, Switzerland and Italy. As managing director of the Hofburg Vienna, Ms. Danler (2010, p. 6) mentions that the national market is very important for the Hofburg Vienna, because it is the government that brings European countries to Vienna to hold conferences. It is also important to target Austrian scientists that are members of international organisations and associations who are very much involved in the meeting industry business.

### 3.4.2. Seasonal Demand for Meetings

“Just as for leisure tourism, most commentators claim to detect seasonal patterns of demand for meetings, demonstrated by months and days of the week when demand is predictably higher or lower than at other times.” (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 86) The Vienna Convention Bureau (2008a, p. 37) revealed a statistic about international congresses showing that March, April, May, September and October can be referred to as the high season months for the industry. Table 1 shows the statistics of international congresses held in Vienna with each month shown in number of events and number of participants.

<i>Monat Month</i>	<i>Anzahl Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Teilnehmer Participants</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>I</b>	30	6,38	4.647	2,69
<b>II</b>	44	9,36	7.249	4,20
<b>III</b>	35	7,45	25.774	14,95
<b>IV</b>	55	11,70	20.765	12,04
<b>V</b>	52	11,06	14.284	8,28
<b>VI</b>	15	3,19	3.775	2,19
<b>VII</b>	26	5,53	16.023	9,29
<b>VIII</b>	23	4,89	5.890	3,41
<b>IX</b>	68	14,49	33.032	19,17
<b>X</b>	42	8,93	24.150	14,00
<b>XI</b>	51	10,85	9.620	5,58
<b>XII</b>	29	6,17	7.243	4,20
<b>Total / Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>172.452</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 International congresses detailed analysis by monthly distribution

Source: Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008a, p. 37

### 3.5. Vienna's Marketing as a Meeting Industry Destination

Competition within the meeting industry is growing intensely. Many new meeting destinations join the market forcing their way up the rankings of the most successful meeting destinations. More than 200 countries are competing for their share of today's meeting industry market and this number is likely to continue rising (Davidson & Rogers, 2006, p. 32). Therefore, marketing is essential for a destination. In Austria, marketing activities take place on several levels by various institutions. Important players for Vienna as a destination include the Vienna Tourist Board, the Vienna Convention Bureau, the Austrian Convention Bureau, and the Austrian National Tourist Board. However it is the Vienna Convention

Bureau who is primarily actively promoting Vienna as a meeting industry destination and makes Vienna so successful within the meeting industry whereby “there is little doubt that the real driving force has been the Vienna Convention Bureau” (Rogers, 2003, p. 302).

### **3.5.1. Vienna Tourism Board**

The Vienna Tourism Board consists of four departments: the Vienna Convention Bureau, the Visitor Services department, the Staff and Finance department, the Strategy and Communication department and the Market and Media Management department. It is set up as an independent legal institution and is the voice of the tourism industry within the city of Vienna. It is managed by a board of directors, nominated by the political parties, whose business life must be linked to tourism and “whose composition reflects the current political situation in the City Parliament.” (Rogers, 2003, p. 303) The board is financed with the local taxes that every guest staying in Vienna has to pay. Indeed, 100% of this tax goes to the board which is then invested in the marketing activities of the Vienna Tourism Board (Tremmel, 2010, p. 37).

### **3.5.2. Vienna Convention Bureau**

The Vienna Convention Bureau or VCB is the official voice of Vienna’s meeting industry acting as the guarantor of impartial, high quality information on the destination’s facilities, services, and the product itself (Davidson & Rogers, 2006, p. 33). In 1969, the VCB was set up as a department of the Vienna Tourist Board, financially supported by the Vienna City Council and the Vienna Chamber of Commerce. Additional funds are received by sponsors that currently comprise a sum of 23 supporters. It is very important to be part of international convention and meeting industry association in today’s meeting industry in order to create a large network on the global market. Therefore, the VCB is a member of 8 associations including MPI, ICCA, UIA and PCMA (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2010c, para. 1) Managed by Christian Mutschlechner, the VCB consists of 11 team members specialized in conference, convention, meeting, and incentive business (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2010b, para. 5).

The sources of the yearly budget that the VCB has at its disposal include the city or local tax (a percentage of the room rates charged by hotels), direct funding from the city administration, funds from the Chamber of Commerce and commercial activities such as advertising, as well as hotel booking services or sponsorship

finance. “The Bureau is allowed to operate as a company and any moneys unspent at the end of the year can be placed into a Convention Bureau reserve fund”. (Rogers, 2003, p. 303)

The VCB services are free of charge and include helping to introduce the clients to the venues, getting quotes, creating bid books and presentations for bidding processes, assisting with contacting local suppliers such as PCOs, venues or incentive agencies, reserving accommodation, arranging site inspections, providing advertising material, as well as a congress calendar where all events are published (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2010d, para. 1-7). The bureau also puts a great emphasis on industry research. Every month, the bureau receives data from hotels and other suppliers and then produces an annual report on the meeting industry of Vienna on a quarterly basis. The law in Austria requires meeting planners to make data available for the VCB and those who refuse can even be fined for an absence of the data (Rogers, 2003, p. 303).

### **3.5.3. Austrian Convention Bureau**

The Austrian Convention Bureau or ACB is a non-profit organization serving as a platform for Austria’s meeting industry. The ACB represents Austria’s meeting industry interests in Austria as well as internationally. It “draws the attention of the authorities and other parts of the public to topics of relevance to the sector, provides for internal communication within the industry, and conducts training and basic research.” (Austria Convention Bureau, n.d.b, para. 7) “The ACB now has a total of 63 members, ranging from congress centres through congress and conference hotels, PCOs, and congress towns and cities to transport carriers.” (Austria Convention Bureau, n.d.c, para. 3)

### **3.5.4. Austrian National Tourist Board**

The Austrian National Tourist Board’s task is to promote the country of Austria as a tourism destination. Great focus is also placed on the meeting industry for which the Austrian Business and Convention Network or ABCN is responsible. It provides services, such as venue and supplier services, as a neutral, independent and non-commercial partner (Austria National Tourist Board, 2010, para. 1-3). The ABCN is also one of the initiators of the Access Austria Exhibition taking place for the seventh time in 2010. It “has grown into a nationally and internationally acknowledged venues platform, counting in the meantime as a must for all those planning and holding events in Austria. [...] [In] 2009 over 230 Austrian exhibitors

from all sectors” of the Austrian meeting industry presented their products and service portfolios (Access Austria, 2010, para. 1-2).

### 3.5.5. PCOs, DMCs and Related Services

There are many PCOs, DMCs and related services that naturally engage in promoting Vienna as a meeting industry destination. Agencies operating in Vienna include: admicos. Congress Incentive GmbH, AIMS International, Austropa Interconvention - Verkehrsbüro Kongress Management GmbH, Columbus Welcome Management, e+o meeting, event & travel management, Kuoni Destination Management Austria GmbH, MCI Wien GmbH, Mondial Corporate Events & Incentives, RAM Consulting GmbH, American Express Reisebüro GmbH, and so forth (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2010e, para. 5-19; Vienna Convention Bureau, 2010f, para. 5-27).

Table 2 shows international congresses that were held in Vienna and that used Vienna’s specialized congress agencies. Mondial Congress’s services were used the most in 2008, followed by Austropa Interconvention. In 2007, however, Austropa Interconvention organized more conferences than Mondial Congress (Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008a, p. 35).

	2008		2007	
	Nº	%	Nº	%
<i>Total / Total</i>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>davon mit Kongressagenturen / using specialized congress agencies</i>	<b>73</b>	<b>15,53</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>26,79</b>
Mondial Congress	<b>25</b>	<b>34,25</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20,29</b>
Austropa Interconvention	<b>22</b>	<b>30,14</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>49,27</b>
MCI	<b>5</b>	<b>6,85</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3,63</b>
AIMS International Congress Services	<b>2</b>	<b>2,74</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3,63</b>
Admicos	<b>2</b>	<b>2,74</b>		
IMS	<b>2</b>	<b>2,74</b>		
RAM Consulting	<b>2</b>	<b>2,74</b>		
Welcome Touristic	<b>2</b>	<b>2,74</b>		
<i>Andere / Others</i>	<b>11</b>	<b>15,06</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>23,18</b>

Table 2 International congresses detailed analysis using specialized congress agencies

Source: Vienna Convention Bureau, 2008a, p. 35

## **4 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

### **4.1. Description of the Method**

#### **4.1.1. Research Design**

This thesis is based on empirical research involving the gathering and analysis of data which can be quantitative, qualitative, primary and secondary data. An inductive approach, which deals with finding out what the situation is, has been used. It involves the description and gathering of information, the analysis thereof and then explains the findings (Veal, 2006, pp. 33-34). As previously mentioned, secondary data or the use of already existing data has been used from the literature review to create the theoretical framework for this bachelor thesis. Primary data has also been collected first hand. This data is solely qualitative since it is not presentable in numerical form. The method used for gathering the qualitative data was through in-depth interviews conducted with experts in the field of research (Veal, 2006, pp. 39-40). Expert interviews or in-depth interviews “usually involve relatively small numbers of individuals being interviewed at length [...] [that results in] [r]elatively large amounts of information”. (Veal, 2006, p. 99)

#### **4.1.2. Expert interviews**

Eight representative experts have been selected; all working in the meeting industry and their work tasks are directly related to this industry. However, a diverse selection could still be achieved, with experts from different institutions within this industry such as congress centers, independent meeting planners, professional congress organisers, hotel chains, convention bureaus, and destination management organisations. Interviewing such a wide range of experts allowed the development of interesting and important findings as well as presenting multiplicity of perspective about the topic.

All interviewed experts are in a leading position in their institution. Therefore their experience and knowledge about the industry and the research topic are beneficial and a reliable source for this thesis.

The following experts have been available for an interview:

- **Steve De Wit**, independent meeting planner
- **Mag. Renate J. Danler**, Managing Director of the Hofburg Vienna GmbH
- **Michael Part**, Sales Director at the Austria Center Vienna IAKW AG



- **Mag. Renate Dobler-Jerabek**, Director Congresses & Events of Reed Messe Wien GmbH
- **Inge Tremmel**, Managing Director – Europe of International Conference Services Ltd.
- **Mag. (FH) Marie-Therese Bradl**, Project Manager at RAM Consulting GmbH
- **Christian Mutschlechner**, Director of the Vienna Convention Bureau
- **Dr. Otto Hartmann**, Director of Sales & Marketing at Austria Hotels International

The interviews were conducted within a period of 2 months. It was possible to carry out seven personal interviews and one telephone interview. The interviews lasted an average of between 20 and 30 minutes. A voice recorder has also been used to be able to precisely recall the information provided by the experts.

#### **4.1.3. Questionnaire**

A specific questionnaire guideline produced for conducting the expert interviews discussed certain topics which were developed using headlines to a bundle of questions. It was not always possible to cover all topics or questions regarding the topic as stated in the guideline depending on the developments and progress of the interview of the interview. The questionnaire guideline varied from time to time depending on the conversational and topical progression of the interview. However all necessary topics important for this thesis were covered during all interviews and the main focus was placed on Vienna's success factors as a leading meeting industry destination.

Questions were asked to topics regarding the 'must-haves' of a leading meeting industry destination in general as well as Vienna's meeting industry and the city's offers to the industry. Further questions regarding Vienna's development as a meeting industry destination, Vienna's marketing as a meeting industry destination, the competition that Vienna has to deal with, as well as Vienna's success as a meeting industry destination was also discussed. The questionnaire guideline can be found in the appendix.

For the analysis of the results, an interpretive approach has been chosen. The results of each interview have been thoroughly compared to identify similarities as well as differences. A transcript of every interview has also been produced to make the process of analysing the interviews easier and to clearly filter general

comments on success factors and specific comments related to Vienna's and success factors as a leading meeting industry destination.

## **4.2. Description of the Results**

### **4.2.1. General Success Factors of a Meeting Industry Destination**

#### **4.2.1.1. Accessibility**

All experts agree that accessibility is a major success factor for leading meeting industry destinations. A destination must be able to serve as many destinations as possible; therefore a great amount of airlines serving the local airport is essential for easy access to the destination. Dobler-Jerabek (2010, p. 21) also mentions that the more centrally the destination is located the better. Also, it is essential that the primary mode of transportation accessing the destination is by air followed by railway and road. How often the destination is served by a transportation mode is an important issue as well, since it has to be easy to get to on a regular and frequent basis. Tremmel (2010, p. 30) says that very often clients find it important that the international airport is not further away than 30 to 40 minutes and that the airport should be connected to public transportation.

#### **4.2.1.2. Infrastructure**

Especially in corporate business, companies want to motivate and energize people. This can mean they want the participants of their events to be more productive, to buy the company's products, to become interested in their company, and so forth, depending on what kind of corporate event is organized. In order to achieve this, the event should take place in a space or place that has some beauty and attractiveness. Therefore, meeting facilities have to offer something spectacular; a certain attractiveness that creates a 'wow' reaction should be available. Consequently, it is always good to be able to offer all kinds of different meeting facilities in design, architecture, or location (De Wit, 2010, pp. 1-2). All experts agree that conference centers are vital in order to provide sound infrastructure for the meeting industry. These must be easily accessible, modern in terms of all necessary equipment for meetings, and need be able to facilitate different kinds of capacities.

The hotel infrastructure in a meeting destination should be vast and diverse ranging from small inns to five stars hotels. These should also vary in their size

and price range in order to accommodate all sorts of meetings and budgets (Part, 2010, p. 11; Tremmel, 2010, p. 31).

#### 4.2.1.3. Image building and branding

A meeting destination should not be a 'No-Name' product, meaning that it has to be a well known destination as a leisure tourism destination (Danler, 2010, p. 5; Mutschlechner, 2010, p. 46). It is beneficial for a meeting industry destination to have some sort of attractions and activities that make people recognize the destination immediately (Tremmel, 2010, p. 32). This is closely related to the image building of a destination, which is very important in order to be successful. It is also a delicate field because it is rather hard to break prejudices that might not be positive for the destination. De Wit (2010, p. 3) says that "image building is essential. It is marketing; it is why you buy an Apple computer!" To build up a certain image is important so that people will recognize the destination, what it stands for, and what the destination's qualities are.

Davidson and Rogers (2006, p.79) mention that positioning is crucial for a destination and influences of the ways in which products are recognized. A clear product position has to be established in the minds of the target group in order to increase the destinations' "chances of succeeding in attracting business from their target market [...] and then effectively" communicated to the buyers. Branding is best described as "a set of associations that is linked to a particular destination, venue or chain of venues, that resides in buyers' memory and helps them understand" the brand itself, what it is, why it can be possibly significant to the buyers and in how far it is different from other brands and destinations (Rogers & Davidson, 2006, p. 81).

However, it is also necessary to remember that many destinations already have an image that might not even be the reality. Especially, when a rather negative image exists, marketing is indispensable in order to reposition the destination's image. Still, this can also have the opposite effect if the destination presents an image that is not accurate or realistic (Dobler-Jerabek, 2010, p. 24).

#### 4.2.1.4. Marketing activities

In order to communicate a destination and its brand/image to the market and potential clients, marketing actions or activities have to be undertaken by the suppliers. This is usually done through advertising and general media communications and producing product characteristics such as a name, logo and slogan, press, opinion leaders, word of mouth, customer relationship management, direct marketing, publications, public relations, trade shows, familiarization trips and so forth (Davidson & Rogers, 2006, pp. 103-112).

#### 4.2.1.5. Networking

It is critical to have good relationships to clients, partners and suppliers within the meeting industry. Quite often business comes from referrals that suppliers and clients initiated. Meeting industry institutions should therefore be represented at various industry events, congresses and trade fairs to create a network to profit from. A great advantage for a destination is low staff turnover which means that people can create trustful relationships with partners, clients and suppliers (Dobler-Jerabek, 2010, p. 26). This is especially important for regular customers who like to come back to a destination or institution because a certain trust basis has already been created. The result is not only loyal customers, but also powerful word of mouth. When people stay longer in their positions, relationships are easier to establish and to keep, which means repeated as well as new business (Danler, 2010, p. 8; Dobler-Jerabek, 2010, p. 26; Mutschlechner, 2010, p. 46). Further, good relationships to suppliers are crucial, since referrals can very often come from them. For example, organizers often go directly to a hotel they know and trust to ask which PCO or DMC to use for their events (Bradl, 2010, p. 41).

#### 4.2.1.6. Cultural offer

A destination which is rich in cultural offers can have great advantages in terms of attractiveness (Danler, 2010, p. 6). Decision makers of meetings and events tend to look for a destination that can offer an attractive cultural background. For instance, leisure activities can motivate people attending an association event. People sitting inside the whole day listening to presentations want to enjoy and relax in the evening. Off-site events are often a big part of the conference and organizers seek appealing locations and activities to provide. Therefore, a destination needs to offer a culturally exceptional experience that is unique to the destination (Part, 2010, p. 11).

#### 4.2.1.7. Stability, security & quality of living

Tremmel (2010, p. 32) and Mutschlechner (2010, p. 46) claim that stability and security are must haves for any leading meeting industry destination; stability in terms of economy, politics, currency as well as society. A destination that has very few strikes, especially in the transportation sector and energy supply sector, can be more successful than others since they are more stable and therefore more reliable. A destination has to have a level of social security if it wants to be successful within the meeting industry.

The quality of living is a major point that should be considered carefully as well (Mutschlechner, 2010, p. 46). The Mercer study publishes a ranking every year covering 215 cities (Mercer, 2010a, para. 4). Many people understand 'quality of living' differently. "While everyone agrees that a high crime rate is undesirable and the air we breathe, the house, the environment we live in should be clean, there is great diversity in ideas about quality of living". (Mercer, 2010b, para. 2) The Mercer studies of the quality of living have been based and assessed on 10 key categories and 39 criteria. The key categories include political and social environment, medical and health considerations, public services and transport, consumer goods, economic environment, schools and education, recreation, housing, socio-cultural environment and natural environment (Mercer, 2010b, para. 7-8).

#### 4.2.1.8. Understanding association patterns

Association meetings and events are long-term business areas. It is essential to know all typical patterns of the association sector in order to make it worthwhile to bid for any association meeting or event. Firstly, the decision-making process in the association business takes quite long. Secondly, many association congresses have some sort of rotation pattern which means that the destinations where events are held vary every year. For example, the first year the congress may take place in North America, the following year in Asia, the third year in Europe, then in Australasia and so on. When this certain pattern has been identified, as well as their preferred location, a destination can find out when it is worthwhile bidding for these events (Tremmel, 2010, p. 34).

#### 4.2.1.9. Corporate Headquarters

The decision-making process for choosing a destination is different in regards to the corporate and the association sector. In the corporate business sector, it is often one person making the decision of where to go whereas in associations many people are involved in deciding where to go. For associations, the attractiveness of the destination is very often an important point that can determine which destination will be chosen. For corporate events, there can be many reasons that have nothing to do with the actually beauty or speciality of the destination (De Wit, 2010, p. 1). Therefore, a meeting industry destination that is home to the headquarters of many different companies, it is more likely that corporate events will take place in this city (Tremmel, 2010, p. 34). In the corporate business the economical attractiveness, such as tax regulations or the employment market situation of a destination, is important in making a destination the headquarter destination (Tremmel, 2010, pp. 35-36).

#### 4.2.2. Vienna's Success Factors as a Meeting Industry Destination

##### 4.2.2.1. The Vienna Convention Bureau

All experts agree, that the VCB and their marketing activities can be seen as one of Vienna's success factors as a meeting industry destination. Part (2010, p. 11), Tremmel (2010, p.38), and Dobler-Jerabek (2010, p. 19) say that everyone within the meeting industry is envious that Vienna has the VCB and that it is often used as a role model for other convention bureaus. Even Davidson & Rogers (2006, p. 183) mention in their book that the VCB has been the "city's success in the international congress and conventions market in recent years", since their testimony is to "respond quickly, effectively and professionally."

A significant advantage that the VCB has realized is the importance of being present on the worldwide market especially at significant trade fairs to exhibit the product 'Vienna' as a meeting destination (Part, 2010, p 13). Dobler-Jerabek (2010, p. 19) also stresses the value of the VCB's international appeal and that the bureau has a great knowledge of where to present the product Vienna. It is not about trying to be present everywhere, but it is essential to promote the product at the most important trade fairs and events to advertise the destination's offers and services. She also stresses that Christian Mutschlechner, director of the VCB and former president of ICCA, and his team promote Vienna through participating in discussions, presenting at industry conventions and events, and doing workshops as well as several memberships in international organizations.

Dobler-Jerabek (2010, p. 20) also sees the structure of the VCB as a great advantage. The VCB and the Vienna Tourist Board have been parted in the sense that they have separated their marketing strategies. It is essential to realize that leisure tourism and business tourism have to be marketed in different ways which the city of Vienna recognized very soon.

#### 4.2.2.2. Partnerships

Vienna's meeting industry organisations are closely working together and creating a strong partnership. For instance Austrian Airlines, Hofburg Vienna, Austria Center Vienna, Vienna Convention Bureau, Reed Messe Vienna and a group of hotels have joined forces and carry out marketing activities together. With an agency in New York, the Vienna Destination Group is conducting market studies, checking leads, forwarding them, creating conjoint packages and simply marketing Vienna as a meeting destination (Part, 2010, p. 13; Dobler-Jerabek, 2010, p. 25). Dobler-Jerabek (2010, p. 26) states that Vienna's meeting industry institutions work closely together even a competitive climate naturally remains.

However, the institutions realized in the congress business there is nothing to really hide, since the information is easily accessible through various databases from the ICCA. Vienna's meeting industry institutions have realized that partnering is crucial and that it is vital to bring business to the city even though it is not possible to held or organized by everyone. They are trying to distribute business among all institutions and to bring the business to the city. It has been understood that every business is beneficial for the city's economy. Dobler-Jerabek (2010, p. 20) and Tremmel (2010, p. 38) mention that the VCB has the great advantage that it is not a membership driven organization and therefore it can work independently free from bias when distributing leads and matching them to the customers' needs. This is a great advantage for customers since they can be certain to receive a one-stop shop service by the bureau; an organisation that knows the city and its suppliers very well and forwards the leads to the right supplier. The VCB has great knowledge of all services and their suppliers and due to its independent status it is able to distribute all leads equally.

#### 4.2.2.3. Infrastructure & accessibility

All experts agree that Vienna's infrastructure regarding meeting facilities is enormous and very diverse. Vienna offers a huge variety of venues suitable for all kinds of meetings and events including many palais, conference hotels, and other

meeting facilities. However, a major success factor is the offer of three quite different conference centers that are all very unique in their nature. Hartmann (2010, p. 50) explicitly points out the three conference centers as a major success factor for Vienna's popularity in hosting large scale events. With the construction of the ACV and the Hofburg Vienna, the city's meeting industry had a fantastic offer regarding meeting facilities. At that time, the ACV was the biggest conference center in Europe and together with the Hofburg, a modern and simultaneously historic venue, Vienna's facilities were quite spectacular. However, with the new Reed Messe Wien, Vienna has the possibility to host mega events, meetings, trade fairs and congresses. Additionally, Hartmann (2010, p. 51) stresses the activities of Austrian Airlines. About 30 years ago, Austrian Airlines started to specifically market Vienna as a meeting industry destination. With offices worldwide, they had the opportunity to contact organizers in these destinations and promote contingent flights to Vienna as the destination for their next event. Together with the Vienna International Airport, perfectly connected to Vienna's excellent public transportation system and an important hub that handles many direct flights as well as connection flights to the biggest hubs worldwide, Austrian Airlines was essential as a promoter for Vienna's meeting industry.

#### 4.2.2.4. Vienna's image

Hartmann (2010, pp. 56) says that Vienna has bloomed from an antique and fusty city to an attractive city full of energy, elegancy and modern flair. As previously mentioned, Vienna's rich history makes the city's cultural offer quite impressive and well perceived by visitors. Vienna has several images such as capital of classical music, imperial buildings, rich history, coffeehouses, art, relaxing atmosphere and so forth. This is very important for the meeting industry especially when talking about social programmes. However, Vienna has more images particularly when talking about the meeting industry. Vienna's image as a meeting industry destination includes: professionalism, great infrastructure in terms of conference centers, hotels and transportation, international oriented, the gateway between east and west, and as a clean and safe city.

Rather important for Vienna's image are international rankings such as the ICCA ranking of top international congress destinations. This, of course, helps to create a positive image on the market and it is a great tool to promote the city as a meeting industry destination. Other rankings include: rank one as the city with the best quality of living worldwide, rank six as the top liveable city worldwide, the fifth



richest city in the European Union, the second cleanest city in Europe, the sixth safest city worldwide, and so forth (Wien Tourismus, 2010, pp. 1-2). Those rankings differ from year to year, but in recent years, Vienna has always been highly ranked in different rankings. They are essential as a marketing tool to be able to refer to them when selling the destination (Tremmel, 2010, p. 33).

Vienna has hosted many mega events as well as congresses which have had a significant impact on Vienna's meeting industry. Hosting events such as the UEFA, the Radiology Congress, the Cardiology Congress or the upcoming AIDS congress have had a great marketing effect. Tremmel (2010, p. 33) mentions that such events make people talk about Vienna; pictures go around the world as unpaid but vital advertising for the city. It shows the world what Vienna can do; it shows the meeting industry what kind of events this destination can stage with professionalism, expertise and success.

Part (2010, p. 12) claims that Vienna has a very good value for money ratio, especially in the hotel industry. Whenever there is a big congress or trade fair in the city, hotels do not increase their room prices like other destinations do when a big event is in town. Danler (2010, p. 7) also agrees that Vienna has a very good value for money ratio and that many customers value this.

Dobler-Jerabek (2010, p. 24), Mutschlechner (2010, p. 46) and Bradl (2010, p. 42) mention the advantage of Vienna's compactness and size. Many clients appreciate that the city itself, compared to other leading meeting industry destinations, is very compact in the sense that the city is not too big and an easy orientation is possible. Everything is perfectly connected by public transportation and there are not many vast walking distances.

#### 4.2.2.5. Ambassadors

Most experts mention that Austrian scientists are extremely important for Vienna's meeting industry. An Austrian scientist who is a member of an international association, who is very much involved in this association and who is interested in bringing meetings to Vienna, can have an enormous influence on where meetings of these associations are taking place. Tremmel (2010, p. 36) mentions that in some associations it is not even possible to bid for a congress if for instance there is no Austrian or Viennese member in this association. In the decision-making process it is very common that the member also has to make the formal invitation. When doing so, it is then of great advantage that the person is internationally

recognized meaning that he or she should have had some attention within their industry due to remarkable inventions, innovations, research results speeches or workshops.

#### 4.2.2.6. Medical Sector

Danler (2010, p. 6) and Hartmann (2010, p. 49) agree that medical congresses are of great importance for Vienna's meeting industry. Not only is a lot of money available in the medical industry, but also a massive exchange of knowledge is taking place in this area. Hartmann (2010, pp. 49-50) states that the PCO Mondial Congress has been a major player of Vienna's medical congress sector. Mondial Congress was one of the first PCOs that realized the potential of this industry and quickly specialized themselves in the organization of medical congresses. They therefore play a major role in the success of Vienna's medical congress industry. Vienna has always been a leader in terms of science, especially medical science, due to the well known medical schools and Europe's biggest hospital, the AKH. The AKH is well known for its leading position in its science and research achievements in the medical industry as well as for its modern and expensive equipment. Siemens provides only very few hospitals with their most modern equipment and the AKH, is one of them. Medical congresses exhibitions are not just a source of finance but also an opportunity for the organizers to exhibit the newest technologies, studies and research. As a recognized institution within the medical industry, the AKH is a great asset for Vienna's meeting industry. Hartmann (2010, p. 50) further mentions that about 50% of Vienna's congresses come from the medical sector and congresses such as the Radiology or Cardiology Congress have made Vienna a well known leading meeting industry destination.

#### 4.2.2.7. Governmental support

The city of Vienna and its leaders soon realized that the meeting industry is very beneficial for the local economy and support the players in this industry. Dobler-Jerabek (2010, p. 19) and Bradl (2010, p. 42) for instance, mention that although uncommon for many destinations, it can make a big difference when the reception of a big congress takes place in the town hall with the mayor and if it then gets completely or partly sponsored by the city this can have a great effect on the clients and repeat business. Dobler-Jerabek (2010, pp. 20-21) also states that a remarkable support is also provided by the city of Vienna, more precisely the chamber of commerce, particularly with subsidies trying to lengthen the high

seasons of the meeting industry in Vienna. The term subsidy always has some sort of negative connotation; however this facilitation of support, that is determined according to the actual overnight stays, is very beneficial for the city in the end. It simply helps to convince organizers to have a look at the months that might be untypical for them or for the meeting industry. Organizers might not have considered these months before, but with an incentive like this, it is easier to motivate them to move to those unusual months. Tremmel (2010, p. 37) also states that the chamber of commerce simply recognized the economic benefit of the meeting industry and its contribution to the local economy. With these subsidies, the meeting industry has the possibility to attract more business to Vienna which means more money will be generated and can then be invested in this industry again.

#### 4.2.2.8. Cultural offer

Danler (2010, p. 6) mentions that Austria has about 8.3 million inhabitants of which about 1.7 million people live in Vienna. Vienna has the cultural institutions and sites of a global city. Vienna has a long history which defines the cultural offer the city has as especially the historical and well preserved buildings carry prestige and an imperial appearance attractive for many international meetings and events. Combined with the substantial offer of exquisite gastronomy, Vienna can take advantage of its long history, tradition and customs.

#### 4.2.2.9. International organisations

Vienna is home to many international organisations such as the United Nations, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Therefore, a lot of movement within the meeting industry can be expected since these organizations bring business to Vienna meeting on a regular basis (Danler, 2010, p. 6).

## 5 CONCLUSION

The meeting industry is a very young and diverse industry. Young in terms of recognition as a professional industry that requires serious consideration and management. During the last ten years, a major development has taken place in this industry. Many new destinations realized the economic benefit of this industry and have invested heavily to improve their cities to meet the meeting industry's needs.

To examine this industry, one of the most successful meeting industry destinations, namely Vienna, experts within the meeting industry were asked to consider the city's enormous success and what a meeting industry destination nowadays must have in order to be successful on the global market. The identified research question "What are the success factors of a leading meeting industry destination?" supported the research to specifically find out what it is that makes a destination successful and competitive in the meeting industry market. The second research question "What are Vienna's success factors as a leading meeting industry destination?" then helped to go into more detail of a specific destination to analyse it and give concrete examples on success factors.

General success factors that have been identified include easy accessibility; good infrastructure in terms of meetings facilities, public transportation and accommodation; branding and right image building of a destination; good marketing activities; beneficial networking possibilities; attractive cultural offer; stability, security and quality of living of the destination; understanding of association patterns and to be home to corporate headquarters.

Vienna is a major player in the international meeting industry market and has a reputation of being an expert in this field. Especially with the Vienna Convention Bureau, it is said that Vienna has realized the importance of the industry very early. The Vienna Convention Bureau is a one-stop shop providing clients with information within 24 hours and holds an impressive level of knowledge and experience. Therefore it is no surprise that the Vienna Convention Bureau itself has been identified as a success factor of Vienna's Meeting Industry. The Vienna Convention Bureau is present at all important international trade fairs and industry events, as it knows where presentations of Vienna are best placed and it has an extensive international network with important contacts in many different industries. Other success factors of Vienna include great partnerships within Vienna's meeting industry and its institutions; magnificent infrastructure and easy

accessibility; an image of professionalism, imperial flair, good service, good value for money and the city's compactness; many local people who act as ambassadors on the international market in their particular industry; the city's success in the medical sector; the city's cultural offer as well as international organisations that are located in Vienna.

The theoretical part was necessary in order to perfectly understand the meeting industry, its most important players, and the structure of the meeting industry as well as to present the successful meeting destination Vienna and its importance to the local economy. When looking at the structure of the meeting industry, one can identify several 'must haves' for a destination that define the industry's basic principles. The expert insights and research findings in the field exhibited key to information regarding a destination's success factors and demonstrate a look 'behind the scenes'. All experts interviewed have thorough knowledge about the industry and due to the fact that Vienna is a leading meeting industry destination on the global market, their expertise helped to find out what made Vienna so successful as a meeting destination.

The identified success factors can be used to help understand which factors are important to consider when a destination wants to become a major competitor on the international meeting industry market. When looking at the structure and the most important parties involved in the meeting industry, the identified success factors might not be applicable to all suppliers. However, all parties can use these factors as a guideline and possibly a first step to analyse one's destination to find out any room for improvements.

Buyers can use this thesis as a guideline or even checklist when looking for a destination for their upcoming events and meetings. Furthermore, the presentation of Vienna's meeting industry can have a beneficial effect on buyers when looking at the city's success factors as well as its offers to the meeting industry.

Suppliers can use these factors to compare them to the destination where they are located in and analyse their destination regarding its strengths and weaknesses and then identify opportunities and threats. These findings can be a great assistance for many destinations to improve their local meeting industry and produce a step by step plan of how to lead the destination to become successful and a major player on the global meeting industry market.

For governments and authorities, this thesis can help to look at the meeting industry more carefully and consider it as a serious economic driver for a destination or city. With their support, the industry can prosper and will have beneficial impacts on the local economy and its residents. Especially with the example of the Vienna Convention Bureau and its great success within the meeting industry, destinations might also want to consider establishing their own convention bureau independent of the national or the city's tourism board in order to be able to fully concentrate on this particular business sector. Convention bureaus can have a major effect on the success of a destination. They can represent the destination on the right trade fairs, design the right marketing campaigns and activities, and create an extensive knowledge about the industry. Recognizing the importance of a convention bureau will help destinations to be able to compete with the top meeting industry destinations.

These factors are more of a guideline and that not all factors are applicable to all destinations. Some destinations simply do not have the possibility to offer historic buildings for example because it is a young city founded 200 years ago or the destination simply does not have the right conditions to be successful in terms of stability and security for instance. However, the thesis can be used to compare a destination to these factors and analyse what the destination's strengths and weaknesses are. Improvements can be made especially in regards to services that a destination can offer. For instance if a destination does not have a convention bureau so far that is run independently and serves as a one-stop shop, with the findings of this research paper, a destination might want to consider to take the Vienna Convention Bureau as an example.

Due to limited time and resources, further research is recommended especially when a destination wants to make improvements to its meeting industry offers and services. Very often feasibility studies are necessary to be carried out, for example when considering improving the destination's infrastructure. It is recommended that this paper be used by destinations that already record certain meeting industry movements in their destination and actively seek advice in how to develop this industry and become a competitor on the global market. It should then be used as a starting point for their research of how to improve the destination. This thesis will support the decision makers to synthesize which areas to look into and consider enhancing to become a leading meeting industry destination.

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## APPENDIX

Experteninterview zum Thema "Success factors of a leading meeting industry destination with a special focus on Vienna – Erfolgsfaktoren einer führenden Meeting Industrie Destination mit einem speziellen Fokus auf Wien"

### 1. Erfolgsfaktoren einer Top Meeting Industrie Destination

Was muss eine Meeting Industrie Destination im Allgemeinen bieten um im Konkurrenzkampf mithalten zu können?

Welche Faktoren sind ein Muss für Städte um erfolgreich in der Meeting Industrie zu sein?

### 2. Stadt Wien

Was würden Sie als Stärken der Stadt Wien als Meeting Destination bezeichnen? Hat die Stadt auch Schwächen?

Was ist Ihrer Meinung nach Wiens USP als Meeting Destination?

Welche Standortvorteile hat die Stadt Wien als Meeting Destination?

Welche Meeting Industrie Märkte sind besonders wichtig für die Stadt Wien (Verbände, Firmen etc – in welchen Bereichen sind diese tätig?

### 3. Wiens Entwicklung in der Meeting Industrie

Wie hat sich die Meeting Industrie in den letzten 50 Jahren in Wien entwickelt?

Inwiefern profitiert Wien von seiner Geschichte und seinen Traditionen?

### 4. VCB - Wien Marketing

Wie ist das Vienna Convention Bureau strukturiert?

Wie vermarkten Sie bzw das VCB die Stadt Wien um Meetings und Kongresse in die Stadt zu bekommen?

Welche Marketing Strategie wenden Sie an? Welche Marketing Tätigkeiten macht das VCB für die Meeting Destination Wien?

### 5. Wiens Erfolgsfaktoren

Warum denken Sie ist Wien so erfolgreich in der Meeting Industrie? Welche Erfolgsfaktoren zeichnen die Stadt Wien aus?

Wie würden Sie die Wichtigkeit der politischen Akzeptanz und Unterstützung der Regierung für die Meeting Industrie einschätzen?

In wie fern ändert sich die Marketing Strategie für Firmen- und Verband Events? Wird hier ein Unterschied gemacht was die Vermarktung der Stadt Wien als Meeting Destination betrifft?

#### 6. Image

Welches Image hat Wien als Meeting Destination Ihrer Meinung nach?

In wie fern sind Großkongresse wie zum Beispiel der Kardiologenkongress für die Stadt Wien und deren Image von Bedeutung? Warum gibt es so viele medizinische Kongresse in der Stadt Wien?

#### 7. Konkurrenz

Wie würden Sie die momentane Konkurrenzsituation beschreiben? Welche Destinationen sind besonders in Konkurrenzkampf mit der Stadt Wien? Was haben diese Destinationen anzubieten, das Wien eventuell nicht hat?

Fallen Ihnen zu diesem Thema noch weitere Aspekte ein? Möchten Sie noch irgendwelche Anmerkungen zu diesem Thema machen?