

A review of research in meetings management: some issues and challenges

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to provide a clear overview of existing research in the field of the meetings industry in international space and to open an academic discussion on the issues of this field in Slovenia. Through the method of literature analysis, we determine the position of the meetings industry in relation to business tourism and leisure tourism, explaining the most frequent definitions of meetings and pointing to the fragmentariness of the meetings industry, recognising it as a special research challenge. The existing research on the meetings industry is focused on five basic areas (economic impact of meetings, convention site-selection process, destination marketing, convention and visitors bureau (CVB) operations, and advances in technology). We also acknowledge the emergence of a completely new question of sustainability of meetings, or the “greening” of meetings. Due to lack of research on the meetings industry in Slovenia, researchers face some issues and challenges, and the increasing importance of the activities in the tourism sector creates a gap in research that needs to be filled, starting with the need to consider the depth and breadth of research. Due to the fragmentation of the meetings industry, we first need to establish appropriate terminology and conduct an in-depth analysis of the conditions in the area of the supply and demand of meetings facilities, perform an economic evaluation of the possible impacts of meetings and analyse the decision-making factors that shape the processes of selecting convention sites. Researchers in Slovenia also need to tackle new questions such as the greening of meetings. We have no doubt that the tradition of the meetings industry in Slovenia makes it necessary for us to encourage its development with research and ensure the continuing expansion of knowledge.

Key words: meetings industry, convention events, congress tourism, business tourism, meetings management research, tourism research

1 Introduction

The meetings industry has become a visible actor on the tourism map of individual countries and continents. According to many authors (Blažević & Alkier Radnić, 2005; UNWTO, 2006), the field has experienced significant growth in the last two decades, as can be seen in the increasing demand for organising all kinds of convention events; some Australian and German authors claim that the meetings industry has already fully recuperated from the global financial crisis (Deery, 2012; EIWT, 2012).

The meetings industry is a comparatively new phenomenon, although we can trace the earliest forms of convention events back to ancient Greece and Rome. A greater expansion of the industry can be observed after 1960 in Europe and North America (Lucianović, 1980; Weber & Chon, 2002), and twenty years later in Asia (Weber & Chon, 2002; Mistilis & Dwyer, 1999). In response to the development of the industry, professional and academic research appears in larger quantities after 1980, and even more so after 1990. The majority of academic research after 1980 originates in the American and Australian research spaces. In Europe, it is mostly produced in Great Britain; while the work done by Asian researchers has appeared only recently. The reasons for this situation can be seen in the development of the meetings industry on particular continents and in particular countries and in the state of the development of research and education institutions, as also noted by Harris, Jago, Allen, and Huyskens (2000).

The aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive presentation of research in the field of the meetings industry and an outline of the starting points for further research in Slovenia, which should contribute to the development of the meetings industry as a form of business tourism. In the Slovenian research space there is a marked absence of these kinds of research and discussion and there are only few professional publications in this field (Rosulnik, 2008; Kongresna Ljubljana 2020, 2011). This paper aims to open the academic discussion on research in the field of the meetings industry in Slovenia and the larger region

by elucidating the position of the meetings industry in connection to business tourism and leisure tourism, by gathering various definitions of convention events and the meetings industry at one place, by presenting the fragmentariness of the meetings industry as a special research challenge and by determining the state of the industry in Slovenia as well as indicating potential future directions for its research.

Our analysis started with a search for relevant literature in the form of scientific monographs accessible in Slovenian libraries and continued with a refinement of the search for those articles that concisely recapture academic publications in the field of the meetings industry. While searching for different publications with the help of the Internet and academic bibliographic bases, we then applied the "snowball method" in order to establish the incidence and distribution of key content. When looking for key content, we could not avoid publications created by professional associations and institutions in the field of the meetings industry as these often represent a starting point for scholarly research. We have considered those that have a firmly established reputation in the field due to their long-term activity as well as those that show international comparability and are also registered in academic periodicals.

The attention of researchers is oriented towards several segments; according to some (Ladkin, 2002; Blažević & Alkier Radnić, 2005; Lee & Back, 2005a; Lee & Back, 2005b), the major challenges of research in the meetings industry lie in:

- the use of appropriate terminology and employment of correct definitions of the industry as such as well as of convention events such as meetings, incentives, congresses, conferences and exhibitions;
- fragmentation of the meetings industry, which is divided into several areas;
 - unification of gathering statistical data for research; the meetings industry is a relatively recent phenomenon and there are many dilemmas about how to collect and use data, where this is true for both secondary and primary data.

2 Fragmentariness of the meetings industry – a challenge for researchers?

One of the central dilemmas of research in the meetings industry is in the use of appropriate terminology and the definitions of concepts encountered every day by the practitioners in the industry. Research projects and studies in the field of the meetings industry are mostly published in the Anglo-American, English-speaking research space, which is why the terminology appropriate to the field can be mostly found in English. Corresponding terms in other languages (comp. Caso, D'Angella & Quintè, 2010; Schreiber, 2012) tend to be close to the English ones. With a view to using appropriate terminology, we need to highlight two significant facts pointed out by various researchers (Ladkin, 2002; Blažević & Alkier Radnić, 2005; Lee & Back, 2005a; Lee & Back, 2005b, UNWTO, 2006):

- firstly: the use of nonstandard definitions, which poses a serious problem for research, given the incoherence of approaches to collecting data and their interpretation from a methodological viewpoint;
- secondly: a lack of unified concepts, both when determining the industry as a broader concept and when more narrowly defining particular types of convention events in the industry.

In literature on the subject, we often come across the concept "industry", which carries different prefixes, such as "the meetings industry", or "the conventions and meetings industry" (Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Opperman, 1996b; Weber & Ladkin, 2003; Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Seekings, 1992), "conference industry" (Rogers, 1998), "convention industry" (Kim, Chon, in Chung, 2003; Opperman, 1996a; Qu, Li & Chu, 2000; Bernini, 2009; Crouch & Ritchie, 1997; Zhang, Leung & Qu, 2007; Severt & Palakurthi, 2008; Baloglu & Love, 2005; Lee, McKercher & Kim, 2009), "MICE industry" (McCabe, Poole, Weeks & Leiper, 2000; Mistilis & Dwyer, 1999; Lawrence & McCabe, 2001;

Carlsen, 1999; Weber, 2001). There are also references to "conference business" (Opperman & Chon, 1997), and "business events" (Seekings, 1992; Jago & Deery, 2010, Mair & Thompson, 2009). Different terms are often used, even by the same author (Weber & Chon, 2002; Seekings, 1992; Opperman, 1996b, Bernini, 2009). Numerous academic papers tend to use the term "convention industry" and "meetings" is often regarded as an umbrella term; while professional contributions to the field (UNWTO, 2006; CIC, 2004; BECA, 2012) indicate that in recent years the term "the meetings industry" has increasingly come to the fore.

We also note the frequent use of the term "the MICE industry", where the acronym MICE stands for four basic convention events, which differ in terms of content as well as in key activities, namely: Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions. The following acronyms are less commonly encountered: MECE (Meetings, Events, Conventions, Exhibitions), MCE (Meetings, Conventions, Exhibitions), and – only seldom – CEMI (Conventions, Exhibitions, Meetings, Incentives) (Weber & Chon, 2002).

We have found that there are at least two reasons for the frequent use of the term "the meetings industry". Firstly, the term "meetings" best captures the various kinds of convention events as such, basically denoting the meeting of persons for business purposes. Secondly, scholarly discussions and professional publications appear in English, which means that we have to deal with the diversity of the use of terms for central events in the industry, such as "convention", "conference" and "congress", as well as determine the nature of the industry as such. In most cases, the difference in use is due to the distinction between American and European congress spaces.

Lack of cohesion in definitions is at its most visible when we are trying to categorize types of convention events and define their characteristics; something that has been noted by different authors (Rogers, 1998; Seekings, 1992; Weber & Chon, 2002) who emphasise that terms and definitions represent a special challenge for researchers in the meetings industry. Often the definitions that signify an important reference frame for

researchers (comp. Rogers, 1998) are also determined by professional associations in the field of the meetings industry, such as BECA (Business Events Council of Australia), CIC (Convention Industry Council), CLC (Convention Liaison Council), ICCA (International Congress & Convention Association), IAPCO (The International Association of Professional Congress Organisers) and EITW (Das Europäische Institut für TagungsWirtschaft). Scholarly papers published by professional associations tackle the task of defining and distinguishing between convention events, including conventions, congresses, conferences, meetings, as well as the various accompanying events, such as incentives, trade-fairs, exhibitions and others. Basic conference events are most in focus, while the attributes of a particular event considered to be essential are its size (indicated by the number of attending participants), its length of duration and periodicity. In Appendix 1, we give a more detailed overview of the definitions of convention events as understood by researchers and professional associations in the meetings industry.

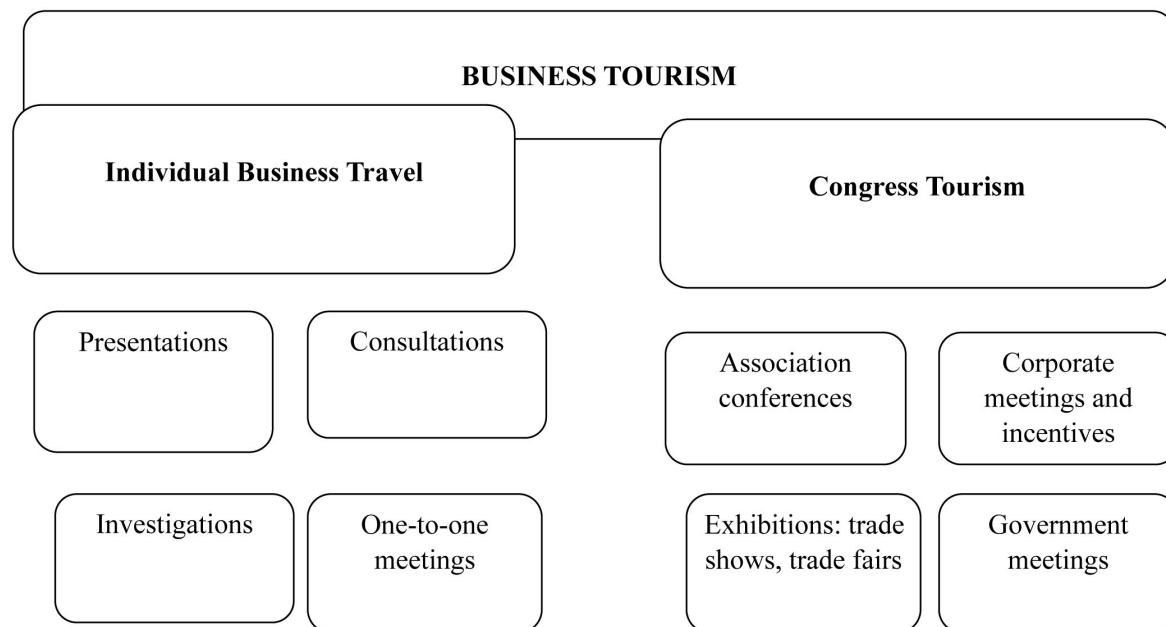
The analysis of literature includes articles and publications by professional associations discussing the meaning of basic convention events; our main purpose was to gather in one place the definitions of various authors that can be found in the respective sources.

We shall explain some differences in meaning that distinguish particular concepts. The greatest dilemma is experienced in using the terms “conference”, “convention” and “congress”. The essential differences can be drawn between the terms “conference” and “congress”, or “conference” and “convention”. Various researchers agree that the term “convention” has a greater currency in North America, Australia and Asia, while Europeans prefer to use the term “congress” (Rogers, 1998; Lucianović, 1980; CIC, 2011; Lawson, 1992, in Weber & Chon, 2002). Some authors (Weber & Chon, 2002, 103; Seekings, 1992; Rogers, 1998; Lucianović, 1980) roughly distinguish between these terms in considering the aim and location of the meeting as well as the number of participants. Thus a convention, or congress, is defined as an event that is larger in size than a conference. The term “convention” is often associated with the periodicity of the meeting’s implementation,

while some researchers (Seekings, 1992; Rogers, 1998; Hiller, 1995) define it as the meeting of a narrowly defined group of individuals (e.g. state institutions).

The term “meetings” is mostly used to label events attended by a smaller number of people (Rutherford, 1990, in Weber & Chon, 2002; Seekings, 1992; Hughes, 1988, in Weber & Chon, 2002), allowing us to basically distinguish it from the terms “conference” and “convention”. Meetings exist in various forms, including corporate meetings, seminars, symposiums or training programs.

What all these definitions have in common is that the participants’ main motive for attending events is a business interest or work; this is why recent literature (comp. Jago and Deery, 2010) and praxis (UNWTO, 2006) refer to them as business events. Rogers (1998, 19) defines a business tourist as a “traveller whose main purpose for travelling is to attend an activity or event associated with his/her business or interest”. Despite different forms of convention events, their organisation constitutes a special kind of tourism known as business tourism, which differs from the leisure tourism industry in the basic motive for travelling, while also being closely related to it (Davidson and Cope, 2003). Forms of leisure tourism (e.g. incentive travels, sightseeing, trips and similar) often complement convention events, despite business being the basic purpose of travelling. It is important to note that we can distinguish between two forms of business tourism, following Rogers (1998) and are presented in Figure 1. The congress industry – or also “congress tourism” – is its mass form, consisting of the above-described convention events, while its individual form is individual business tourism, which concerns one person’s business-motivated trip (e.g. a travelling salesman) (Rogers, 1998; Davidson & Cope, 2003; Jago & Deery, 2010). However this latter form is not included in research on business tourism or the meetings industry. When we use the terms “business tourism”, “conference tourism” and “meetings tourism”, what we have in mind is exclusively their mass form. The definition of “meetings tourism” was provided by the AIEST (The International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism) in Europe in 1970, who defined it as “... a group of activities and relation-

Fig. 1: *Classification of forms of business tourism*

Source: Adapted from: Davidson & Cope, 2003; Rogers, 1998; Jago & Deery, 2010.

ships that stem from the travel and stay of individuals coming together to exchange mainly scientific and professional knowledge, and where the meeting place is not a place of work or residence” (Lucianović, 1980; Prebežac, Mikulić & Peručić, 2008).

A more detailed look at particular activities comprising the meetings industry in the above image reveals that particular convention events are not distinguished solely by differences in their content but also by those relating to the criterion of the holder, actor or organiser of the event. These can be corporations that form the market of corporate meetings; professional associations (usually within the confines of one industry or profession), which comprise the association market; and governmental or political bodies, which represent the market for government meetings. Research usually includes corporate and associations’ meetings; while the meetings of government and political bodies are not part of statistical research, especially due to the sensitivity of collecting data (comp. Weber & Chon, 2002; Rogers, 1998; Opperman, 1996b; Crouch & Ritchie, 1997; Crouch & Louviere, 2004).

The challenge for researchers is exacerbated by the fact that the fragmentation of convention events is shown not only in differences in their size but also in terms of the number of participating countries, which categorizes convention events into local/regional, national and international. The size of convention events is important from the point of view of research, since gathering and comparing the results of studies of events that differ in size can raise issues of methodology (Weber & Chon, 2002). On the other hand, due to the fragmentation of the meetings industry, the implementation of continuous research and reference to statistical information are very rare and uncertain and usually occur at the level of congress offices (local and national events) or professional associations. Two world-renowned professional associations, UIA (Union of International Associations) and ICCA (International Congress & Convention Association), have for more than six decades collected data uniquely for convention events at the international level, where each defines the concept of an international event in its own terms, rendering their data incomparable. We should note

that we cannot always get hold of an accurate image of the meetings industry in the examined countries since their reports include only those events that involve more than 300 or 500 participants – although the remainder of such events also play a significant role in shaping the meetings map of a particular country. Thus the ICCA recorded 20 international congress events in the city of town of Ljubljana in its 2010 report, according to the 53rd position in its ranking (ICCA, 2010) even though Ljubljana actually hosted 43 such events that year (Kongresna Ljubljana 2020, 2011). In spite of this drawback, its statistical reports often represent an important source of data, providing a useful frame reference for both researchers and practitioners, due to the long duration of the data-gathering period and stable methodology applied.

The analysis of sources related to definitions in the meetings industry reveals that the industry is strongly fragmented, which poses special challenges to researchers; or, as Zhang, Leung and Qu (2007, 1124) claim, it “... represents an unexploited market for researchers”. The first step in any research should consist in the appropriate definitions of convention events and the meetings industry as such, as this ensures the consistent gathering of data and comparability of data as well as helping to provide a suitable interpretative framework and critical understanding of the industry.

3 The existing research in the meetings industry and new opportunities

Research in the meetings industry is a relatively new phenomenon since research papers on the subject appear mostly after the 1980s and these first appeared in the Anglo-American world (Rutherford, 1980, in Weber & Chon, 2002). We cannot neglect the contribution of a Yugoslav researcher (Lucianović, 1980), whose publication was certainly considered groundbreaking in Europe. Research in Asia emerges a little later on (Kim, Chon & Chung, 2003; Zhang, Leung & Qu, 2007). The phenomenon of scholarly research in the meetings industry is affected by the development of the meetings industry market as such, as recog-

nised by Weber and Chon (2002), and Lee and Back (2005a); this market flourishes in the United States of America, Great Britain and Australia. We may add that the Yugoslav market of the meetings industry in the region of southeastern Europe was already in full swing by the 1970s (Zidanski, 2005), which explains why the first publications started to appear in former Yugoslavia (which also includes a reference to Slovenia) in the first years of the 1980s.

An overview of the literature shows that only a handful of authors provide a comprehensive content analysis of published papers (Lee & Back, 2005a; Lee & Back, 2005b; Yoo & Weber, 2005; Carlsen, 1999). The main observation made by various researchers is that different publications draw attention to different areas of the meetings industry. What they have in common is that the majority of research is done in the field of the economic impact of conventions, a topic that tends to attract researchers' attention first (Carlsen, 1999). Another field that boasts a large number of publications is convention site-selection process (Lee & Back, 2005a; Lee & Back, 2005b; Yoo & Weber, 2005). Researchers in this field distinguish between two parties to the choice of destination: the organisers of and participants in the convention event. Most publications focus on the organisers as those who choose the destination, which is confirmed by researchers themselves. Studies examining participants' opinions on location choice are rare (Opperman, 1996a; Opperman, 1996b; Baloglu & Love, 2005; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Jago & Deery, 2005; Filipović, 2007), although the views of participants often count more than those of the organisers (Weber & Chon, 2002; Chen, 2006; Dragičević, Stankov, Armenski & Štetić, 2011). The fields of destination marketing, use of modern technology and the role of congress offices in the meetings industry are also gaining ground (Lee & Back, 2005a).

The above-described research areas in the meetings industry need to be broadened, as our review of the existing literature in the field shows that, in accordance with the general trends of global tourism, in the last two years there has been a growing interest in the sustainability of convention events. The meetings industry is increasingly oriented towards greening

itself in all aspects, an agenda that was first initiated and implemented by professional associations (CIC, 2004). Two years ago, first academic papers on the topic started to appear. These have tended to be written from the perspective of a broader concept of corporate social responsibility. Researchers (Lee, Breiter & Choi, 2012; Mair & Jago, 2010; Park & Boo, 2010; Whitfield & Dioko, 2012; Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012) believe that neither research nor discussion have so far focused on questions of the environmental influences of convention events' on the destination, even though researchers have actively considered environmental issues for at least a decade in the framework of leisure tourism. Researchers agree that we need to define the concept of a "green meeting" and that there is potential for research in the areas of the meetings industry: on the side of the convention organisers, convention suppliers and convention participants. The practitioners in the field of the meetings industry started with the activities of greening the convention events by compiling guidelines and recommendations for ecologically conscious behaviour (comp. CIC, 2004). Slovenia also provided a practical example: the Slovenian Convention Bureau's campaign, which is entitled BeBee (KUS, 2012a) and which started in 2010.

Just as the meetings industry extends and relates to other activities in tourism, from hotel management, hospitality industry, sustainable development, organisation and management, to the business of organising events, scholarly papers on the subject also appear in scientific periodicals that cover all these areas. Most frequently, we find contributions of interest in the following internationally acclaimed periodicals: *Tourism Management*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Travel Research*, *Tourism Economics*, *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, *The International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *The International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Tourism Research*.

A scientific periodical that specialises in the field of the meetings industry is *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism*, which started to appear in 1997 as the

Journal of Convention & Exhibition Management and which was renamed in 2004. In 1997, only one issue was published; since 2006 there have been four issues per year.

One of the more significant findings is that, at the beginning of the emergence of scholarly and professional papers of the new field, the researchers we have included in our study were mostly focused on seeking the meaning of particular convention events (comp. Seekings, 1992; Weber & Chon, 2002), while, after the turn of the millennium, they tend to favour measuring the impact of the meetings industry on tourism and more broadly (comp. Lee & Back, 2005a). Along with the consolidation of suitable terms of reference, the most recent challenge in research is currently unfolding in the area of sustainably oriented convention events, namely the possibility of redefining the view on the existing research in the meetings industry, as attested in the majority of recent publications, e.g. by Rittichainuwat and Mair (2012).

4 The meetings industry in Slovenia and research challenges

The meetings industry in Slovenia has a long tradition. Even though the first congress in the present-day meaning of the word – the Congress of Laibach (also known as the Congress of the Holy Alliance), took place in Ljubljana in 1821 – a more substantial development of the activity begins after the year 1960 (Zidanski, 2005). Slovenia as a congress destination (with Ljubljana and Portorož) was part of the Yugoslav convention market, which was in full bloom also due to the large meetings of the then political authorities (Lucianović, 1980).

After gaining independence, Slovenia had to take care of the basic infrastructural conditions for the proper functioning of the meetings industry and especially for efficient marketing in order to maintain its position on the European convention map. Slovenia's inclusion in the EU has increased its credibility; it has now become the leading congress country in southeastern Europe. Today, however, other former Yugoslavian republics, such as Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, are increas-

ingly investing in congress infrastructure and already catching up with Slovenia. Major Slovenian towns where convention events take place are Ljubljana, Portorož, Bled and Maribor, while the meetings industry is also developing in some of the Slovenian spa resorts. Ljubljana is the leading Slovenian convention town, in terms of conference facilities and number of convention events. According to the report of the international professional association ICCA (ICCA, 2012), Ljubljana hosted 44 international convention events in 2011 with more than 500 participants, occupying the 27th place among 200 European cities.

The central office, which connects the suppliers of convention services and is responsible for promoting Slovenia as a meetings destination, is the Slovenian Convention Bureau. Since 2004 the Bureau has been supported by state aid to establish companies in the field of the meetings industry. The Slovenian Convention Bureau operates as a non-profit organisation, an independent partner that mediates information between the organisers and suppliers of services to the meetings. In order to obtain a clearer view of the meetings services offered and provide a higher level of service quality, the Bureau passed Slovenian convention standards in 2007. On the global scale, Slovenia is one of the first convention countries to introduce such a standardisation (KUS, 2012b). Standards are classified into ten different groups according to the type of supplier from A to J, where each group has its own minimal general and advisable conditions as well as optional ecological conditions. The latter represent a pioneering step of the Slovenian meetings industry, considering that the issue of sustainability of convention events is globally still in its initial phase.

Scientific research in the field of the meetings industry in Slovenia is almost entirely undeveloped, as there is a noticeable absence of studies and papers. Only two empirical studies have been carried out among convention participants and convention suppliers for the Ljubljana destination so far (Rosulnik, 2008; Kongresna Ljubljana 2020, 2011) and these two studies are accessible only to the expert public. They were implemented in 2008 and 2011 and measured similar parameters. In the participants' population, the

parameters that were in focus were profile, consumption and customs; in the population of the organisers of convention events, their profile and characteristics were placed in the forefront together with organisation of meetings. The results of the research do not allow for generalisation due to the small size of the sample but they do offer an insight into the state of the Slovenian meetings industry. As claimed by Rosulnik (2008), in 2006, Slovenia hosted more than 700,000 convention participants; if we add participants of those meetings that fall outside of the official records (e.g. university conferences, corporate meetings), the number of such participants would reach around a million.

A closer look shows that the majority of participants come from the countries of the European Union; on average they spend €2,350 per person over the course of a three-day event; they tend to be highly educated and they belong to the private sector. Their primary motives for attendance are: an opportunity for networking, professional education and safety of the destination, which is in line with international studies (Mair & Thompson, 2009). The characteristics of convention events show that on average they last for three days and take place in congress centres, while participants most frequently attend those that involve from 501 to 1000 guests. In the view of organisers, the attraction of Slovenia as a meetings destination is its easy accessibility and attractiveness as well as the diversity of the meetings services (Rosulnik, 2008).

In which fields of the Slovenian meetings industry can we expect research challenges? The quickest answer would be: in all, as the marked absence of research in the Slovenian research space seems to indicate that the challenges we face are unlimited. Indubitably, we will need to fill in this gap with academic papers that will unite the meetings industry and that will place it in the Slovenian tourism research space. In the initial phase, we need an argument-based discussion about the breadth and scope of research that should be undertaken in comparison with research in other parts of Europe, America, Asia and Australia. Due to absence of research it makes sense to start with a critical analysis on the side of the supply of meetings services and to investigate the organisation of the in-

dustry as such. It also remains to establish the types of convention events, the extent to which they are carried out, how dispersed they are and what is the profile of convention participants. Considering global research, potential areas for exploration are definitely in the field of economic influences of convention events as well as factors of convention site selection, on the side of suppliers of services to the meetings and organisers of convention events as well as on the side of participants. Due to the relatively sustainable practices of Slovenian tourism, the field of “green convention events” presents an opportunity for comparative research in sustainable development in the meetings industry; while the relative smallness of Slovenia as a meetings destination leads us to think that we could benefit from an assessment of its carrying capacity according to the model suggested by Jurinčič (2009) for Istria as a tourist destination. At any rate, first of all we need to stabilise suitable terminology and the methodology of collecting data, considering the fragmentariness of the meetings industry, as we thus ensure an equal starting point for research and discussion. Since both the world expert public as well as the Slovenian one show that practice usually “overtakes” academic debates, it is advisable to do research in the meetings industry in cooperation with its main holders and thus enable research support for the future development of the industry and for the expansion of knowledge in the field.

5 Conclusions

The aim of the paper is to open a discussion in the field of research in the meetings industry in Slovenia, which we found to be undeveloped. We believe it will require quite some effort to fill this gap in research.

Fragmentation, which is characteristic of the meetings industry, is a special challenge for researchers since

it necessitates the establishment of precise research frameworks and requires caution when introducing research projects. In the field of the meetings industry, we often encounter a problem when defining convention events and activities as such, which does not always allow for appropriate comparability of research projects.

Research in the meetings industry has so far been attached to five basic areas; we also notice the emergence of a new question concerning the environmental sustainability of meetings, which derives from a broader concept of the social responsibility of companies. This emerging field generates new problems for research in the meetings industry: the introduction of new terminology (“green meetings”), the investigation of environmental influences on convention events, new motives of service suppliers, organisers and participants, and also the question of the competitive advantage of green meetings in Slovenia.

Research in the meetings industry in Slovenia is still in its initial stage; this is why so many possibilities for its implementation are opening. In addition to defining the industry appropriately and determining the subjects and extent of research (including the issue of “greening” the industry), research has to be led in the direction of ensuring credible results, thus enabling the scientific and professional development of the industry.

This paper thus attempts to start the discussion about research in the field of the meetings industry in Slovenia. It contributes to the scientific discipline through its extensive review of contemporary debates and global research that is currently filling the gap in the Slovenian research space and suggests possibilities for further research.

Pregled raziskovanja v kongresni dejavnosti: vprašanja in izzivi

Povzetek

Namen prispevka je pregledno predstaviti raziskovanje na področju kongresne dejavnosti v mednarodnem prostoru in odpreti akademsko razpravo na obravnavano tematiko v Sloveniji. Z metodo analize literature opredeljujemo položaj kongresne dejavnosti v odnosu do poslovnega in priložnostnega turizma, podajamo pogostejše definicije kongresnih prireditev, fragmentiranost kongresne dejavnosti pa prikažemo kot izziv za raziskovanje. Dosedanje raziskovanje v kongresni dejavnosti je vpeto v pet temeljnih področij (ekonomski vplivi kongresnih prireditev, izbira kongresne destinacije, destinacijski marketing, delovanje kongresnih uradov in nove tehnologije v kongresni dejavnosti), ugotavljamo pa, da se pojavlja popolnoma novo vprašanje trajnostne naravnosti kongresnih prireditev oziroma "ozelenjevanja kongresnih prireditev". Zaradi pomanjkanja raziskav o kongresni dejavnosti v Sloveniji se pred raziskovalce postavljajo nekatera vprašanja in izzivi, saj je zaradi vse večje pomembnosti dejavnosti v turističnem sektorju treba zapolniti raziskovalno vrzel, v prvi fazi pa razmisliti o globini in širini raziskav. Glede na fragmentiranost kongresne dejavnosti je treba najprej uveljaviti ustrezno terminologijo ter opraviti poglobljeno analizo stanja na področju ponudbe kongresnih storitev in njegovem povpraševanju, opraviti ekonomsko oceno možnih vplivov kongresnih prireditev ter analizirati dejavnike odločitve za izbiro kongresne destinacije. Tudi v Sloveniji je pri raziskovanju treba slediti novim vprašanjem, kot je ozelenjevanje kongresnih prireditev. Menimo, da je zaradi tradicije kongresne dejavnosti v Sloveniji treba z raziskovanjem podpreti njen razvoj ter poskrbeti za širitev znanja.

Ključne besede: kongresna dejavnost, kongresne prireditve, kongresni turizem, raziskovanje kongresne dejavnosti, raziskovanje v turizmu

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Review of definitions in the meetings industry

Definition / aim of MEETING	Source / Author
Any off-site gathering (including conventions, congresses, conferences, seminars, workshops and symposiums) which brings together people for a common purpose: the sharing of information. This defines both corporate business (CB) and association meetings.	BECA (Business Events Council of Australia)
An event where the primary activity of the attendees is to attend educational sessions, participate in meetings/discussions, socialise, or attend other organised events. There is no exhibit component to this event.	CIC (Convention Industry Council)
A meeting is a coming together of a number of people in one place, to confer or carry out a particular activity. This can be on an ad hoc basis, or according to set pattern.	CLC (Convention Liaison Council), 1993
A meeting is a general term indicating the coming together of a number of people in one place, to confer or carry out a particular activity. Frequency: can be on an ad hoc basis or according to a set pattern, as for instance annual general meetings, committee meetings, etc.	ICCA (International Congress & Convention Association); IAPCO (The International Association of Professional Congress Organisers)
A meeting is an event where fifteen or more people meet on the premise for a minimum of six hours with a fixed agenda. A meeting lasts less than two days and does not include overnight accommodation.	Hughes, 1988
A meeting is an event that brings people together for the purposes of sharing information and to discuss and solve organisational and operational problems. It is usually a small event, often involving only a few executives. It can be a corporate meeting, seminar, symposium, or training program.	Rutherford, 1990

A meeting is usually a much smaller event, often involving a few executives discussing business round a boardroom table. The word meeting is also used in wider sense to describe conferences, meetings and seminars in a collective manner.	Seekings, 1992
A meeting is defined as a coming together of a number of people in one place, to confer or carry out a particular activity. This can be on an ad hoc basis or according to a set pattern.	CLC (Convention Liaison Council), 1993; in Weber and Chon, 2002
Definition / aim of CONFERENCE	Source / Author
1) Participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact-finding, problem solving and consultation. 2) An event used by any organisation to meet and exchange views, convey a message, open a debate or give publicity to some area of opinion on a specific issue. No tradition, continuity or periodicity is required to convene a conference. Although not generally limited in time, conferences are usually of short duration with specific objectives. Conferences are generally organised on a smaller scale than congresses.	CIC (Convention Industry Council)
Participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact-finding, problem solving and consultation. As compared with a congress, a conference is normally smaller in scale and more select in character – features which tend to facilitate the exchange of information. The term “conference” carries no special connotation as to frequency. Though not inherently limited in time, conferences are usually of limited duration with specific objectives.	ICCA (International Congress & Convention Association); IAPCO (The International Association of Professional Congress Organisers)
A meeting of two or more people to discuss a common concern.	IACVB (International Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaux)
Conference often last for several days and may attract hundreds or even thousands of delegates; they may involve complex social programmes, exhibitions and displays. Many of larger conferences have international audiences and are events of national and international interest.	Seekings, 1992
A conference is an out of office meeting of at least six hours duration, involving a minimum of eight people.	BTA (British Tourist Authority, 1999) in Weber and Chon, 2002

Conferences are for the most part meetings that are important in terms of topics as well as consequences of the accomplished work. A conference is a meeting which is usually smaller than a congress, but may still be attended by several hundred participants. It may be concerned with a more narrowly defined topic than a congress and it involves just one group of professionals in the framework of one discipline.	Zidanski, 2005
A conference is an interactive meeting intended for discussion, exchange of opinions, seeking solutions and consultation. A conference is not limited with a particular sequence of events or length of duration. It is usually smaller in scope and shorter than a congress, and serves a specific purpose.	Kongresna Ljubljana 2020
Definition / aim of CONVENTION	Source / Author
1) The regular coming together of large groups of individuals, generally to discuss a particular subject. A congress will often last several days and have several simultaneous sessions. The length of time between congresses is usually established in advance of the implementation stage, and can be either pluriannual or annual. Most international or world congresses are of the former type while national congresses are more frequently held annually. 2) Meeting of an association of delegates or representatives from constituent organisations. 3) European term for convention.	CIC (Convention Industry Council)
In continental Europe congress is the usual English equivalent for the convention.	Seekings, 1992
A congress involves a larger number of participants: several hundred to several thousand. It is widely open to cooperation of all organisations and competent persons. The conclusions of a congress are intended for the general public. Congresses take place in intervals of a few years.	Zidanski, 2005
A congress is a regular meeting of a large group of individuals with the purpose of discussing a particular topic. It lasts for several days and includes several simultaneous lectures. A congress occurs on a continuous basis, annually or once every two years.	Kongresna Ljubljana 2020, 2011
Definition / aim of CONVENTION	Source / Author
1) An event where the primary activity of the attendees is to attend educational sessions, participate in meetings/discussions, socialise, or attend other organised events. There is a secondary exhibit component. 2) Gathering of delegates, representatives, and members of a membership or industry organisation convened for a common purpose. Common features include educational sessions, committee meetings, social functions, and meetings to conduct the governance business of the organisation. Conventions are typically recurring events with specific, established timing.	CIC (Convention Industry Council), 2006 CIC (Convention Industry Council), 2011
Assemblage of delegates, representatives, and members of an organisation convened for a common purpose. A general and formal meeting of a legislative body, social or economic group in order to provide information on a particular situation and in order to establish consent on policies among the participants. Usually of limited duration with set objectives, but no determined frequency.	IACVB (International Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaux)
The word convention implies a gathering of greater importance, size and formality – perhaps to formulate policy and select candidates for office. (...) The word convention is preferred in America.	Seekings, 1992

A convention is defined as an assembly of persons for some common object or for the exchange of ideas, views, and information of common interest to the group. (...) ... is widely used in in America, Australia, and Asia to describe the traditional form of annual or total membership meetings.	Lawson, 1992; in Weber and Chon, 2002
A convention is an assembly of people for the exchange of ideas, views, and information that is periodical and often accompanied by an exhibition of products and services.	Rutherford, 1980; in Weber and Chon, 2002

Source: Adapted from UNWTO, 2006; Weber & Chon, 2002; Seekings, 1992; Kongresna Ljubljana 2020, 2011; Zidanski, 2005, CIC, 2011.