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Tourism and Hotel Management

The contribution of the convention venues of Budapest to the conference tourism

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Tourism and Hotel Management at the Budapest Business School has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other institution. This thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research; it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged. I understand that my thesis may be made available to the public.

Eudás Kiti

Dissertation Consultation Progress Report

Name of the Student: ERDŐS KITI

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TOURISM

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Statement certifies that the student appeared in the consultations at least three times. I have seen the last version of the dissertation - by definition not be the final - even the version of the proposed minor changes do not take into account a meeting dissertation imposed on the form and content requirements. The structure of dissertation follows the requirements of higher education.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The title of the dissertation is: The contribution of the convention venues of Budapest to the conference tourism.

The first reason why the author decided on this topic is because her industrial placement took place in the Corinthia Hotel Budapest. In this hotel, conference tourism plays an important part, as Corinthia Hotel Budapest, beside the leisure activities, is a conference hotel. Throughout the year, many conferences and congresses are held in the Valletta Conference Centre and in the Grand Ballroom. During the internship, the author often met business person who arrived at the Hotel to transact a business or to take part in conferences. However, the author did not have the opportunity to observe the business facilities and services within the conference organising area. It is a constant interest of the author how the conferences are organised, what the important steps to make an event successful and enjoyable. Throughout this paper, the author focuses on examining the conference tourism and to get familiar with the processes.

On the other hand, conference tourism plays a significant role worldwide. It is a special segment in the huge tourism industry and year by year it shows an increasing tendency. Many people take part on a business trip to conduct a meeting, to have new relationships and to develop him/her in the business section.

In Hungary, conference tourism also plays a significant role. Mainly Hungarians are the major clients, but international orders are important as well. The author firmly believes that it is relevant to observe and analyse the situation in Hungary, as the area has many opportunities to offer which are significant places to organise and held a conference. During the decades, important venues were built, which may provide an ideal place for the events with the good possibilities to make a conference successful. Moreover, agencies are established to focus on only conventions and organise business travels due to the growing tendencies.

At the end of the dissertation, the author would like to get a clear view on the industry and the Hungarian situation. With finding the problems, the author will be able to find solutions to develop the Hungarian situation.

1.2 Hypothesis, aim, objectives

Hypothesis

The convention venues of Budapest can have important benefits on international level.

By the end of the dissertation work, the author intends to prove that it is good for the foreigners to hold the international conferences and congresses in Budapest.

Aim

This aim of this paper is to show the relation between the convention venues and conference tourism.

Objectives

During the dissertation work it is significant to set up objectives and find answers to them. The objectives gave the author the guidelines during the research period. With them, important developments and changes can be invented. The Objectives of the dissertation are the following:

1st is to introduce and analyse the Hungarian conference tourism. During the last decades, the Hungarian conference tourism went through many changes through which it became more and more important.

2nd is to examine the most important convention venues of Budapest which are significant for the organisers.

3rd is to find out the opinion of Hungarian organizers about the reason why for international conferences Budapest is suitable.

4th is to outline the possibilities of the Whale, SYMA and Concert Hall (Pesti Vigadó) to become a better options for a conference.

By realising how Budapest can be sold with the mentioned sites as a conference venue, the author can state that the Hungarian capital is worth taking into consideration as the conference venue.

1.3 Structure of dissertation

The dissertation is divided into 5 chapters. These parts are logically and thematically linked to each other.

The first chapter is the introduction, which introduces the topic of the dissertation, the hypothesis, aims and objectives.

The second chapter is the literature review. It defines all the necessary theoretical knowledge about the analysed topic. Important background information about Hungary, the related conference tourism and the introduction of the venues can be found here.

The third chapter is the methodology, where the applied research methods and written materials are discussed.

The fourth chapter contains the analysis of results. The information collected from the interviews is included and discussed in more details in the fifth chapter which is the conclusion.

1.4 Summary

The first chapter shows the mission of the dissertation. This thesis demonstrates the Hungarian conference tourism and explains the importance of this tourism field. The author aim is to present conference tourism and to examine the topic. The introduction part includes the hypothesis, aim and objectives of the dissertation. Furthermore, the structure of the dissertation can be found also in the

Introduction. The forthcoming chapter lays down the ground for the dissertation creating a basic knowledge for the later topics.

2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In the first chapter the author is going to establish the basic knowledge of the dissertation work. The basis of the conference tourism and the Hungarian situation will be presented. Following this, in the second part, important convention venues of Budapest will be introduced including the three chosen venues which are going to be interview themes later. Literature review contain dates which are significant to be familiar with. Because of the reason, the investigated area is Hungary; the literature review is based on literature sources in Hungarian and translated by the author.

2.2 Business travel and conference, convention tourism in general

Over the decades, tourism showed a continuous growth and a deepen diverseness to become the biggest industry all over the world. It is responsible for more than one in eleven jobs globally. Tourism contributes to the GDP with 9.8% and 6% to the world's exports. The member countries of the European Union have different views in connection with the tourism industry. It is determined by their culture, tradition, economy and the tourism type which exist in their country. To mention some example, those countries that are dominant and also called as sender countries in the tourism industry, they do not need the interference of the European Union in their tourism section. Opposite to this, the Mediterranean countries are capable for different kind of supporting from the European Union to be able to develop. (Talabos, 2003) Determining the motivation and the aim of the travel, tourism can be divided into three parts:

1. Leisure tourism
2. Visiting friends and relatives (VFR)
3. Business tourism

All over the world, approximately 10% accounts the business tourism at international level. From 2000 to 2007, business travel contributed to the creation of more than 40 million workplaces. It also means that at the same time, with this improvement, the statistics shows a 20% increasing in the global employment. Supposing, the business travel industry decreased by 25% during two years, this would mean that the number of jobs would be 30 million less. It is a fast-growing segment of the largest industry in the world. This section is significant because throughout this, people can create new relationships, they can enlarge their knowledge and they are able to get familiar with more innovations in connection with their work. We can distinguish the regular business travel, which is conducted by the company, whose employees will travel on business purpose on behalf of the company. (Garán, 2014)¹ A unique segment within business tourism is the MICE which stand for the Meeting, Incentives, Congress and Exhibition/ Events words. The advantages of the MICE are that there is no seasonality; it takes longer than for example the leisure breaks. Furthermore, during these events, additional services are involved and there is a high need of the qualified employees. During a business event, the countries can also sell themselves. The main challenge is to identify the trends and meet business traveller's needs.

If we investigate the business travel deeper, we can see that conventions represent the biggest incidence. Conferences and conventions are usually planned in advance and they are organised along a particular purpose. They are arranged according to a previously accepted agenda and programs. (Talabos, 2014) The business section prefers to use the conference type of events. Two reasons can be defined. First of all, these kinds of activities are not direct marketing tools, they focus on the aim that they would like to achieve, the information they would like to handle over.

We can ask, what are the meanings of conferences? These are those kinds of events that are ordered by enterprises or group of businesses to give and change

¹ Lecture material

information. It is based on consultations, presentations and often other complementary services and exhibitions are given. The conferences are usually organised for the employees of a business and the inner sphere of an enterprise can take into consideration. Furthermore, the participants can be the partners and customers of a business. It often happens that the targeted group is not the business partners. In case of state organizations, governments and larger public services for which the event is organised, the main aim is not the selling of products, but the professional orientation. (Novák, 2002)

Countries are continuously looking for the opportunities to increase their attractiveness as a convention destination. More and more resorts and hotels are opened with business facilities and rooms for meetings to become significant participants for the conference organizers. Mainly the bigger cities are chosen for the place of a convention. Making the right decision, firstly, the organizers take into consideration that the place is easily accessible and it should have quality service. Furthermore, it is also significant that the city is attractive from a touristic point of view. Compared to the leisure tourism, the conference tourism also has the preferred months which are mainly from April to May and from September to October which is called the third season in the tourism industry. In this case, the third season helps to exploit the opportunities of hotels and catering trade better. The right of making a congress is an outstanding income source for the organizer city². (Michalkó, 2013) Moreover, conference programs also exist, in which, participants can enjoy a city tour, sightseeing or golf as a systematic part of their programme. Increasing the number of those business travellers who would like to take their families on a business trip. This gives the opportunity to work together with hotels and convention centres to create new offerings which would be enjoyable for the children and spouses. The family market shows an increasing tendency because people work more and they would like to balance their work and family. According to the Travel Industry Association of America, the number of those people who brought their families to their business trips, increased with 55% in the 19th century. (www.tradeforum.org)

² Translated by the author

Conference market can be well organized and manageable. The topic of a convention determines the participants, and we can be familiar with the sender country and the special needs from the previous confirmation. All over the world, there are big scrambles among the countries and the organizers to get the right for organizing a conference. It is easier for the more popular places to grab availability. In 2014, according to the world wide ranking of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) which provides the last dates published in 2014 according to the number of meetings per country, the first position is given for the United States of America (USA) with 831 meetings. The USA is followed by Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. On that list, Hungary is listed to the 31th place with 125 meetings.

Table 1: Worldwide ranking: number of meetings per country

Rank	Country	# Meetings
1	U.S.A.	831
2	Germany	659
3	Spain	578
4	United Kingdom	543
5	France	533
6	Italy	452
7	Japan	337
8	China-P.R.	332
9	Netherlands	307
10	Brazil	291
11	Austria	287
12	Canada	265
13	Australia	260

Source: www.iccaworld.com

Following with another table, analysing the countries world widely according to the estimated total numbers of participants, the first places are mainly the same, but on that list Hungary goes more below until the 41th place with 27014 participants. World widely the country does not reaches success, but the ICCA shows a better situation throughout Europe ranking list. According to the number of meetings per country in Europe, the most popular countries are Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. It is not surprising because on the worldwide list, they were presented also in the leader board. On that list, Hungary reached a better place, the 18th with 125 meetings.

Table 2: Europe ranking: number of meetings per country

Rank	Country	# Meetings
1	Germany	659
2	Spain	578
3	United Kingdom	543
4	France	533
5	Italy	452
6	Netherlands	307
7	Austria	287
8	Sweden	238
9	Portugal	229
10	Switzerland	226
11	Turkey	190
12	Belgium	187
13	Denmark	164
14	Finland	162
15	Poland	161
16	Greece	148
17	Czech Republic	146
18	Hungary	125
19	Norway	114
20	Ireland	108

Source: www.iccaworld.org

To become more familiar with the situation of conference tourism of Hungary, the author is going to introduce it in the next chapter.

2.3 Hungarian conference tourism

2.3.1 A short history

In Hungary, many opportunities were given for the formation of the organization of the conference tourism. The first option was the innovation of the congress centres and the development of hotels. In 1985, Budapest Convention Centre opened its gates, but before this, in 1982, – mainly with the help of Austrian supplies – seven 4-5 stars hotels were built with more than 2000 rooms in Budapest. This number of places gave the opportunity for the conference organization to start up. Quality conferences and congresses were begun. It must be mentioned that their antecedent was in 1980. During the organization of the Physiological World congress, in Budapest, there were no congress centre and there were also problems with the situation of the hotels. Compared to this, a real mega-conference was held at the place of the International Sale of Budapest. It was the event that made Budapest

becomes more and more popular among the conference and congress locations. Today, the creation of the rural conference centres is in process. For example in Sopron, Szeged, Pécs and other congress centres also can be found. In reality, in those cities where high schools and universities exist, huge conferences can be held. (Pusztai, 2005)

2.3.2 Hungary statistics

It is known in the world of conference organization, that however Hungary is a small country, it is able to present huge things. More and more international business people come here, the conference and business tourism show an increasing tendency. It can be laid down that Hungary is a suitable place for many mega sittings. In the country, lots of places are given to conduct a sitting and focus on only the business. Beautiful locations, touristic attractions and programmes are also attractive at the destination. (Dr. Faragó, 1999) Yearly statistics are published about the world conference tourism by the two biggest associations which are the Union of International Association (UIA) and the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA). These two associations make the rankings according to several criteria's. The data's of the UIA and ICCA are usually different, because they do not assign the same number of conferences to Hungary. According to an article, written by the Hungarian Convention Bureau from 1998 to 2007, Budapest was among the ten most popular conference cities, but on the other hand, the UIA said that the Hungarian capital reached the 12th place, what is more, in 2007, it was only on the 24th place. Of course, Hungarian statistics are also made about the tendency of the Hungarian MICE tourism. In accordance with the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 42 million 468 foreign visitors arrived in Hungary in 2007. Out of this huge amount: 38.5% with leisure motivation, 16.6% with business purpose, 22.4% for visiting friends and relatives and 15% with other purpose such as learning or transaction. If we investigate the Hungarian conference situation from 1993 to 2007, we can see that the number of conferences and participants shows an increasing number. The Hungarian Convention Bureau also monitored the changing of the trends of the domestic programme market in 2011. The average duration of the international conventions was 3.4 days and the average numbers of participants were

above 209 head. As mentioned before, Hungary gained better position in the following points:

- Increasing number of international conferences
- Number of participants on international conferences
- Number of average days of international conferences
- Number of other conventions
- Number of participants of other conventions

The market of trade tourism is Budapest centred in the future, which shows that in 2011, the number of conferences increased by 3%. The most popular rural conference places are: Gödöllő, Szeged, Pécs, Debrecen, Eger, Sopron, and many areas near to Lake Balaton. Beside these places, we can mention those ones which are usually the host places for two international conferences: Visegrád, Szombathely, Székesfehérvár, Veszprém, or Kecskemét. (www.hcb.hu)

To introduce Hungarian rural areas to the international market, it is a key issue of Hungary to strengthen its position at an international level. According to the statistics of the Hungarian Convention Bureau, the number of organised conferences was 1197 in the first six months in 2014. Out of this amount, internationals were 476 and Hungarian 721, which shows a 10.7% increase compared to the same previous year. 190 thousand people took part in the conferences. 72% of the conventions were held in Budapest, and the remaining 28% on rural area. Budapest is still the host city for 80% of the international conferences. Mainly the Hungarian conferences, approximately 40% are organised outside the capital. Under the international conferences the experts mean those company or alliance events, on which minimum 50 foreign people take part. (www.hcb.hu)

Opposing this, the Hungarian conferences are those company or alliance events, on which minimum 50 Hungarian participants participate. These definitions differ from the definitions set by the International Congress and Convention Association. In the following table shows, that in case of Hungarian conferences, the ration is more balanced than the international ones.

Table 3: Area distribution of international and Hungarian conferences (%):

	Budapest	Rural Area
International	82	18
Hungarian	63	37
Total	72	28

Source: www.itthon.hu, www.hcb.hu ³

In 2013, the role of the hotels increased in Hungary. 85.3% of the conventions were held in hotels, 6.8% in congress centres, 2.3% on universities and 5.6% were held on other convention places. The number of international conferences according to the statistics was 476 with 78814 participants. Beside this, the Hungarian conference had more, exactly 721 with 109071 participants. The main part of the events were organised with 50-100 people. In the first half of 2014, according to the specialisation, 55% of them were medical themed, 13.8% agricultural and the remaining part was information technology, natural science and others. Examining the customers of the international conferences, in the first position stays the Hungarians with 51%. British customers are in the second position with 9.4% and they are followed by the Americans with 8.4%. If we analyse the arrivals, mainly German, British and American participants arrived to Hungary to participate on an international conference.⁴ (www.hcb.hu)

2.3.3 Conference Ambassador Programme

Some years ago, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences wrote application for conference organizing support. The essence of the support was that they wanted to encourage the building of national relations. International conferences or workshops organised by research facilities in Hungary could apply for it. However, the support is not valid now due to lack of money. According to Csesznok Júlia (2015), from the

³ The table was modified by the author

⁴ Translated by the author

Hungarian Convention Bureau, there is a question mark about the existing state support for conferences. Hungarian Tourism Ltd. has created a Conference Ambassador Programme. The aim of it is to organize more international conferences in Hungary which enrich the Hungarian scientific, economic and cultural life. What is more it can strengthen the tourism of the country. The task of the Hungarian Tourism Ltd. is to popularize the Hungarian tourism at home and outland as well. In this context the HT Ltd⁵. entrusts the participants of the programme to bring the international events to Hungary. Besides this they need to represent the HT Ltd. and propagate its publications. Who can submit an offer? Those organizations, associations and foundations can apply which are registered in Hungary and are members of an international organization. Moreover, those individual entrepreneurs can submit an offer who takes part personally in the process of application. Organizations of which activity is not authorized or which has bankruptcy debt, cannot take part in the program. Applicants can apply with not gained organization right and not decided convention venue. The number of foreign participants in these organizations must be minimum 60% and 350 people. The form of providing financial resources is based on agency contract. The assignments fee can be maximum gross 4 million HUF, according to the given number of participants:

- 500 participants – maximum 1 million HUF
- 500-1000 participants – maximum 2 million HUF
- 1000-2000 participants - maximum 3 million HUF
- Above 2000 participants, individual judgement

Application forms can be submitted continuously, but at least two months before the presentation. (www.hcb.hu)

2.3.4 Short-term future plan

According to the Hungarian Tourism Ltd, most of the conferences are held from September to December. Signs show that those companies which are connected in this section can hope the same in 2015. International conferences are organised continuously mainly in Budapest. Countryside places are not the most suitable ones

⁵ Hungarian Tourism Ltd.

because they cannot be approached by aeroplane from foreign countries. The market looks forward the construction of the new congress centre which would be able to give place for 4-5 hundred participants. It will be next to the Palace of Arts, where now a huge parking space can be found. Plans of the building will be ready at the end of this year and it will be finished in 2018. Total expenses of the centre return within 8-10 years. Hungary contends for the organisation of many huge international conferences between the years 2018 and 2024. Chances would be bigger if the investment could start. However, results are already shown: in 2017, Hungary will organise the conference of Hungarian Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. 134 countries with approximately 1500 guests will visit our capital. The aim of the Hungarian Tourism Ltd. is that Budapest becomes one of the most popular European conference cities to the year 2020. Until that time barriers should be pulled down. First of all they have to cope with the problems of convention venues and deficiencies of infrastructure. (Világgazdaság, 2015)

2.4 Defining the meaning of Professional Conference Organizer

In this section of the dissertation the tasks and responsibilities of the Professional Conference Organizer would be discussed. The discussion is based on the literature by Faragó (2015) and the important information of the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers.

The PCO acronym is the abbreviation of the last three worlds of the International Association of Professional Congress Organizers. It is the international term used for a person who is professionally trained, educated and specialized in congress organization. Professional Conference Organizer is not a travel agency, but it can be a section of a congress travel agency. The differentiation is that for the PCO that the main activity is the organization of congresses, business and incentive tourism. It does not deal with programmes of leisure group travellers. It is contracted with companies, associations and alliances for whom, according to given circumstances, sessions could be organised. PCOs are often private firms, which have more clients and they work parallel on more conventions. The number of Professional Conference Organizer depends on the commission. It can happen that

because of the reason of a bigger conference, a new PCO is established for months or for a year which does not work together after the end of the event. According to the view of the market, the PCO is the buyer and also the seller in the same person who works with the know-how method, sell its own know-how and its work, but for the success of an event it buys from others. It is the organizer, completer and supervisor of a session. It comes from this that the Professional Conference Organizer cannot make a mistake. All of its work is a premier; there is no chance for a dress rehearsal. PCO has to pay attention to the client. The customer in many cases does not know exactly the strict expectation; only make a draft for the organizer. PCO has to fully understand the imagination and expectation of the client. For the customer, the session is a professional success, domestic and international appreciation is significant. Furthermore, Professional Conference Organizer has to give some pieces of advice. Because of the continuous change of the exchange rates and prices, it is not easy to make a financial plan. This is the reason why the PCO has to be an expert in the calculation because it gives many unsure factors. Moreover, flexibility is also a key point because it has to manage well the upcoming changing. The fixed programme is only real when it is over. Any convention can change during the organization and arrangement period. That conference which seems to be impossible has to be also organised. Detailed analyses and documents have to be handed over to the client to support the closed event. PCO must have good foreign language knowledge. It is expected from the PCO to find sponsors and make advantageous contracts. A huge convention bind significant working capital, returning time is long. The whole preparation part is financed by the PCO, and the first incomes come later. It happens many times, that the price for a conference is lower for a certain time with previous registration than few days before the event. The reason of this that the PCO would like to know as soon as possible how many people would like to participate in the convention this is why it reduced the prices. On the other hand, it can occur that PCO needs income to be able to cover expenses. Cancellation price change according to the time: the paid price in the conference is not paid back if the conference is cancelled before the start of the event. By that time, all the services are already ordered. If they are not used or only with a decreased number, the retailer charges forfeit. Among the previously mentioned scope of duties, the PCO staffs are responsible for the following works: registration, accommodation, tours, exhibition,

printed materials, finances, executives and assistants of a congress, guiding of organizing committee, transportation.⁶ (Dr. Faragó, 1999)

An important Association exist which mission statement is the following: *“The IAPCO mission is to raise the standards of service amongst its members and other sectors of the meetings industry by means of continuing education and interaction with other professionals.”* (<http://www.iapco.org/all-about-iapco/what-we-do/iapcos-aims/>). IAPCO means International Association of Professional Congress Organisers. They try to achieve worldwide accreditation and knowledge of true PCOs. The administration and organisation of congresses, conferences and other national and international meetings are handled by them. IAPCO makes different kind of trainings to make the PCOs more efficient and lies down the theoretical rules of international congresses. PCO can be involved to the organization process at any stage but the best way to employ them as soon as possible at the beginning of the whole process. In order to find the most suitable PCO for the conference of congress, all the necessary information has to be handed over for them in a tender document to be able to establish the most appropriate services and programs. It has to prepare a budget for the conference according to the given details. It is important to take into consideration before selecting the right PCO to think over what kind of event they took part previously, their knowledge and experience. A list should be created about them to be able to make a clear view. The chosen one contributes to the conference as much or as little as it is required. A whole list can be found on the webpage of the IAPCO about the task of the right PCO. Some of them are going to be presented to be able to see the importance of it:

- Venue research and feasibility
- Finance consultancy – pre-finance, sponsorship, exhibitions, loans
- Book-keeping
- Registration processing systems
- Marketing and public relations
- Insurance cover
- Food and beverage

(www.iapco.org)

⁶ Translated by the author

2.5 Convention/Conference venue

The world is full of with better and better conference opportunities but many sittings are not organised at the right place. Choosing the right area is a kind of science. Rarely happens that an event is held at the same place. Usually those countries or cities are chosen where a representative of the organization exists and where a kind of relationship exists in connection with the theme of the convention. It can hardly be imagined that an alpinist world congress could be organised in Hungary, but the country is suitable for many studies of science and the best ones have already made sitting here. Decision makers visit the chosen place and they travel there to visit it. Before the exact place would be selected, first of all the country and the city is chosen. All over the world many conference cities can be found. For the cities, organising a conference is an extra investment. The smaller the city, the better economic effect can be felt. (Dr. Faragó, 1999) The larger participant number conferences are usually held in those conference centres which purpose built. Some of them are organised in hotels, which can cater- for maximum couple of hundred conventions. For those events which are made in summertime or at weekends, the ideal places are the convention centres university or high school. First of all, the capacity of the centre or area has to take into consideration. It has to be thought over what kind of event will be organised and after that the area can be chose. The place should be easily accessible by public transport or by car. Accommodation and programmes should be given for the participants. Furthermore, technical equipment is very significant. Important desirable aspects of conference centres are the air conditioner, heating and airing. Adding to this, the natural lightning and darkening to make the event better. Moreover important facilities are the following ones:

- Stage technical facilities
- Sound techniques elements (public address system, translation system)
- Visual technique elements (screen, overhead and slide projector)
- Communication infrastructure (telephone, internet, fax)

There are further additional services which are needed for a conference. These are the registration area, cloakroom, arrangement tables, safe, printing

facilities and offices. The most suitable places are visited by the conference organizers. They gather the needed services and facilities for the convention. (www.rendezvenyszervezo.com) According to the IAPCO, finding the best venue for the organised conference or congress, the following points should be taken into consideration:

- Cost
- Infrastructure/services
- Local suppliers containing in-house audio visual
- Staff experience with similar events
- Internet capacity
- Quality/management
- Hotel capacities
- Accessibility
- Airport/international access
- Safety and Security
- Customs clearance/entry controls
- National regulations
- Capacity: Exhibition space including access
- Registration area
- Session halls
- Catering

(www.iapco.org)

2.6 Examination of the popular convention venues of Budapest

In this part, the author is going to introduce six significant, independently elected convention venues of Budapest. The chosen venues are well known and popular places in the capital for events, conventions and conferences. The aim is to show the structure and given availabilities of them for organizations. With the description the author would like to create a view about the possibilities.

2.6.1 Hungexpo

Hungexpo is one of the biggest exhibitions organizer company in Budapest. From 1967, with more than 40 years of experience, it is the leader on the domestic market. High level trade shows and markets are organised in Hungary and on abroad. Its aim is to become a determining exhibition organizer place in East-Central Europe. The other significant field of the Hungexpo is the HUNGEXPO Budapest Fair Centre which is an ideal place for conferences and exhibitions.

What kind of services do they offer? It is 15 km far from the centre of Budapest with a renewed area. There are eight event halls with the capacity of 250-15000 places. The Hungexpo is like a huge construction toy; it is spacious and is a flexible area which can be fitted easily to be comfortable for 15000 participants. Parking place is also given. The area is suitable for concerts, congresses and conferences, business meetings, sport events and exhibitions. (www.hungexpo.hu)

2.6.2 Whale

The Whale is a trade, cultural, entertaining and host centre. The City Centre with Inner-Ferenc city part and the touristic zone with gastro part are connected by it. The building is unique because it is a statue, a sightseeing attraction also. The Whale offers availability on the second floor which is the Big Conference room for events organization like: conference, banquet, party, private event, training or news conference. The area contains two separate catering rooms. The huge place can be varied and furnished easily. This is the reason why it is suitable to make traditional stage conventions or sessions. Built-in sound system, conference hands free with six microphones are available. The area is 1100 square metre with 600 square metre foreground. The capacity of the parking area is 250. To continue with, smaller events can be held on the third floor of the Whale which is called Small Events room. It is appropriate for a few hundred people. Participants are impressed by the breath-taking panorama. Not only the outside area is fascinating, but also the inner gallery of the building. The room is 480 square metres with two smaller dressing rooms. Not at least, the Whale disposes of a fourth floor which is an open panorama terrace. It can be called as a uniqueness of the building, from which a wonderful view can be taken

for whole Budapest. The terrace is 215 square metres with 74 square metre raised podium. (www.balnabudapest.hu)

2.6.3 SYMA

The SYMA+SD Ltd. were set up in 1990. It is one of the leading convention organizers not only in Hungary for 5 years. Yearly, it gives the place for approximately 120 events. Three multifunctional halls, easily approachable and free parking places make the area more proper. SYMA is suitable for conferences, congresses, exhibitions, sport events, gala dinners, company organizations and trade shows. The inner area is shaped without columns. It gives many separate rooms and on-the-spot restaurants. International conferences can be organised with maximum 2500 participants. With the easily movable walls, in the “C” building four 300-500 capacity sections can be made with the name of the Olympic cities: Mexico, Munich, Montreal, and Moscow. The C building is also used as a media room. In the “A” building, the area is suitable for international congresses. It has the biggest carrying capacity because a huge camion can drive in the hall and the walls will not be cracked. The exhibitions, sport events or musicals are usually kept here. Additional services can be enlisted such as: catering, planning, furniture rental, safety service, hostess service...etc. In the “B” hall, openings and plenary sessions are usually held. On the first floor, the 120 participant capacity Melbourne room, 9-120 capacity Roma and restaurant are situated. On the second floor, the offices and a huge terrace can be found. (www.syma.hu)

2.6.4 Budapest Congress Centre

The Hungarian capital Budapest with the Hotel Novotel Budapest City and Budapest Congress Centre are successful points for organising an event which has the capacity for 2000 people. The Centre is really convenient for the participants because the Novotel Budapest City hotel is 25 km far from the airport which stays in connection with the Budapest Congress Centre. The area is suitable for the organization of conferences and congresses, trade shows, exhibitions, shows, concerts and events. 25 years professional experience is provided for the foreigners

with a little Hungarian style. Conventions can be organized in one or in 20 multifunctional rooms. Uniqueness of the place is the 96 square metres high projection screens and the fact that they are able to make a gala dinner for 850 participants in one room. Moveable walls can be moved according to the imagination of the customer. On the ground floor level meeting rooms can be easily found at the Budapest Congress Center and the Novotel Budapest City. (www.bcc.hu)

2.6.5 Lurdy Conference Centre

Lurdy Conference Centre is situated on the first floor of the Lurdy House. It is situated close to the city centre near to the Rákóczi Bridge. Besides the fact that it is easily approachable by public transport and car, it has unlimited capacity free parking places. The company has more than 10 years of experience in the convention organization area. Five conferences and event centres await the events, conventions, conferences or exhibitions on approximately 2500 square metre. The rooms are technically well equipped. Ten restaurants are available for the guests, but on request an own catering company can be used. The capacity of the area is 1200 people. (www.lurdykonferencia.hu)

2.6.6 Concert Hall (Pesti Vigadó)

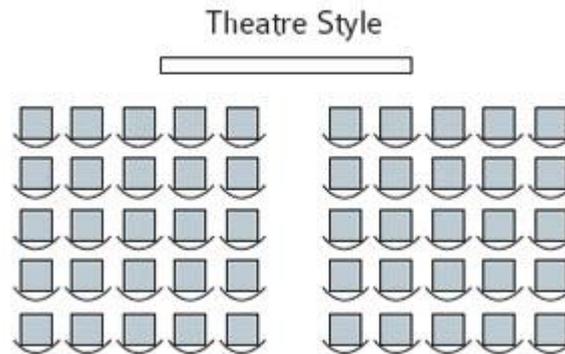
The renewed Concert Hall is situated in the heart of Budapest. The rooms are available for external partners. It can be a worthy and suitable place for many varieties of conventions as: concert, exhibition, ball, conference and diplomacy, business type of representative events. The building can be accessed by wheelchair and it contains a lower level, ground floor and II-IV-V-VI Floors. General services include cleaning and maintenance duty during the convention. Professional sound and lightning technique is provided. The Concert Hall offers catering service from the mobile buffet to the elegant gala dinner. Hostess and cloakroom services are available. The lower level has 270 square metre exhibition areas which are in connection with the Gallery situated on the ground floor. Concert Hall Gallery can be found at the ground level, which is the biggest exhibition room of it. The lobby and foyer is ideal for reception, welcome reception and standing reception.

Ceremonial hall, North and South rooms, parlour and dressing rooms can be found on the second floor. They can be appropriate place for the organization of concerts, cultural events, conferences, standing and sitting reception and gala dinner. High quality conferences also can be held on the fourth floor, where Makovecz room is situated. Fifth floor includes separate rooms where cultural conventions and periodic exhibitions can be organised. Not at least, sixth floor of the Concert Hall is unique built multipurpose exhibition rooms which give the place for many periodic exhibitions, cultural and artistic exhibitions. Add to this, the sixth floor is connected to the exhibition room of the fifth floor. The Panoramic terrace with Danube panorama also can be found on the sixth floor which provides a breath-taking view. (www.vigado.hu)

2.7 Requirements of a Conference Centre

The author considers it important to lay down the basic requirements of a conference centre because later on, this topic will play a significant part. It is easier to make a conclusion if we know the average structure of such a centre in order to be able to see the problems in Hungary. The International Association of Professional Congress Organisers published 35 pages long document about the main aspects of a suitable conference centre. To be aware of them, the author is going to mention some of the main factors. World widely many centres are being planned. The IAPCO collected the basic requirements which can be useful in the planning and construction process. The auditorium of right building has to accept 3500 people. Main halls can be divided into minimum four areas from which one area is 1000 theatre style, in case of three areas, 400 theatre styles is allowed.

Figure 1: Layout of theatre style



Source: www.conferencevenues.com.au

Another important aspect is the exhibition area, which need to be a column free space on a maximum 10000 square meters and minimum 5000 square meters space. For the offices, secretariat, meetings....etc. fixed places need to be created. Furthermore, requested area is the wide and long foyers, where people can make the registration work, poster displays or equip stand up catering. In addition to the area requirements, many aspects are collected which has to be taken into consideration when a conference is organised. Have to think of those people who are disabled. Wide service lifts and tall doors have to be created in order to bring the large and heavy equipment. For the participants, appropriate parking place has to be made. Moreover, the designers have to think of the storage place where the materials and equipment can be kept. All the required technique gadgets have to be included. (www.iapco.org)

2.8 Summary

In the literature review, the author created the bases of the dissertation. During the research, libraries were visited providing important written materials in connection with the business tourism and inside this, the conference and convention tourism. The author was able to be familiar with yearly statistics provided by official conference and congress sites. Furthermore, many articles were read and analysed in connection with the topic. In addition to this, important convention venues were chosen which contributes to the conference organisation and tourism in Hungary.

From the venues, later on three will be chosen to be analysed and making future plan in the conclusion part.

3 Methodology

The third part of the dissertation work is the methodology. In this chapter, the method of research used by the author and the information data collection used up to fulfil the aim of the stated hypothesis which says that the convention venues of Budapest have important benefits on international level. Methodology is clarifying information collection and methods of research including from where, how, when and by whom it was gathered. The literature clarified the basis of convention and conference tourism, the important data's of Hungary and significant places.

3.1 Secondary research

Already existing materials were used by the author for secondary research. Main part of the information and literatures were collected by libraries, books and articles which have strong connections to the chosen topic. Tour Operation 2 and Convention and Event Management Lectures created reliable bases. Books of Dr. Faragó Hilda, Novák László, Michalkó Gábor and Pusztai János gave important information for the topic of the dissertation. Furthermore, many websites gave to the author significant information which cannot be found in any book. Because of the reason that the investigated area is Hungary, the literatures which were provided by libraries were written in Hungarian language. The author translated all of them into English. The www.syma.hu, www.hungexpo.hu, www.balna.hu, www.bcc.hu, www.vigado.hu and www.lurdykonferencia.hu provided the basic data's about the investigated venues in Hungary. From these sites, the author was able to look in and learn more about the facilities and possibilities of some convention venues. Moreover, the www.hcb.hu site, which is an important association in Hungary, help to the author to see the availabilities in connection with the supports. Add to this, beside the books, internet sites helped to the author to be more familiar with the convention and conference tourism and organization. These sites are the following ones: www.tradeforum.org, www2.unwto.org, www.rendezvenyszervezo.com. Until the end of the dissertation, the author has already found newer and newer articles in

newspapers which are also included in this work because they provided up-to-date information. The mentioned newspapers are the *Világgazdaság* and *Népszabadság*.

3.2 Primary research

The primary research includes interview and site visits. These information and data's cannot be found in any written materials. They were collected by the author personally by visiting the sites and making interviews with experts who work in companies and venues which contribute to the organization of conventions and conferences. This is the reason why this information is relevant in the dissertation. The purpose of the personal visits was to contribute and support the research process with relevant and up-to-date information. The interview questions were created by the author to be able to know as much about the investigated areas as it can. The personal visits and face-to-face interviews helped a lot. The author was able to see personally the venues and it created a useful view about them and the conference tourism. Throughout the dissertation, the author made personal interview with three convention and conference organising companies and with three venues which were chosen by the author as investigated sites. During the interviews, the interviewees were very helpful and kind with long experience in their profession; they answered all of the questions. One of the interviewee was the largest contributor. Instead of 20 minutes, the duration of the whole meeting was more than half an hour. It was really honorific for the author that its partner tried to give her all knowledge. The author saw that this person is really like her work.

The first interviewed company does not want to be mentioned because they made an opinion about a venue that they would not like to give a name. The second company was the Meeting Budapest with Szántó Éva who also works in the SYMA, but later on an explanation will be given about this situation. The third company was Carlson Wagonlit Travel Agency with Németh Beatrix. In addition to this, the author also spoke personally with the Whale and Concert Hall. In the Whale with Dobos Réka (Event Planner) and in the Concert Hall the author was able to speak with two interviewees who were Csurkulya-Molnár Adél Éva (Sales Team Leader) and Mikecz Dalma (Event Sales Manager).

3.3 Data Analysis Method

During the primary research period, quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods are used. The difference between them is going to be described later. The author thought that making interviews with experts is the best way to answer the objectives. However, not a big segment was chosen, important answers were given. It means that a Qualitative Data Analysis method was used which is going to be explained.

3.3.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis contains surveys and customer questionnaires. With them people can create statistics and facts to help and guide them during the research. For the success result, large number of people has to be reached which is have to be selected to answer the questions or fill out the questioners. By asking many people the same questions, it is possible to create a clearer picture of what their opinion is. Quantitative research also can be used to compare groups of people. The opinion of the author was that the quantitative research is not as suitable as the qualitative research for the dissertation. Many people do not know so much about conference tourism of the suitability of the venues. The author thought about to make a questioner and spread it among the organizer companies, but many companies are so busy during this period that they also refused to be an interviewee during a short interview and they did not have time to conduct with it.

3.3.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative research includes face-to-face interviews which help to know not only what the interviewee thinks but also why it thinks it. It is a more personal way to get answers for the given questions and be able to find solutions for the problems. During an interview, more questions can occur than it was planned. The interviewee can explain the opinion or if it does not understand the purpose of the question, the questioner can provide an explanation to see everything clear and avoid misunderstandings. Moreover, throughout personal meetings, the author was able to

see the chosen venues. During the site visits, the author was able to see the spaces, opportunities and also deficiencies.

3.4 Summary

In the Methodology, it is visible that behind the dissertation stands a long research process. In the secondary research, all of the used written materials are enumerated. The author spent long time to collect the best and most relevant information for the dissertation to establish the ground. Furthermore, the introduction of the primary research shows who were interviewed and helped to the author to examine the chosen objectives. During the research process, qualitative method was chosen which the most suitable data analysis for the author in order to create a common opinion and solution in the given theme.

4 Analysis of results

The author is going to analyse the results from the interviews which were made during the primary research period. Two main objectives were changed in connection with the primary research. The author thought that the dissertation will be more successful due to these changes. The main points are to find out the opinion of Hungarian organizers why it is suitable for the international conferences/conventions to choose Budapest and to outline the possibilities of the Whale, SYMA and Concert Hall (Pesti Vigadó) to become better options for a conference. The author is going to compare the opinion of the interviewed organizer companies with the answers of the chosen venues. A unified result will be given during it.

4.1 Introduction of the interview process

During the research period, the two kinds of interviews were made with organiser companies and venues and therefore different questions were created. The list of the questions can be found in the Appendices part of the dissertation. Three companies and three convention venues of Budapest were chosen for the interviews. One company does not want to be mentioned, due to this it will be named as First Company.

Companies:

- First Company
- Meeting Budapest – Szántó Éva
- Carlson Wagonlit Travel Agency – Németh Beatrix

Venues:

- Whale – Dobos Réka
- SYMA – Szántó Éva
- Concert Hall (Pesti Vigadó) - Csurkulya-Molnár Adél Éva and Mikecz Dalma

4.2 Basic information about the chosen companies

First of all, the author is not entitled to give information about the first company with which it made its first interview. This is the reason why during the evaluation of the answers, this company will be signed as First Company.

Second interview was made with Szántó Éva who works also in the Meeting Budapest and SYMA. The director of Meeting Budapest was Köves Tamás. Éva worked for a long time abroad, she organised many conferences and congresses. After that she moved to Hungary and she cooperated with Tamás. The Meeting Budapest was established in 1991 which is specialised to the organization of conventions and conferences. Their scopes of activities are the planning, organisation and transaction of national and domestic conferences, corporate events, trade shows and banquets. The Meeting Budapest with 20 years of experience is a leading national PCO.

The third interview was transacted with Németh Beatrix, who is the team leader in the meeting and event section within the Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT). She works here about five years ago. CWT helps to organise both travels and meetings & events. It is a national agency which is presented in 150 countries. The main profile is the business travels and organisation of events. Main part of it is the business travel which is approximately 95%. Within the CWT, the Meeting&Events is a new section.

4.3 Evaluation of answers

The author divided this point into more parts. First of all, the answers of the companies are going to be introduced, after that the interviews made with the venues. Following this, a short SWOT analysis will be given in connection with the venues to see the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the sites. After that a main comparison will be given. Have to be mentioned, that the Meeting Budapest and SYMA works together, this is the reason why some answers are similar.

4.4 Interview with companies

During it the First Company, Meeting Budapest and Carlson Wagonlit were interviewed. The focus was on the situation of Hungarian conference tourism and the foreigner's point of view in connection with Budapest.

1. *During a year, how much commission does the company get?*

Throughout the *first question*, The First Company said that they organize mainly foreign conventions and only smaller conferences which mainly take place on ships. Opposite to this, the Meeting Budapest has yearly about two bigger foreign conferences. Szántó Éva mentioned that two big gynaecological congresses have been already held in the SYMA. Mostly medical conferences are organized. According to CWT, the number of commissions is between 20-50 which is mainly inbound travel and international commissions.

2. *What is the advantage of organising foreign events compared to the Hungarian ones?*

Second question: According to the First Company, the foreigners are more punctual when they pay the money. They adhere to the given payment day. They are more collected and precise. Hungarians tend to pay even with 30 days delay. The opinion of Meeting Budapest was that for example in case of a foreign conference, it is not only good for the organizer company, but also for the whole country. Compared to the Hungarians, foreigners tend to pay more money. For them, Hungary is cheap and they are more profit oriented. The price level in abroad is higher and they get a high quality conference in Hungary. Opposite to these answers, Németh Beatrix said that she does not make any differentiation between the international and domestic commissions. Both of them are good for the company.

3. *What is the major drawback which is not depends on the organizer company?*

Third question: For the foreigners, the VAT sometimes causes some problems which were said by the First Company. Szántó Éva thinks that Hungary would need a centre which is specialized only to conferences. The problem is that Hungary has many venues for events and conventions but all of them have problems

why they are not appropriate for conferences or grosses. Some of them do not have enough place, or a storehouse where the techniques could be kept. Later on, during the analyse of the chosen venues, these problems will be mentioned with more details. The opinion of Carlson Wagonlit Travel was that the bankruptcy of MALÉV Ltd. caused a big disadvantage in case of transport. Due to this, it is harder to approach Hungary with plane. Business travellers do not prefer low-cost flights and with these kinds of plane not that level come which is expected. The other drawback which is not depending on them is the infrastructure of the capital. Because of this, they might not be able to approach a street with the guests.

4. *What has been the biggest commission during the years?*

Fourth question: Hungarian- Chinese convention with 400 participants was the biggest commission fulfilled by the First Company. In the Meeting Budapest, the director was Köves Tamás who organized many monumental congresses and conferences with 4000-4500 participants during his career. It is really hard to choose only one according to Szántó Éva. Németh Beatrix works about five years in CWT. Throughout this time, mainly 300 participant conferences are usually organized. Mainly they make international conferences for the companies of their business partners. To mention an example, in November, they organised an international conference on which the participants travelled from all over the world to Hungary. It was a five days long one.

5. *Has the company ever had to disclaim a foreign event due to a Hungarian event? If yes, why?*

Fifth question: The common opinion was that it has never happened that they had to cancel a foreign event because of a Hungarian one. A foreign convention means more profit for the company. In case of a conference, the organizers have to start the organization about two years before. There is a long process, because firstly they have to win the right to organize a chosen conference. Lots of money and effort are invested in the process. In case of the CWT, as it was mentioned previously, they do not make a differentiation between the domestic and international events.

6. *In general, why do the foreigners consider Budapest as a suitable place for a conference transaction?*

Sixth question: During it, also a common answer was given. According to the companies, foreigners think that Budapest is a wonderful city with beautiful sights and many available programs. For them, the Hungarian capital is safe and cheaper than abroad cities. The main venues are easily approachable from the airport or hotels. Németh Beatrix completed this common opinion with fact that also significant part is the marketing of Hungarian tourism. Her insight is that Hungary is on a good way if we look at the marketing strategy. During the trade fairs our country is usually awarded and very popular. Beatrix said that from the international colleagues she always get a good feedback about the country. When she get such good opinions, she is very proud for Hungary.

7. *Are there any venues which would be suitable as a conference place but the organizers dismiss it?*

Seventh question: Common answer was given. It is hard to give a good answer. The main aspect is the price and the purpose of the event. The already mentioned problem is that all venues have disadvantage and Hungary does not have a conference centre.

8. *What is the opinion of the company about the SYMA, Whale and Concert Hall? Do the mentioned sites need any change?*

Eighth question: First Company has already worked with SYMA during the organization of an event. The interviewee felt that there were a communication problem and the organizer and principal did not speak about every aspect. The SYMA was colourless and not pleasing. Of course, it said, that it does not think that all of these were thanks to the SYMA, might the principal did not give an exact notion. First Company has not worked with the Whale and Concert Hall yet. According to Meeting Budapest, SYMA is a multifunctional venue that it will never be a conference centre because of some problems which will be mentioned later. The Whale and Concert Hall are also not suitable for a conference. The Whale has a good situation with a wonderful view. But it gives only place for a conference but it does not have section rooms or technique equipment's. Furthermore, it does not have a

suitable parking place which is also an important aspect. The Concert Hall is a beautiful building with good plenary room and acoustics but the capacity is not enough. CWT has not worked yet with the SYMA because it is too big for their 300 participant conferences. The Whale and Concert Hall could be suitable if we overcome the problems.

4.4.1 Opinion of Hungarian organizers about the reason why for international conferences Budapest is suitable

The common opinion during the interviews was that Budapest is a suitable place for conferences. For the foreigners it is attractive because of the prices, sites and programs. Price and value ratio is favourable. If we compare the conference tourism to other field of tourism, the conference tourism has more advantage than the other ones. Business travellers tend to pay more money and stay longer than the other travellers. Conference tourism is not only good for the conference venue or the organizers, but also adds a lot to the whole tourism industry of Hungary. If the country is attractive for the business travellers, later on they will come back with their family for a vacation. The contribution of Budapest to the conference tourism is really good. As it was mentioned before, nowadays many medical conferences choose the country as a location. The participants can enjoy much kind of programs beside their conferences. Budapest is full of with them. Beside this, cannot be missed the traditional foods and drinks, whole gastronomy of Hungary.

The main problem of Budapest is that there is no available and existing congress centre which focuses on only these kinds of events. The city is full of with four and five star hotels which are also favourite places for conferences but for a huge conference they are also not suitable. During the dissertation, six types of venues were mentioned, but as it was seen, they do not concentrate on only conferences. Every venue has a problem because of which none of them are the most appropriate. If the plan of the new congress centre could be realized, it would mean a huge step for Hungary to be better in the field of conference organization. Later on, in the Conclusion part, this plan will be detailed.

4.5 Interview with venues

First of all, the question can be asked why these three venues were chosen for the other half of the interview and as an objective. The Whale has already had a huge popularity in the media during the construction works because of the occurred problems. Many events have already been taken place here and the population is familiar with it. After that, the SYMA is also known. The author has already visited the building as a participant in a convention. The huge area was interesting for the author; this is the reason why it wanted to gather more information about it. Lastly but not at least, the Concert Hall has a significant and old history. It was renovated approximately one year before and built picture on the internet caught the attention of the author.

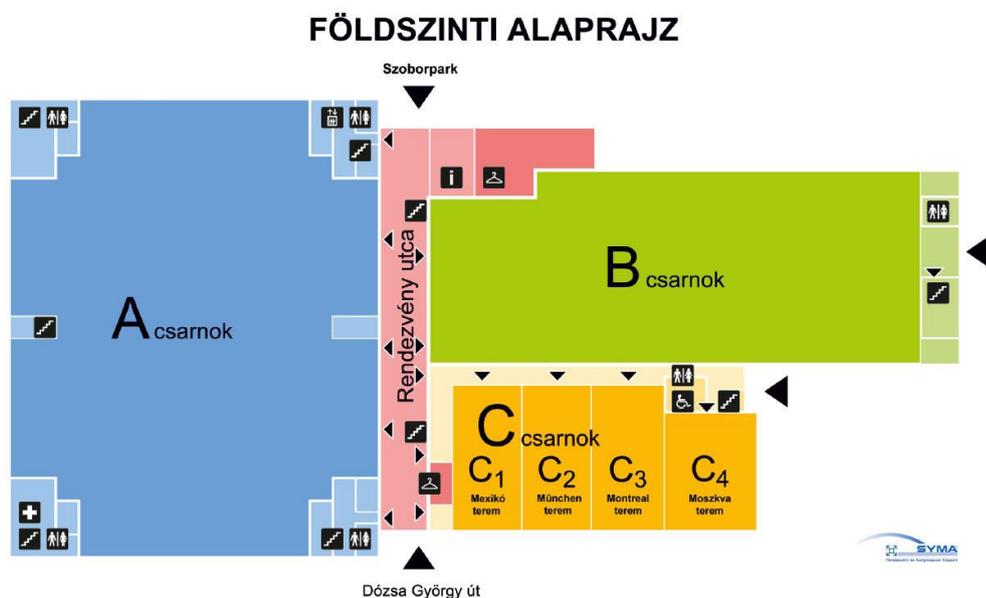
The *first interview* was made with Dobos Réka who is the Event planner in the Whale. The conference tourism is not really featured for the Whale. But those, who have already held a conference in the building was satisfied with the place. It provides natural lightning. It is hard for the Whale to be a suitable place for a conference because they can give only the space. They do not have many equipment which could be used. The organizers need to pay more for it; they have to bring technique equipment's or furniture's. Dobos Réka thought that conference organizers have a schema according to which they organize. They do not make many innovations; they do not provide an experience. They prefer if everything is given at a place and they do not need to bring many things. The conference itself is usually held at other place. Lots of effort should be put in the work and many companies are not willing to do it. They like the safe places where everything is given. In the Whale, mainly the conference opening and gala dinners are held. During the planning of the building, sadly, the designer did not think of many things. The main problem is that the Whale does not have a storehouse where the equipment could be kept. They have to build other spaces later on. Problems have already occurred during the building and with the handover. The building "rottened" when they started their work because the structure was not covered, constructions were made. The whole building process was in hurry. Sadly, the Whale does not have place to expand. They would need a storehouse to become a more suitable place for conferences. The opinion of Dobos Réka was, that now, what they have is enough.

They do not plan any change because they should make more changes to return the effort.

The *second interview* was made with Szántó Éva, who also works in the SYMA and Meeting Budapest. The Meeting Budapest and SYMA are one company for a while. Szántó Éva worked abroad for many years, after that when she came back to Hungary; she cooperated with Köves Tamás, who was the director of Meeting Budapest. The company moved to the SYMA building. The area is suitable for a conference because it gives many places. Usually medical conferences are held here. In the “A” hall, the exhibitions are usually held where the sponsors present themselves. Plenary sessions are held in the “B” hall. The “C” hall can be divided into four section rooms with the moveable walls. Name of the rooms are the following: Mexico, Munich, Montreal, Moscow. The capacity of one room is about 450 people. The advantage of the SYMA is that the conference, exhibition and the catering can be held in one building. They are easily approachable and have huge parking place. The area gives many places on the ground floor and on the first floor. Mainly smaller domestic conferences are held in the SYMA with 400-500, maximum 800 participants. The price contains the furniture’s and cleaning services. The SYMA has every equipment and services which are needed for the organization. The bigger ones are the foreign conferences from which they have two yearly. Szántó Éva said that it is really hard to get the right for the organization of a big conference. First of all, the country itself has to win the right, after that the destination manager and the PCO chose the city and the venue. It is a long process. A foreign event or conference is a huge profit for not only the venue but also for the country. If the business men liked the country, they will come back later with their family for a holiday. It is good for the Hungarian tourism too. The big conferences are willing to pay more to get the best quality services. Compared to the Hungarians, the foreigners are more profit oriented. The SYMA also have some problems which should be corrected in order to be more suitable. The first is that they do not have a storehouse where they could keep for example the chairs. These are kept in the corner of the “A” hall. Furthermore, the cloakroom is small and they are not able to expand it. Of course, they can solve this problem if they need. According to Szántó Éva, the biggest problem is that SYMA is not a conference centre. It is multifunctional, suitable for many events but it will never be a conference centre.

Szántó Éva and Köves Tamás had a huge plan. They wanted to create a congress centre. The plans were already made; the author was able to see them. They wanted to expand the existing building with a huge hall and smaller rooms. The following figure is the layout of the ground floor of the SYMA today. On that the author can show the planned expansion. Beside the hall “B” a new corridor was planned to build with space for cafe breaks and receptions. Next to that the huge congress hall was designed with triangle shaped seats.

Figure 2: Ground floor layout of the SYMA



Source: www.syma.hu

The area where the SYMA is situated in is owned by the state. Éva and Tamás got the right to expand the building but they did not get the financial support. Szántó Éva firmly believes that the Hungarian conference tourism needs a congress centre. She is sad about the situation that their plan could not be actualized. She thinks that an official conference centre includes accommodation, parking place and auditorium is the most suitable. The basis of Budapest Congress Centre would be a good idea and appropriate, but previously, the areas did not need to have an exhibition area but nowadays it is important because from the sponsors, many profit come. The mentioned problems could be solved with the plan of a congress centre but sadly they do not have enough money for that. In the future, the SYMA will be

expanded with a Paris room which will be next to the already mentioned Mosca room.

The *last interview* was made with Csurkolya-Molnár Adél Éva and Mikecz Dalma who work in the Concert Hall. It has to be mentioned that the building is the headquarters of the Hungarian Academy of Arts. It is the reason why the area is not always free. The occasions of the Hungarian Academy of Arts have priority. The Concert Hall functions as a cultural, exhibition, conference, concert and business events area. Conferences are usually taking place in the Concert Hall. To mention some, international, medical congresses or The Association for International Sport for All (TAFISA) has already organised its international, three days long conference in the building. The renewed Concert Hall opened its gates last year. From that time, approximately 8-10 international conferences were organised with about 200-400 participants. Adél and Dalma do not differentiate the foreign and Hungarian events. They do not think that it gives any difference in case of it. As it was mentioned before, the Hungarian Academy of Arts has priority. They have a list about those kinds of events which have the same precedence. Even so it has never happened yet that they need to cancel an event because of this kind of situation. They solve every situation. As every area, the Concert Hall also has problems. In the area everything is given. Some technique problems occur in case of the internet. Furthermore, they do not have enough freight elevators and the sizes of the doors are sometimes not suitable. The opinion of Adél and Éva was that if we compare the Concert Hall with the Whale and SYMA, the SYMA is suitable for every kind of events. It has a huge capacity. In case of Whale and Concert Hall, during the construction, the designers did not focus on the capacity and the purpose of the buildings. The two buildings are rather community building sites than conference centres. The Concert Hall, in case of conference, is the most suitable area for an opening or a gala dinner. The inner part is breath taking and amazing. The disadvantage is the lack of capacity and there is no parking place. Above a 300 participant conference, they have problems to deal with this amount. For the luck of the Concert Hall, many four and five star hotels are situated near to the building and the conference participants can easily walk to the site. Concert Hall is strong in case of accompanying programs. The author asked the opinion of Adél and Éva that what should be done to make the Concert Hall more suitable for conferences. They said that constructions are hard to

be made because the building has to be protected. They have a fix area with which they have to deal with. More halls and section rooms should be built to become a better conference site. As it was mentioned before, they also contribute to the opinion that the construction of a conference centre would be a huge step in case of conference tourism.

4.5.1 SWOT Analysis of the venues

The author introduced the interviews which were made with organizer companies and venues. To create a more transparent summary, a SWOT analysis will be given in case of the venues. It is a good tool to be able to map an industry or place. With the SWOT analyse, the author is going to investigate the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the venues. Strength shows the positive aspects while the weaknesses the negative sides of an area, which does not work well but changes can develop them. Opportunities and threats mainly cannot be affected but they can be used as a forecast. SWOT analysis will contribute to the final result of the dissertation.

Table 4: Common SWOT Analyses of the Whale, SYMA and Concert Hall

	Whale	SYMA	Concert Hall
Strengths	panorama location modern building	multifunctional capacity services are given moveable walls	location inner view nearby accommodations wheelchair access
Weaknesses	lack of parking capacity no storehouse no section rooms constructional problems	no storehouse huge distances within the area	not enough section rooms technical problems cannot be modified lack of capacity
Opportunities	- no availability for modifications	expansion	many cultural events atmosphere of building is attractive
Threats	Common: construction of new convention sites increasing prices in the country		

Source: created by the author

4.5.2 Possibilities of the venues to become a better options for a conference

Throughout the personal interviews which were made on the chosen venues, the author was able to see the places personally. According to the questions, the author tried to reveal the may arise further opportunities in case of the venues.

First of all, the author would like to mention some news about the Whale which are important in case of clarifying the future of it. It was opened in 8 of November 2013, but the first opening was planned in 2010-2011. As it was mentioned in the interview, problems occurred during the building process. Further constructions has to made in order to the place could be appropriate for the

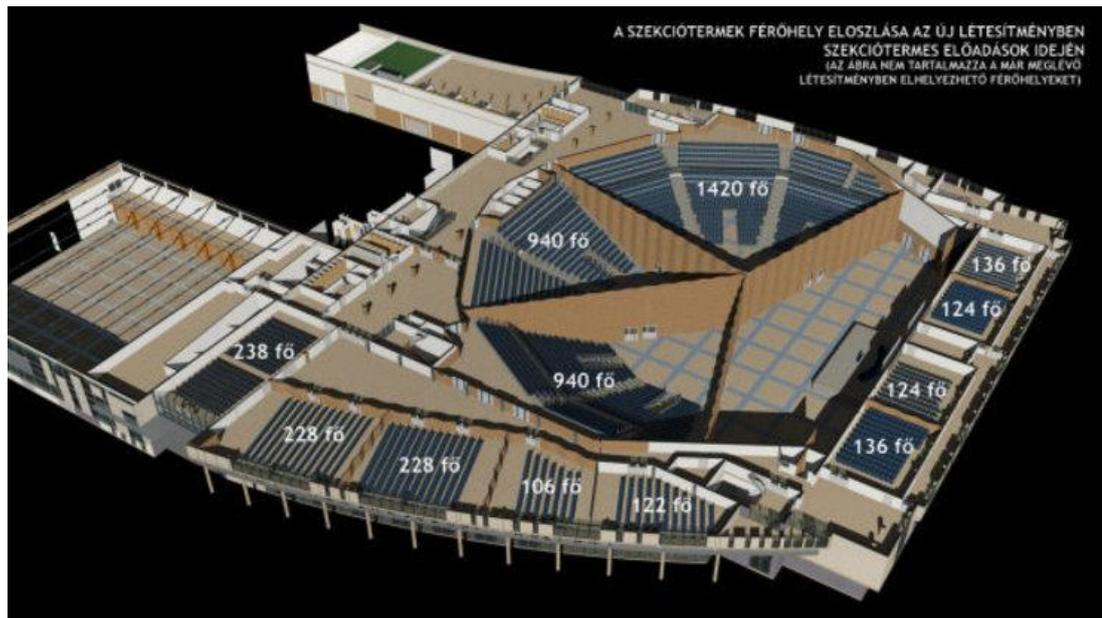
operation. As it was mentioned, the building structure was not covered and it damn. When it opened its gates, some people were sceptical about the further utilization of the area. According to an article which was written by Bicsérdi Ádám in the HVG in 2014, after the opening in the first year the whole Whale was empty and lifeless. One purpose of the building was to create an elite-plaza. Many retail spaces were empty and no one wanted to rent them. The different conventions organised in the building, bring life into it. (www.hvg.hu, 2014) In the Népszabadság newspaper an article appeared in November 2015, about the Whale from which the author think has to be mentioned taking into consideration the future of the building. According to it, the Central Bank of Hungary (MNB) would like to buy the Whale. The negotiations have already started but the details are not published yet. According to City Hall sources, the business depends on the price of the “glass fish”. Budapest is willing to sell the building because the offer is useful for it. Another important aspect is that in the Whale, 5000 square meters is still empty due to the fact that the government has already moved market and gallery here. Many rental applications were announced to fill the building but these applications did not lead to success. The planned income at the beginning was approximately 3 billion HUF, but now the capital is satisfied the Whale is able to extractive 400 million HUF/ year. The Central Bank of Hungary plans to re-establish its previously closed visitor centre and to establish a money historical museum. (Népszabadság, 2015)

As it becomes clear during the interview, the Whale will never be a conference place. As it was mentioned previously in the literature review part, a conference needs much technique equipment to be successful. The Whale mainly provides the area, the space for the events and conferences. As it was written previously, the main reason of it is the shortage of storehouse. Without it, they do not have space where they can keep the technique equipment or the furniture. It is true that the Whale is a huge and wonderful building with good location but it is not enough for a conference. Exemplifying, in the SYMA many space is given to hide the furniture without a storehouse. But in the Whale, they do not have it. It is really hard in case of that building to improve the area to become a better option for conferences. Despite of the good location and wonderful view, it is also the disadvantage of the area that it does not have space to expand. The building is surrounded by from one side by the river Danube and on the other side by the street.

It is not surprising that they are not willing to make any changes. A fix area was available for them, a fix building and they tried to make as much out of it as it was possible. The opinion of the author is that during the construction works, someone had to think over better the whole concept. If lesser shops areas have been built, a smaller store area could be created on the ground floor. According to the news, it can happen that the Whale will have a new image if the Central Bank of Hungary will succeed in the buying willingness. In this case, anything can happen and the future of the glass fish is not sure.

In case of the SYMA, the whole concept is good. It is a multifunctional building, which is suitable for many conventions and events because of the huge capacity. Everything is available under one roof. If we make a comparison between the Whale and SYMA, we can see that the SYMA is a better choice for conferences. The author has already taken part in a convention in the building. During the interview, another convention was prepared and it was amazing for it how they can create a new and different world. Some people do not like it that they have to walk a lot between the halls or among the floors because on the first floor, it gives also section rooms. As it was mentioned before, the dream of Szántó Éva and Köves Tamás was to build a congress centre which did not become real. With this centre the area could be a better option for conferences. The author was able to see the plans of this expansion. More section rooms were planned and a huge congress hall which could be suitable for these kind of events. Next to the hall, a bigger area was planned which could be suitable for receptions or coffee breaks. The author found a figure about the visualisation of the planned congress centre. On that, the available capacities are visible and the triangle shaped seats. With it, the reader can imagine better the whole plan and with the previous floor plan the situation of the whole concept.

Figure 3: Subdivision and capacity of the section rooms in the new building



Source: www.hg.hu

Now the SYMA has huge parking place where the buses, which bring the participants, can wait comfortably. It is visible that if the congress centre could come true, this advantage of the SYMA would disappear. The new wing of the building would take the place. At this moment it cannot be forecasted if in the future the SYMA have possibilities to create the congress centre. But in the short future, the area is going to be enlarged with smaller section rooms to create a better option for the conventions. As it was mentioned during the Whale, the SYMA also has the same problem that they do not have a storehouse. For the author it was showed that the unused chairs are hidden with curtains in the corner of the “A” Hall. It is the fortune of the area that they have huge places with which they work and utilize it.

In 2011, the Hungarian Academy of Arts became a public body. Two years later it got the ownership of the Concert Hall which was at the end of its renewal. The building has a long history and beside this a wonderful inner side. The author was impressed by sawing this. The whole building is has to be protected this is the reason why it is not suitable for different kind of reconstructions. As in case of the Whale, the capacity of the Concert Hall is also limited. Problems occur above the number of 300 participants. As it was mentioned before during the interview, the Concert Hall is rather a cultural site than a conference area. Szántó Éva also said that the whole building and area is beautiful, the plenary room is good but the capacity is

not enough. It is the reason why only 200-400 number of participant conferences are organised here.

All things considered, from them Whale, SYMA and Concert Hall, the most possibility for the development the SYMA has. It has the available place for expansion; it already has the plans and ideas. Everything is given except the money. Only the SYMA showed during the interviews the willingness to make variations. Mainly because of the reason that it is already a multifunctional building with a huge capacity. In case of the other two venues the situation is different. They have a fix area, a fix building which is not suitable for the constructions. The whole problem started during the planning and building process in case of the Whale. The concept was not think over, the builder did not think of the future possibilities. Opposite to this, the aim of the Concert Hall did not have conference purpose. The building was built in 1829. Concerts and exhibitions were held there and the building is also perfect for that purpose now. The author thinks that the conference organisation in the Concert Hall is like an “additional service”. It is not the aim. It is rather a cultural area than a conference place. The whole building has such a long history and amazing inner sphere that it is not worth it to make constructions. Thinking over the details, the author firmly believes that the SYMA has most possibilities to become a better option for conferences. The Whale and Concert Hall because of the fixed place do not have availability for expansions.

4.6 Summary

In the Analysis of results the author introduced the primary researches in connection with the third and fourth Objectives which can be read in the Introduction and also in the Analysis of results part of the dissertation. The process of the interviews and the questions are detailed in the Analysis of results. Short introduction is given about the organiser companies. All the answers are shown and analysed. The author tried to answer the Objectives according to the given questions and read materials. A short SWOT analysis is also given to see the possibilities and weaknesses of the venues more clearly. The examined topics in the Analysis of

results contribute to the fifth Objective which is going to be discussed in the Conclusion of the dissertation.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In the Conclusion and Recommendations the author is going to answer the Objective fifth which is to realise how the author can sell Budapest with the mentioned sites as a conference venue. In the previous chapter, important venues and companies were asked about the situation of the conference tourism and what their opinion is about the future. Furthermore, it will be revealed that the author can state the Hypothesis or not. Recommendations will be given how Budapest could be a more suitable place in case of international conferences or congresses. These will be given according to the heard answers and opinions during the interviews because a common opinion was given in case of the situation of Budapest. The above chapters laid down the basis for the author to be able to write a Conclusion and Recommendation which will show the significant changing what should be done in order to Hungary has a better conference tourism.

5.2 Conclusion

The fifth Objective of the dissertation is to realise how the author can sell Budapest with the mentioned sites as a conference venue. During the introduction and analysis three venues were chosen with them the author would like to investigate the situation of the Budapest and the available changes. It is really hard to sell the capital as a conference venue or place. As it was already mentioned, the city has a good place among the European conference countries and cities. It is a popular destination because of the attractive prices and wide variety of additional programs. To mention an example, the Hungarian Tourism Ltd. participated in a MICE workshop which took place in Vienna, 9th November 2015. Kovács Balázs, who is the Head of Delegation in Austria, expressed that the Hungarian services are able to fit all the XXI. Century requirements. For the Austrians, Hungary is a perfect place

to organize conferences because of the price value ratios. (www.at.gotohungary.com) Those people who visit the country, it gives a good chance that they will come back later for a holiday with their relatives or family

A conference centre, place or venue needs many technical services and available rooms where the sessions and the exhibitions can be held. Many equipment and aspects contribute to the success of a conference. All of the three venues, the SYMA, Whale and Concert Hall organise events and they have one or more aspects which are good for a conference organisation, but sadly all of them would need many changes to become a really suitable place. Previously it was shown that the Whale and Concert Hall do not have availability for construction works, because of the fixed area and building. In case of the Whale, new news appeared and the author thinks that the future of the building is not sure yet. They use their possibilities as they are able to. The SYMA has chance to enlarge the area and become a better option for conferences, but they also has many legal and financial barriers with which they have to deal with.

To answer the fifth Objective, the opinion of the author is that many changes could be put into effect to sell Budapest as a conference venue with the mentioned sites. However, a common opinion was built during the interviews which would be the solution for Budapest and the whole country to become more attractive for the conferences and the organisers. It is going to be discussed in the next chapter. If it could come true, we can speak about a more attractive and sellable country.

5.3 Recommendation

It was clear for the author during the interviews and also a common opinion was given that the main problem of Hungary in the field of conference tourism is that the country does not have an exact congress centre which contains all the necessary equipment, places and accommodation. Building a Congress Centre has a long planning period. The author searched on the internet what is the situation now with it. Many articles were founded which paid attention to the plans and problems. One of the interviewee was very sceptic with it that in the future it will be built up because of this long planning process. It said that the building is always promised

but nothing happens. Sadly, it is a habitual in Hungary that promises are given, but there is no result.

Köves Tamás, who was the director of the Hungarian Association of Event organizers (MaResz) has already mentioned this problem in 2010 during his presentation that the main problem is that Hungary does not have a congress centre which is able to accept more thousands of participants and which fits to the international levels and requirements. During the last decades, many professionals in the tourism industry contributed to this opinion and wished that the centre will be built up. Mr Köves predicted that if these plans have not been realized, the Hungarian conference tourism will have huge disadvantages in the future. He thought that after the first three year of the construction of the congress centre, the guest night in Hungary will increase with approximately 100-150000 reservations. After five or six years, if the new Congress Centre would be successful, the predicted numbers would be much more. In 2014, the state bought up an approximately 13 thousand square meters area in the neighbourhood of the Palace of Arts (MÜPA). The future plan is that the new congress centre will contain a huge hall which capacity in case of congresses will be about 4-5000 seats and in case of cultural events 3-4000 seats. Furthermore, two big section rooms will be designed with one by one about the capacity of 1200-1500. Moreover, in the building smaller section rooms will be available with 50-200 seats. In total, these rooms will be able to accept 2000 people. The exhibition area will be placed on 6-8 thousand square meters. In the parking place 450 cars will be able to park. Competition was announced between the architectures which one could carry out the plan of the Congress Centre. The winner one was the Finta Studio. (www.turizmusonline.hu) Remembering to the requirements of the IAPCO in case of a conference centre which were listed in the Literature review, we can see that the new centre could be suitable to these points

If the plan is going to be realized, the new Congress Centre will be built up for about 2018. The author firmly believes that with it Hungary can reach a better position on the yearly ranking lists. The country will have bigger chance to win the organisational rights of the international congresses and conferences. Budapest will be able to become the host country for international events with a suitable centre. The beauty and attractions are given from which a good feedback is given from the foreign visitors. The opportunities have to be used up as much as possible.

Conference tourism shows an increasing tendency in the field of tourism. The author read some articles about the future of the MICE. The opinion of some people is that the video conferences will substitute the personal meetings and business travel. But the opinion of the author is contrary. It thinks that the business travels cannot be replaced. With it, experts and professionals can get knowledge and build such an important relationships which cannot be reached through for example through the internet. Personal meetings and connections cannot be replaced. With an organisational right is also good for the whole country not only for the organisers or the venue. The hypothesis was that the convention venues of Budapest have important benefits on international level. The author can state that it is already truth with the available venues because the ranking list shows it that Hungary is in the mid-range. But the country could reach better position and benefit if the plans could come true and an exact Congress Centre could be build up which every part is suitable for the rules of a conference or congress.

5.4 Reflection and evaluation of Research Methodology

The author firmly believes that the used research method was suitable to find the necessary answers in connection with the chosen conference venues, what they should do and the future development of the conference tourism of Budapest. Interviews were helpful for the author to be able to reveal the problem in Hungary. All the interviewees were kind and tried to give as much information as they could. The author is grateful that it could speak with real experts who work in the industry for many years. Personal visits made the whole concept better that the author could see personally the building and imagine the future availabilities.

Many articles were read in connection with the recommendation which deal with also this problem. Main part of the interviews revealed the same problem; it was easier for the author to find the main weakness of Hungary. The author wanted to spread a questioner among the Hungarian conference and congress organisers to be able to investigate better the situation of Hungary, but organising the interviews was also hard because the offices are busy. Conference tourism is a wide area; from many sides can it be investigated. The author narrowed it to a smaller area with which it could find an important problem in the country.

5.5 Suggestion for further research

Continuous researches are needed in case of the conference tourism to be able to see the position of the country, worldwide new trends and to be able to monitor the competitors. Hungarian experts need to be flexible for the changes. Not only for the conference tourism, but also for the whole tourism industry has to be examined. We live in a fast world, changes appear immediately. Conference tourism includes lot of profit for the country and with the developments better and better position can be reached and more business travellers can be attracted.

5.6 Closing thoughts

The opinion of the author is that if enough attention would be spent on conference tourism, Hungary will reach the best position. All significant aspects are given in Budapest, and even in the country side of Hungary. The country hides such treasures and attractive sites that can be valuable later in the business travel. As it can be read, conference tourism include bigger money, they tend to pay more. The author has already experienced during its industrial placement that even business people are also enchanted by Hungary. The country should take more advantage from its beauty and availabilities.

Appendices

Appendix 1.: Questions of the interviews

Questions for companies:

1. During a year, how much commission does the company get?
2. What is the advantage of organising foreign events compared to the Hungarian ones?
3. What is the major drawback which is not depends on the organizer company?
4. What has been the biggest commission during the years?
5. Has the company ever had to disclaim a foreign event due to a Hungarian event? If yes, why?
6. In general, why do the foreigners consider Budapest as a suitable place for a conference transaction?
7. Are there any venues which would be suitable as a conference place but the organizers dismiss it?
8. What is the opinion of the company about the SYMA, Whale and Concert Hall? Do the mentioned sites need any change?

Questions for chosen venues:

1. How typical the conference tourism for the venue?
2. How many commissions does the venue get in a year?
3. What is the advantage of the foreign commissions for the venue?
4. What is the reason why the venue does not get more conference commissions?
5. Does the venue have any problem?
6. What kind of factors should be changed to be a suitable place for conferences?
7. What is your opinion about the Hungarian conference tourism?
8. Do you see any available changes in connection with the area in the future?

Appendix 2: Source and illustrational pictures

Table 1: Worldwide ranking: number of meetings per country

Rank	Country	# Meetings
1	U.S.A.	831
2	Germany	659
3	Spain	578
4	United Kingdom	543
5	France	533
6	Italy	452
7	Japan	337
8	China-P.R.	332
9	Netherlands	307
10	Brazil	291
11	Austria	287
12	Canada	265
13	Australia	260

Source: www.iccaworld.com

Table 2: Europe ranking: number of meetings per country

Rank	Country	# Meetings
1	Germany	659
2	Spain	578
3	United Kingdom	543
4	France	533
5	Italy	452
6	Netherlands	307
7	Austria	287
8	Sweden	238
9	Portugal	229
10	Switzerland	226
11	Turkey	190
12	Belgium	187
13	Denmark	164
14	Finland	162
15	Poland	161
16	Greece	148
17	Czech Republic	146
18	Hungary	125
19	Norway	114
20	Ireland	108

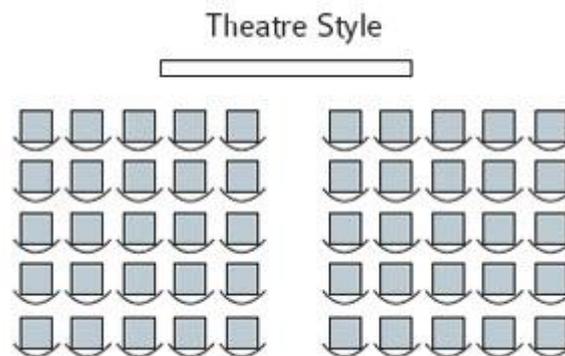
Source: www.iccaworld.org

Table 3: Area distribution of international and Hungarian conferences (%):

	Budapest	Rural Area
International	82	18
Hungarian	63	37
Total	72	28

Source: www.itthon.hu, www.hcb.hu

Figure 1: Layout of theatre style



Source: www.conferencevenues.com.au

Figure 2: Ground floor layout of the SYMA



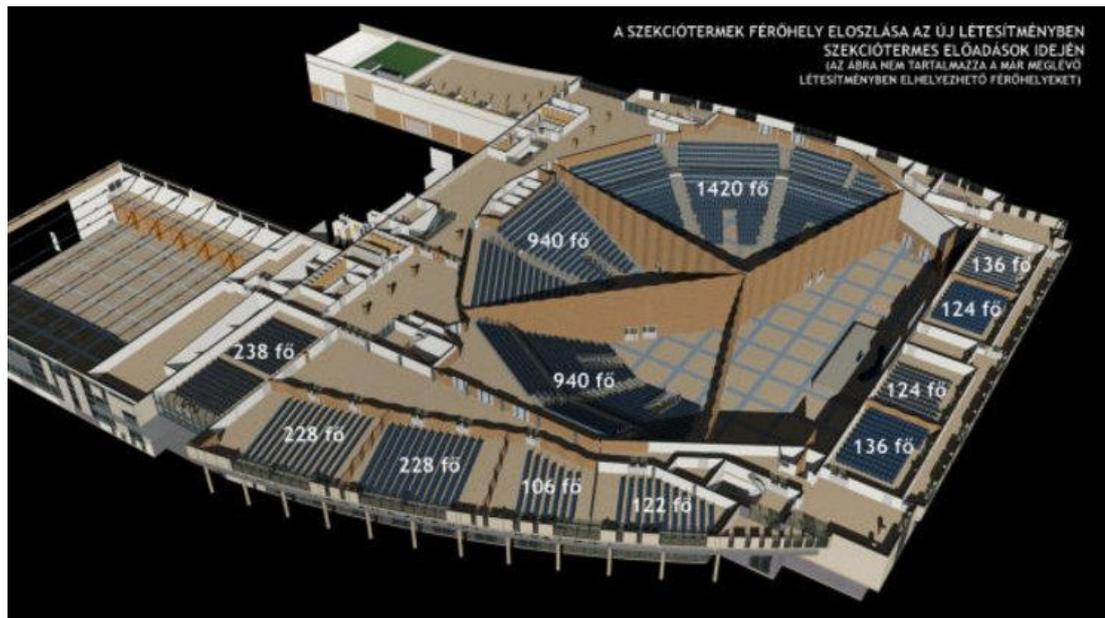
Source: www.syma.hu

Table 4: Common SWOT Analyses of the Whale, SYMA and Concert Hall

	Whale	SYMA	Concert Hall
Strengths	panorama location modern building	multifunctional capacity services are given moveable walls	location inner view nearby accommodations wheelchair access
Weaknesses	lack of parking capacity no storehouse no section rooms constructional problems	no storehouse huge distances within the area	not enough section rooms technical problems cannot be modified lack of capacity
Opportunities	- no availability for modifications	expansion	many cultural events atmosphere of building is attractive
Threats	Common: construction of new convention sites increasing prices in the country		

Source: created by the author

Figure 3: Subdivision and capacity of the section rooms in the new building



Source: www.hg.hu

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