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Why build purpose-built conference venues? Forecasting new build

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Abstract

Many UK destinations have constructed purpose-built conference venues as a tool for regenerating economic, social and environmental decline during the post-war period. This research is based on a postal survey of 300 UK purpose-built venues undertaken in 2001, of which 53 responding venues were deemed valid, giving a response rate of 17.6 per cent. This research examines the temporal growth of purpose-built venues from the 1950s up to and including the survey year. Additionally, employing exponential smoothing techniques, the number of UK purpose-built venues is predicted from 2001 to 2020. Combining both the predicted growth rates with the knowledge of both the advantages and disadvantages of establishing purpose-built conference venues, conclusions are drawn with regard to further regeneration within UK destinations.

Keywords:

purpose-built conference venues , regeneration , f orecasting , double-exponential smoothing

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INTRODUCTION

Many purpose-built conference venues have been constructed as a tool for regenerating economic, social and environmental decline during the postwar period in the UK. This regeneration can both extend and revitalise a destination ' s lifecycle as a result of strategic decision making on the part of destinations management.[1] Often the aim of such strategic decision making is to use the purpose-built conference venue as the centrepiece for creating a vibrant urban centre[2,3] indeed, purpose-built venues are often seen as the ' fl agship, centrepiece ' of a destination. In doing so, destination managers identify new markets that are both geographically and behaviourally segmented, thus reducing their dependence on a single

market. This paper identifi es the rationale behind the use of purpose-built conference venues as a means of regeneration. It is limited to the costs and benefi ts incurred and / or accrued by a destination drawn from economic, social and environmental domains. Empirical data are then presented, identifying the rationale for constructing UK purpose-built conference venues in support or rejection of the literature review. Once the motivation for creating purpose-built venues has been identifi ed, the growth of the UK purpose-built conference sector is forecast. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the growth rate forecasted and the

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rationale for constructing purpose-built conference venues with regard to the oversupply and / or continual demand for UK purpose-built conference venues.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CONSTRUCTING A UK PURPOSE-BUILT CONFERENCE VENUE

Investment in the construction of a conference venue has, in many instances, supported improvements in the destinations environment, through the revitalisation of blighted areas that have been created through the destinations decline.[2 – 4] As a destination declines, it becomes a tourist slum, becoming devoid of any tourism activity.[5] This has been seen in both coastal resorts and inner city areas of the UK, as experienced by Bournemouth, Birmingham, Belfast, Brighton, Cardiff, Glasgow, Harrogate and Manchester.[6] With regard to Birmingham, the decline in its manufacturing base resulted in high unemployment and blighted areas being commonplace. In order to alleviate these economic, social and environmental issues, the International Convention Centre (ICC) was built to regenerate the region by acting as a catalyst for growth within the retail, hotel and leisure sectors. As a result, it generated £ 1.5bn of public and private investment within the city, as well as attracting 1.5 million people to the city in its opening year, including 120,000 delegates attending more than 360 conferences and seminars.[7] In addition to this public and private investment within the region, the National Exhibition Centre generates more than £ 711m in visitor expenditure per annum. Overall, Birmingham has pioneered the use of conference venues to regenerate its city and it now has 70 conference hotels.[8]

The construction of a conference venue spurs additional capital improvements through public and private collaboration, including the upgrading and re-establishment of accommodation stock, as well as the construction and renovations of restaurants, retail units and entertainment facilities.[9] While the development of a variety of cultural, educational and conference facilities often results in the augmentation of productivity at the local level,[10] and with these benefi ts fi ltering down throughout society quicker than they do for most other industries,[11] the result is that communities are willing to subsidise construction and operation of conference centres because these additional retail, entertainment and food outlets are available for the local community to use.[9] Furthermore, the overall economic development that is stimulated by conference activity will lead to greater income levels for and higher demands from the host population. This will not only increase the taxation revenue available

for local investment, but will also make local investments more attractive by generating higher levels of local demand for general consumption, particularly for consumer durables. This is seen as a cascading effect of expenditure.[12]

CONSEQUENCES OF OPERATING A UK PURPOSE-BUILT CONFERENCE VENUE

Once developed, the conference sector within a destination is able to attract delegates. The economic benefi ts of business tourism total over £ 20bn annually for the UK, of which £ 11.7bn is accounted for by conferences and meeting and £ 3.5bn is accounted for by international business visitors.[13] This income is generated from approximately 80 million individuals attending almost one and a half million meetings and conferences in the UK per annum.[14] No other tourism sector generates as much revenue as the conference sector and the economic prosperity it generates for a destination is indisputable.[15] It contributes substantial revenue to a local destination, and it is for this reason that destinations may restructure their tourism plans by introducing a conference venue.

Although business tourism visitor numbers have increased, in general there has been a shortening of conference durations in favour of singleday conferences.[16] The average UK conference duration is now 1.6 days,[17] reducing from an average length of 2.2 days in 1998 and 1.8 days in 2001.[18] Although 63 per cent of all conferences last between 4 hours and one a day,[17] more one-day conferences create the potential for a destination to host a greater number of events. This creates pressure for both the venue to attract more events and for accommodation providers to be able to provide accommodation for only one night, creating a greater turnaround of conference delegates on a day-to-day basis.

The generation of economic benefi ts through revenue and employment opportunities is the single most effective way that the establishment of a conference venue can rejuvenate a declining destination. The amount spent per delegate has also risen continually, from approximately £ 60 in 1984 to £ 177 per day in 2000.[19] For each day that a delegate remains in a UK destination, they spend in excess of £ 100, with a further £ 100 – £ 200 channelled into accommodation, and an average of £ 30 is spent on meals and £ 16 on shopping and gifts in the host community.[6 ,15] Examples highlighting the fi nancial contribution of a conference venue to the destinations economy can be seen. The Edinburgh ICC generated over £ 17m for the local area in 2001 alone and over £ 187m since its opening in 1995.[20 ,21] From this literature review, it can be seen that the conference sector is able to attract high-spending visitors who stay longer in the destination than the conference they attended.[6 ,19,22,23]

Through the introduction of a conference venue, the destination will benefi t through the lengthening of the tourism season, as conference travel is less seasonal compared to holiday travel, enabling better planning and utilisation of tourism infrastructure, while increasing the longevity of the tourism season.[24] The destination is therefore not reliant on day visitors within a defi ned season. This can be demonstrated within the UK, where the largest number of non-residential conferences is more likely to be held in March, September and October, with residential conferences most likely to take place in September and October.[18] Conversely, smaller proportions of both non-residential and residential conferences took place during January, July, August and December, that is, the peak holiday months.[18] There is generally a lull in the primary holiday periods of July and August as well as Christmas including the New Year, because of staff taking their annual vacations.[25] The British Association of Conference Destinations (BACD)[26] strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analyses highlighted that one of the UK conference sectors strengths is that conference business is conducted throughout the year. The peak seasons are autumn and spring, complimenting the leisure tourism sector, which peaks in summer. This seasonal pattern makes the conference sector particularly attractive to seaside resorts[11] and supports the theory that conferences are held in the ‘ shoulder months ’ of the tourism season, which helps to prolong the revenue-generating season for a destination.[6 ,18,26] The Edinburgh ICC was built with the aim of ‘ bringing business life to Edinburgh ’ s traditionally winter months between November and March ’ .[28]

The introduction of conferences has been shown to attract delegate expenditure within the destination and also to extend the longevity of the destination ’ s revenue generating season, thus assisting in reversing aspects of a declining destination. The net effect is to protect existing employment and also to provide additional employment opportunities.[26]

This protection and generation of employment opportunities is fundamental to the rejuvenation of a destination. Various methods have been employed to establish the levels of employment generated by a conference sector within a destination. An impact study utilises delegate numbers and expenditure to derive an estimate of the number of jobs created.[11,22] For example, the Birmingham ICC estimated that the centre itself would only generate approximately 125 jobs; however, an estimated 1,959 further jobs would be created in the local economy.[29] Furthermore, Edinburgh ' s ICC was estimated to create almost 1,000 additional employment opportunities within the local economy.[30] The number and range of employment opportunities created both directly and indirectly through the introduction of conference facilities will create additional operational jobs for both the skilled and unskilled members of the community within many sectors.[31]

In order to assess the economic impacts of conference tourism, Dwyer and Forsyth[2] adopted ' an illustrative model that can be used to estimate direct spending, added value, economic output, direct employment and total employment generated by conference tourism within a nation ' . In this model descriptive, they did not present any fi gures with regards to the economic impact of conference tourism, but forwarded the theoretical linkages to form the multiplier effect of Meetings Incentives Conferences and Exhibitions tourism, as shown in Figure 1 .

Through the economic multiplier effect, meetings, conventions, exhibitions and incentive travel generate an increase in gross direct spending and employment. The amount of indirect spending impacts on income, employment, output and value added depends on the leakages out of the regional or national economy by way of taxes paid and the

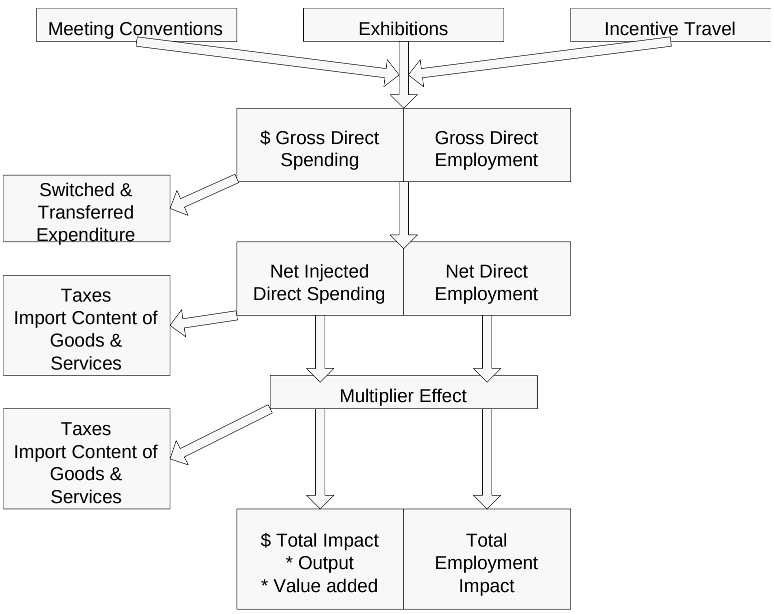

Figure 1: Conference multiplier effect[2]

import content of goods and service demanded at direct and indirect levels.

Social development highlights the positive impacts of conference development within the community. The undertaking of a prestigious conference may result in a considerable amount of credibility for the destination and such publicity often promotes a ' sense of pride ' within the host community.[32] This is especially the case if a conference venue can attract large-scale conferences, such as the political conferences, which are often held in UK conference towns such as Blackpool, Brighton, Bournemouth or Harrogate. These events produce an array of publicity, promotion and public relations advertising as well as exposure for the destination and the region. Delegates become unpaid ambassadors [33] and, as such, a large number of potential repeat visitors become acquainted with the destination. If they are treated well and pleased, they will not only advertise by word of mouth, but will also likely visit the area on other occasions.[34] As such, residents ' attitudes have the opportunity to undertake a degree of rejuvenation through the creation of a new sense of pride within the destination. Although there are many positive aspects to the introduction of a conference sector to a destination which counteract the onset of decline, there are negative impacts on the destination that should also be considered.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF INTRODUCING A CONFERENCE SECTOR TO A DESTINATION

Destinations should consider both the cost of construction and the operating costs when considering whether to rejuvenate through the establishment of a purpose-built venue, particularly when the venue is publicly funded and future revenue should be offset against both initial construction and ongoing costs. Development and operating costs of a conference venue varies considerably. Table 1 shows the cost of constructing UK purpose-built venues that opened from 1991 to 1997. The lowest cost purpose-built venue opening during this period cost £ 6m, with the most expensive venue costing £ 180m.[35]

Additionally, refurbishment and / or extension costs can occur once the centre has been opened. For example, the Bournemouth International Centre (BIC) cost £ 18m to construct and £ 5m to extend,[36] and in 2005 the BIC spent an additional £ 22m on an additional extension and refurbishment programme.[37] The economic viability of building a conference venue is reduced in today ' s competitive climate as the lavishness and size of conference venues have increased the cost of construction considerably.[9]

Any benefi ts accrued through the construction of a conference venue may not necessarily aid the destination ' s peripheral regions. Thus, the sphere of infl uence is small as most conference delegates ' meet, eat and sleep under one roof — the venue ' .[27] Any new tourism infrastructure that interacts with conference delegates is established close to the venue, such as a conference hotel. Minimal development occurs in peripheral areas, as delegates are often limited in their ability to travel within a destination, preferring instead to rely on tourism infrastructure located centrally to the destination, such as hotels, restaurants and retail outlets.

As more destinations restructure towards offering conference facilities, the sector is becoming increasingly competitive,[38] and with this increased competition comes the possibility that supply may exceed demand.[39] ' When will the bubble burst? ' , as the number of delegates and conferences cannot continue to increase *ad-infi nitum* . Evidence that supply may be exceeding demand comes from conference planners bargaining for lower rental rates.[9,33,40] This can be seen in the declining daily rates charged by conference venues for corporate delegates. The

UK Conference Market Survey identifi ed that average daily corporate delegate rates fell from £ 34.50 in 1999 to £ 32.95 in 2000. [41] Investors should learn from the construction boom in hotels during the mid-1980s, which led to an oversupply of rooms and which, in turn, led to hotel occupancies and room rates plummeting, with many hotels going

Table 1: Cost of major new conference and exhibition venues opened between 1991 and 1997 in the UK[35]

Location	Year of opening	Capital cost (£ m)
International Convention Centre, Birmingham	1991	1 80
Edinburgh International Conference Centre	1995	3 8
Clyde Auditorium	1997	3 8
Belfast Waterfront Conference & Concert Centre	1997	3 2
Plymouth Pavilions	1992	2 5
Cardiff International Arena	1993	2 5
North Wales Conference Centre, Llandudno	1994	6

bankrupt.[9] The marketing reality of the 1990s has made large venues recognise that in today ' s highly competitive environment, they cannot afford to ignore any potential markets.[42] Basically, ' competition for meetings has become intense ' .[43]

When a destination considers whether or not to develop a conference sector, it should also look at macroeconomic conditions such as interest rates. When interest rates rose in 1998 in the UK, the consumer

Q1anticipated harder times by ratcheting down spending ' .[44] This had a detrimental effect on the conference sector. Fewer bookings occurred, leaving spare capacity unsold, which in turn resulted in a reduction in prices and profi t levels.[44] However, large international meetings are often organised between two and four years in advance so that the true impact of any downturn may not be witnessed for some years in the future. The destination should, therefore, consider the economic cycle carefully, to ensure that the opening of any conference venue does not coincide with a period of economic recession. Opening a venue in times of economic recession would make the establishment of the venue within the conference sector more diffi cult, compared to opening the venue during a period of economic prosperity. Economies experience periods of economic prosperity and recession, with potentially positive and negative impacts for the conference sector, respectively. During a recession, the corporate sector often reduces expenditure on conferences owing to concerns over meeting travelling costs as it is discretionary expenditure,[45,46] and this was experienced in the UK during the recession at the beginning of the 1990s.[33]

Social and environmental disruption within a destination, due to conference venue development, is inevitable.[12] When large numbers of delegates attend conferences, they often move en masse to a conference destination for short periods of time. This increased population density manifests itself in a number of ways, including the level of traffi c congestion and related parking availability, crowding of footpaths and streets as well as overcrowding in shops, restaurants and accommodation, the presence of a carnival atmosphere and the number of tourists in general. Once the conference is over, the density of inhabitants returns to pre-conference levels. This can create peak / trough population densities, which at their height may be greater than the carrying capacity

of a destination. In developing a conference sector, a destination should therefore consider what changes will be required in its infrastructure. Associated with these changes will be an additional cost to the local economy of providing an infrastructure that can cope with the additional visitors that a successful conference venue brings.[33] Other social impacts include the residents ' attitudes. The presence of a conference venue, and, in particular, high status conferences, can lend a considerable amount of credibility to a destination[32] and, as such, the local inhabitants may initially feel euphoric as the conference venue generates economic gains for the local community.

In light of the fi nding of the literature review, this paper examines empirical data, identifying the rationale behind the construction of purpose-built conference venues, in order to identify whether the empirical fi ndings support the literature review. Once the rationale has been identifi ed, future growth is predicted through the utilisation of historical data within forecasting methods. Finally, these future trends are supported by empirical fi ndings obtained from questionnaire respondents. The paper continues with an examination of the empirical data collection process.

METHODOLOGY

The empirical data utilised within this paper were collected as part of a wider survey. This subset utilised a postal questionnaire sent to 300 purpose-built UK conference venues between June and August 2001, of which 53 valid responses were obtained, giving a response rate of 17.6 per cent. The addresses for these venues were obtained from a number of publications, including The Venue: The World-wide Guide to Conference and Incentive Travel Facilities 2000 / 01[47] and The Green and Blue Book publication.[48] Secondary sources included UK conference bureaus and local authorities, along with journals, trade magazines and British Tourism Association publications. The questionnaires that were deemed usable were coded and entered into SPSS (version 10.0) for analysis.

PURPOSE-BUILT CONFERENCE VENUE CLASSIFICATION

For the use of this paper, the term ' purpose-built venues ' included the classifi cations of:

— purpose-built convention centre (specifi cally built to host conferences);
— multi-purpose (civic and community halls, used for many other events);
— residential conference centre (devoted to conference market offering space for employees to learn).

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Smoothing techniques were applied to forecast the future of the UK conference sector. The smoothing technique utilised is that of doubleexponential smoothing.

DOUBLE-EXPONENTIAL SMOOTHING

Double-exponential smoothing computes a trend through the data using a weighting function that places the greatest emphasis on the most recent time periods.[49] In the fi rst-order exponential smoothing procedure, the forecast values always lag behind the actual values by one or several periods. A more effi cient adjustment can be made to the forecast by using double-exponential smoothing, as it is based on a linear trend and consists of two equations. The fi rst equation corresponds to that of fi rst-order exponential smoothing, while in the second equation the values calculated in the fi rst equation are used as initial values and are smoothed again.[50] The advantages of using a double-exponential smoothing method is that

it is relatively simple and captures linear trends both up and down, while forecasting several periods ahead. Its disadvantages are that it cannot predict non-linear trends or stepped data well and fails to deal with seasonality. It does not offer any causal explanation, but is common to all time-series methods.

FINDINGS; REASONS FOR CREATING CONFERENCE FACILITIES

In light of the literature review identifying that the construction of a purpose-built conference centre brings with it economic, social and environmental costs and benefi ts incurred and / or accrued by a destination, respondents were asked for the rationale behind the construction of their conference facilities. Respondents were provided with a list of key reasons for creating and supplying conference facilities. The list was drawn from a review of relevant literature including previously utilised questionnaires from the BACD and British Conference Market Trends Survey (BCMTS).[51] Each reason was graded by respondents from 1 (highly signifi cant in the decision) to 5 (not signifi cant in the decision) (Table 2).

‘ To meet market demand ’ and ‘ Based on perceived demand ’ were ranked fi rst and second, respectively, in terms of the most commonly cited factors for creating and supplying conference facilities. Market demand is the relationship between the established demand for the conference facilities and the price offered, often established through market research. This compares to perceived demand, which is simply the apparent demand and the perceptible price that can be charged, which is demand that has yet to be established. These factors are not specifi cally linked to any individual economic, social or environmental cost or benefi t. Where demand, be it actual or perceived, exists, the construction of a purpose-built conference centre is likely to occur, in the knowledge that its construction will bring with it a wide range of costs and benefi ts for the destination.

Table 2 : Reasons for creating/supplying purpose-built conference venues (*N*=53)

	Mean
To meet market demand	2.7
Based on perceived demand	2.8
Aim to attract business in off-peak times	2.9
To attract high levels of delegate spending	3.1
To generate economic gains for the local community	3.2
To increase hotel bookings and occupancies	3.6
To increase employment opportunities	3.6
Other towns/destinations have added conference facili-ties	3.8
Due to private sector investment	3.9
To enhance urban image	4.0
Redevelopment of blighted areas	4.1
Due to Local Government investment	4.1
Due to consecutive poor tourist seasons in terms of visitor numbers	4.2
Due to Central Government investment	4.5

The factor ranked as the third most important factor, with an average ranking of 2.9, is that of ‘ Aim to attract business in off-peak times ’ . These fi ndings support the viewpoint that conferences are held in the ‘ shoulder months ’ of the tourism season in order to prolong the revenue-generating season for a destination.[6,18,27] In extending the revenue-generating season, it also protects existing employment and provides additional employment opportunities.

Factors associated with the regeneration of a declining destination (‘ To generate economic gains for the local community ’ , ‘ To increase employment opportunities ’ , ‘ To enhance urban image ’ and ‘ Redevelopment of blighted areas ’) were only ranked fourth, eighth, tenth and eleventh, respectively, suggesting that these were not signifi cant factors in deciding whether to construct a purpose-built venue. Factors associated with demand, be it actual or perceived, are viewed as the primary motivators for the establishment of purpose-built conference venues. Factors associated with regeneration can be considered as secondary factors in any decision-making process. These empirical fi ndings from respondents within the purpose-built conference sector oppose the fi ndings of the literature review.

Historical data concerning the decade in which the purpose-built conference venue was opened were utilised within the forecasting technique of double-exponential smoothing in order to predict the future composition of the UK conference sector. In doing so, and in the knowledge that satisfying demand is more important than regeneration of a destination in the decision to build a purpose-built conference venue, this research aims to identify how respondents perceive the future of the UK conference sector.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF PURPOSE-BUILT CONFERENCE VENUES

In order to undertake future predictions, historical data are required upon which to forecast, and respondents were therefore asked in which decade their conference venue was built (Figure 2). The greatest levels of growth within the UK purpose-built conference sector occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, with 19 (35.9 per cent) and 21 (39.6 per cent) venues opening, respectively. No respondents stated that their purpose-built venue opened in the years 2000 – 2001 (up to and including the year of survey). The results suggest that by the turn of the 21st century, many UK cities and large towns had invested in the construction of a purpose-built conference venue. However, there is a shortage of publicly funded conference venues in many UK cities, for example Bath, Bristol, Eastbourne, Leeds, Manchester and Swindon. Thus, there is potential for expansion in the UK purpose-built conference sector.[26]

Based on the number of responding venues that opened during the post-war period, forecasting techniques were utilised to predict the future development of the UK conference sector. Double-exponential smoothing was applied to this historical data to forecast growth in the current decade and that of 2010 – 2019 (Figure 2). The results suggest that 29.6 purposebuilt venues may be constructed and opened in the current decade and

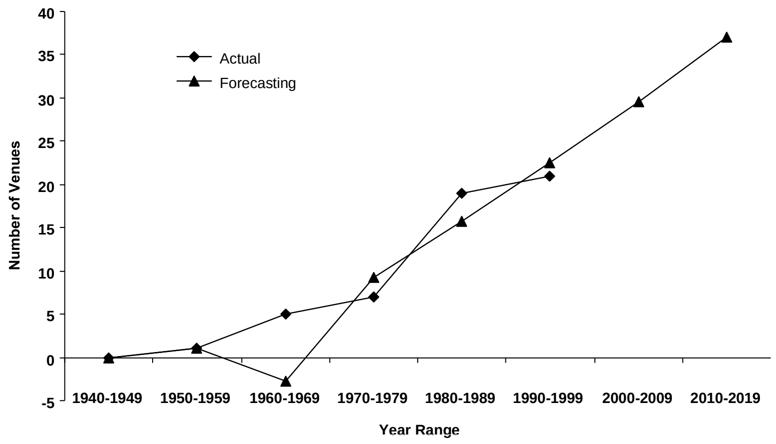

Figure 2: Double-exponential smoothing forecasting for the construction of purpose-built venues (*N* = 53)

37.1 may be added during the subsequent decade of 2010 to 2019. Utilising the forecasted values established by double-exponential forecasting, the growth rate for the construction of purpose-built conference venues over the two predicted decades from 2000 – 2009 to 2010 – 2019 is forecast to be 64 per cent.

With purpose-built conference venues being constructed on the basis of demand, and the fact that historical data, when used to forecast the construction of new purpose-built conference venues, suggest a 64 per cent rise, the implications of this fi nding are that as more destinations restructure towards offering conference facilities, the sector is becoming increasingly competitive.[38]

WHAT ARE THE PERCEIVED FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE UK CONFERENCE SECTOR?

In light of the research ' s fi ndings, respondents were asked how they viewed the future of the UK conference sector, the results of which can be seen in Figure 3 .

It can be seen that two factors received the greatest level of support. Overall, respondents considered that the UK conference sector will continue to grow, with 33 (62.2 per cent) respondents predicting this, while 23 (43.3 per cent) respondents predicted that greater competition will develop. Seven (13.2 per cent) responding venues predicted that the future will see larger conference venues opening throughout the UK, in terms of delegate capacity. As stated earlier, purpose-built venues are often seen as the ' fl agship, centrepiece ' of a destination. It is, therefore, very important for purpose-built venues to continue to attract prestigious conferences and overseas delegates, and also to attract large events to their conference destination. Large conferences are prestigious for the image of the destination and also provide attractive fi nancial awards.[33],[34] Only three (5.6 per cent) respondents suggested that the conference sector would experience the closure of small venues in the future. Fewer respondents believed that the conference sector would experience an increase in the number of overseas conferences, with seven (13.2 per cent) respondents stating that they believed this would be the case in the

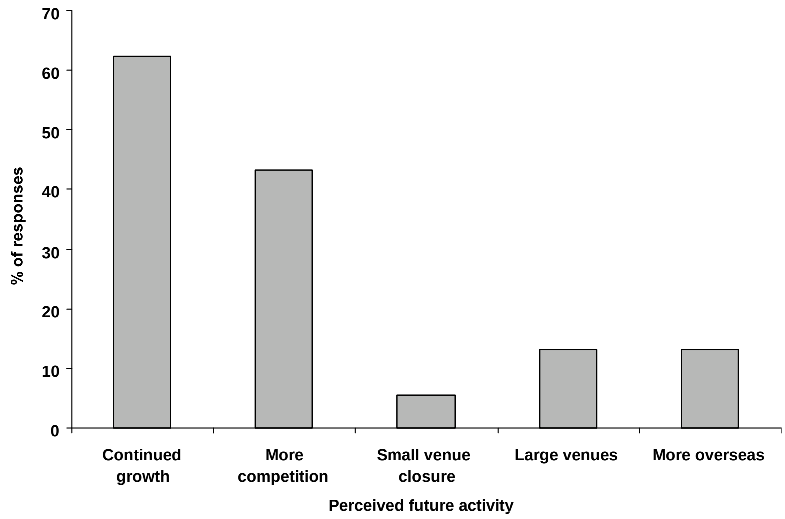

Figure 3: The perceived future of the UK conference sector (*N* = 53)

future. The UK conference sector could be marketed in a more dynamic way overseas, with the aim of attracting more high-spending overseas tourists to the UK. Overall, these fi gures suggest optimism within the UK conference sector.[26]

WILL THE CONFERENCE BUBBLE BURST?

In light of the anticipated continuation of growth within the UK purposebuilt conference sector, along with an increase in competition, an increasing body of literature has, over the past decade, been concerned with the oversupply of conference facilities within the UK. Indeed, ' When will the bubble burst? '[39] as the number of delegates and conferences cannot continue to increase *ad - infi nitum* .

Evidence that supply may be exceeding demand comes from conference planners bargaining for lower rental rates.[9,33,40] This can be seen in the declining daily rates charged by conference venues for corporate delegates. In the UK, the average daily corporate delegate rates fell from £ 34.50 in 1999 to £ 32.95 in 2000.[41] Investors should learn from the construction boom in hotels during the mid-1980s, which led to an over supply of rooms, that, in turn, led to hotel occupancies and room rates plummeting with many hotels going bankrupt.[9] The marketing reality of the 1990s has made large venues recognise that in today ' s highly competitive environment, they cannot afford to ignore any potential markets.[42] Basically, ' competition for meetings has become intense ' ;[43] however, the fi ndings of this research suggest that the construction of purpose-built conference venues is based on the existence of suffi cient demand.

CONCLUSION

The future continues to look positive for the UK conference sector. Respondents from purpose-built venues support the fi nding of the double-exponential smoothing techniques and predict continued growth in the supply of conference facilities. This increase in the supply of purpose-built conference venues is in response to both perceived and actual demand; factors relating to the regeneration of a destination are secondary, and this fi nding opposes the literature review. Additionally, respondents predict an increase in competition, but do not believe that they will see the closure of small venues, the expansion of overseas markets, or the building of larger conference venues. However, this research concludes that with the expansion of both the quantity and size of conference venues, there is a danger that too many purpose-built venues will be established, leading to over capacity within the conference sector. This research questions the ability of the UK purpose-built conference sector to expand in terms of both supply of conference venues and demand for their services ad-infi nitum.

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