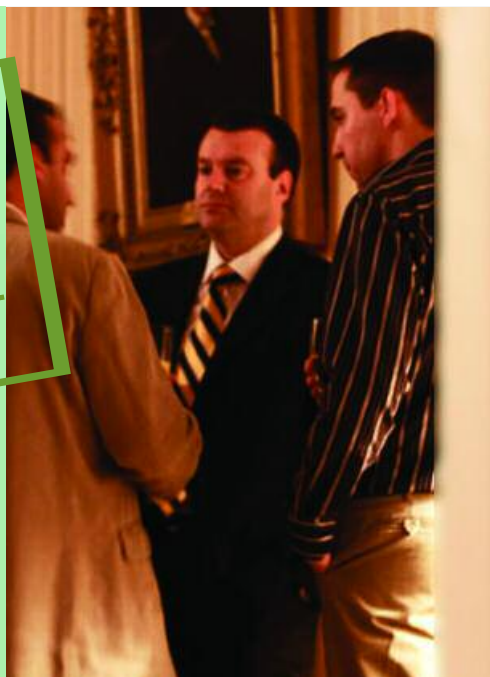


1 Destination Selection:

**WE PUT YOU
IN CONTROL**

“How to select a winning destination for your International event”



Choosing the right destination is the basis of a successful event as it provides the platform upon which congress and meeting goals and objectives can be built. Selecting the right destination means identifying a geographic region that is appealing, accessible and affordable as this “trio” will, ultimately, drive delegate numbers.

Defining Meeting Requirements

The meeting goals and objectives should guide the destination selection process. Based on the stated goals and objectives, you can begin to define the meeting requirements in terms of space, dates, rates and services. This process requires knowledge and data on attendee demographics, programme content and available budget. Historical data from previous meetings/ events with similar goals and objectives will often help to define these parameters.

Preparing the Event Profile

Before opening the discussion about possible destinations it is essential to identify and prepare the event profile. The profile should include the goals and objectives, the attendee profile, available historical data, preferred dates, number of guestrooms, meeting room requirements, outline programme schedule, range of acceptable rates, catering requirements, information about exhibition and other special events or activities.

Request for Proposals (RFP)

The event profile makes it possible to prepare a short list of suitable destinations. The next step is to prepare the bid document which is a written document that includes the meeting specifications. It may also describe the selection procedures and criteria. This process should ideally be handled by Professional Congress Organiser (PCO) on the behalf of the client. The bid document should then be sent to prospective cities, PCOs, Destination Management Companies (DMCs), Convention and Visitor Bureaus (CVBs) or venue facilities.

Researching Destinations

For Scientific Meetings it will be necessary to identify national societies or active scientists interested in hosting the congress. Local support is vital for the success of any congress. Again, the knowledge and expertise of PCOs in a global association such as INCON can be drawn upon to guarantee success. INCON partners often work globally and therefore can dispense advice about destinations worldwide through their own experiences. Convention and Visitor Bureaus (CVB) can also be helpful partners in the destination selection process.

They represent specific destinations and offer expert knowledge and, in many cases tangible support. CVBs usually provides unbiased information about local hotels, conference and convention centres, non-traditional venues and suppliers. Other valuable sources for obtaining information and assistance include national tourism offices, government agencies, international airlines, travel agents, international hotel chains and members of the particular association who have previous experience at the prospective destinations.

Attending trade shows such as EIBTM, IT&ME, IMEX or ITB represents a most useful resource as much time can be saved in collecting information. IMEX, for example, has a hosted buyer programme especially for decision makers from associations with subject-related seminars. Trade associations related to the meeting/ events industry like the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO), Meeting Professionals International (MPI) etc and others will assist with further information. Trade magazines, also, are another useful source of information. Some publishers in the industry produce annual directories of venues.

Site Visits

By analysing the RFP responses it will be possible to narrow the selection to a short list of potential destinations. However, before coming to a final decision it is always advisable to conduct a site visit. Site visits are often financially supported by the CVB, PCO and other partners.

Conclusion

The destination must be safe, attractive and affordable to attract many participants. INCON is offering its support by providing a “one-stop shop” - no matter where you choose to hold your event.

Check List for Destination Selection

- Accessibility of the destination (by air, by rail, by road)
- Suitable congress venue
- Sufficient hotel room capacity across the category appropriate to the socio-economic profile of the delegate
- Reputation, flexibility & professionalism of the venue staff and other support personnel
- Reasonable costs including travel & accommodation
- Telecommunication & infrastructure
- Safety & security
- Natural & health risks (earthquakes, epidemics etc)
- Local membership and their interest in assisting with and/or participating in the meeting
- Availability, comfort and cost of ground transportation
- Appeal and Attractiveness of the destination (leisure time activities, cultural attractions etc)
- Attendee expectations for meeting venue and support services
- Availability of multilingual staff
- Cancellation policies and negotiation flexibility
- Foreign exchange rates & seasonal aspects (peak seasons etc)
- Political & economic stability of the destination
- Foreign governments reputation
- Customs regulations
- Visa requirements (free access for everybody)
- Climate at the destination
- Environmental friendly destination (green aspects)
- Accessibility for people with disabilities
- Availability of medical facilities
- Attitude of local residents toward foreign visitors & language barriers
- Time zones
- Concurrent local events or related meetings
- Labour union regulations
- Local holidays
- Recommendations & possible concerns of sponsors

Inge Hanser

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