

TOP TRENDS TAKING OVER MICE TOURISM IN 2018



More security, personalized offers that will strengthen human interaction, and the implementation of new technologies are the three fundamental trends that any traveling business or agency should consider if they are looking to grow in the Business Travel & MICE tourism in 2018.

Security

Executives from hotel chains, convention centers, receptive agencies, highlight the importance of security - all events should be held under greater security measures and inspections. All MICE tourism destinations that are mass events are, therefore, possible targets. **Thus they should have contingency plans ready, evaluated and previously tested in order to lower the chances of an attack.**

Since zero risk is impossible in case of an attack, bomb threat, etc., experts advise that the situation should be communicated to the delegates in the fastest and most accurate way possible: through text messages, instant messaging, email, etc.

The recent report by Ostelea School of Tourism & Hospitality recalls that Turkey "has lost more than 45% of the events it held, after the incidents suffered in the last two years."

On the other hand, Paris, after the attacks in 2015, "has partially recovered its stability in the tourism sector in a record time, with a year-on-year growth of 7.4%".

Experience

Looking ahead to the following years, 63% of executives in the MICE tourism sector expect an increase in virtual attendance at events, according to a survey carried out by the MPI (Meeting Professionals International) association among its associates.

According to Rob Davidson, analyst of the IBTM fair (Incentives, Business Traveling, and Meetings), "we are talking about conferences in which there can be as many people inside the room as outside of it, that is, following the online attendance and intervention, thousands of miles away."

To face this trend, and to prevent tourism meetings from maintaining its preeminence, the annual report of IBTM highlights the need to "create experiences", which will require more creativity, logistical efforts, etc., by tourism companies and destinations.

Rutger Hoorn, director of global sales at Ovation Global DMC, an agency specialized in receptive MICE recognized in more than 100 countries, is not surprised that for the umpteenth time, the concept of "experiences" is being explored again.

But he adds: "You can always look for something new that hasn't been done before. And now everyone talks about how technologies, like virtual reality, artificial intelligence, etc., will affect the travel experience."

"But we are offering human interaction with customers in order to create more business. We believe that the experience comes after that personal relationship has been established. We can create experiences, yes, but always through human interaction."

In any case, adding layers to personalized services is essential if you really want the congress or convention attendees to feel special, and then take their experience to another level, according to Sonia Prieto, director of Tourism for Value Retail Spain, company owner of the shopping centers La Roca Village, in Barcelona, and Las Rozas Village, in Madrid, both luxury outlets.

Technology

One of the next MICE tourism trends to mark in 2018 will be related to new technologies.

This will not only be subjected to cost or effectiveness, but to the fact that it will be a growing requirement among a new profile of customers.

In this sense, the report of the IBTM aims at companies in the Fintech sector (new technologies related to banking and finance), information technologies, the automotive industry, and the pharmaceutical industry.

With regard to professional associations, "the growth of travel for the scientific, technological, engineering and mathematical sectors is maintained". And it is precisely in those economic activities linked to scientific advances, and the online world, etc., where companies and individuals "will, of course, want technology to be an essential part of their events," says Rob Davidson.

For the next two years, 57% of the MICE tourism sector expects two great terms, according to a survey carried out by the association of MPI managers among its associates.

Another 54% estimate that travel budgets will tend to increase during the next year.

In addition, incentive travels -which had declined in recent years-, have steadily recovered since the beginning of 2016.

"For incentive travels, the cost per person increases from 3,000 to 4,000 dollars." But beware, **because 60% of customers see that costs (flights, hotel, etc.) are growing faster than travel budgets.**

Preferred destinations for incentive travels include the United States, the Caribbean, Mexico and Europe. Asia is expected to increase by 28% in the next five years, due to the increased demand for China and India as a travel destination. London, Barcelona and Berlin top the list of the 10 most sought destinations in Europe by the MICE segment for next year, according to a report by American Express Meetings & Events.

The other cities included in this top 10 are: Amsterdam, Paris, Madrid, Frankfurt, Rome, Munich and Prague.

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