

Tourism and Demography



Edited by

**Ian Yeoman, Cathy H. C. Hsu,
Karen A. Smith and Sandra Watson**

What Does Generation Y Want from Conferences and Incentive Programmes?

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What Does Generation Y Want from Conferences and Incentive Programmes? Implications for the Business Tourism Industry

Rob Davidson

Objectives

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with an understanding of:

- ◆ The sectors and distinguishing characteristics of business tourism;
- ◆ The four generations currently to be found in the global workforce;
- ◆ The salient characteristics of Generation Y;
- ◆ How the design of conferences and incentive trips may be adapted, in order to appeal to members of Generation Y;
- ◆ The challenges involved in identifying the business tourism destinations that most motivate members of Generation Y.

Introduction

Business tourism – principally, travel for commercial, professional and work-related purposes – represents the major non-leisure form of tourism, and business tourists are widely recognised as the highest-spending category of travellers. It is generally agreed (for example, Swarbrooke and Horner, 2001; Davidson and Cope, 2003; Rogers, 2003) that modern-day business tourism includes four principal forms of travel: journeys for the purpose of attending conferences and other types of meetings; journeys to attend an exhibition or trade fair; individual business trips; and incentive trips or incentive travel. While most forms of business tourism are self-explanatory, incentive travel is the name given to the travel, usually in groups, of employees who have been awarded a luxury trip, entirely paid for by their company, as a prize for high achievement at work. This is widely recognised as one of the most effective management tools for encouraging employees to be more productive and to make a greater contribution to their company's profitability. In the vast majority of cases, therefore, each category of business tourism is in some way linked to the travellers' professional life or to their role in the commercial processes that underpin much of modern business life.

It is clear that conferences and incentive trips play a key role in fostering communication between members of the same profession or the same organisation and achieving greater business results. Most of the end-users of such events – those who invest their time in participating in conferences and incentive programmes – are people in some form of employment. For them, participating in these forms of business tourism can significantly contribute to their career development, as they represent important sources of information, motivation and networking opportunities.

All businesses must adapt their products and services to meet the changing needs of their customers, and the conference and incentive travel sectors of the business tourism industry are no exception. They must constantly evolve in order to ensure that such business events effectively meet the needs and aspirations of each new generation of participants. This chapter examines the particular characteristics of Generation Y as business tourists and investigates how conferences and incentive programmes can be designed in such a way that they appeal to this youngest, but fastest-growing, segment of employees. The recommendations will be of interest to all intermediaries and suppliers in the conference and incentive travel sectors, including convention bureaux and other destination marketing organisations; destination management companies; professional conference organisers; incentive travel houses, venues and speakers.

Chapter extract

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