

10 Sector-focused Approach to Business Events in Manchester

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This chapter explores the development and planning of a portfolio of business events in Manchester, UK. The portfolio approach combines a strong focus on the city's key industry sectors with a 'quality-orientated' way of event strategy development and implementation. Rather than aiming at filling the event venues with a quantity of random business events, Manchester has successfully secured a number of large-scale conferences with a strong international profile that are aligned with the city's key industry sectors such as Biomedicine, Healthcare, Sport, IT and Social Science. The city also aims at creating its own business events to fill the gaps in the calendar and prioritise specific areas, Digital or Advanced Materials, for example.

The chapter also analyses the nature of the inter-organisational collaboration and joint decision-making in Manchester in relation to the business event sector development and destination promotion. The overall realisation of the business event strategy is guided by Marketing Manchester (MM), a local DMO, and Manchester Convention Bureau (MCB), responsible for event bidding and collaboration with the local, national and international partners and clients.

This chapter draws on primary research in the form of document analysis and interviews conducted by the authors with several industry experts, responsible for business event strategy development and destination marketing in Manchester.

The value of business events

In tourism and event sectors, the significance of business events has been proven by the fact that almost all major cities have been investing extensively into convention and exhibition centres and facilities (Getz & Page, 2016; Rogers

& Davidson, 2016) alongside the increasing number of companies operating or selling these facilities and securing international conferences (Kim, Yoon, & Kim, 2011).

The business events industry is often referred to a 'MICE' sector which stands for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (Getz, 2013). The major value of business events has been seen in their economic contribution to the host destination (Deng & Li, 2014; Getz, 2013; Raj, Walters, & Rashid, 2017). Statistically, international business-event travellers tend to spend more at a destination than leisure tourists (Getz & Page, 2016). Therefore, business events' delegates are considered to be higher-yield tourists than travellers with leisure motives (Rogers & Davidson, 2016).

In addition to the direct economic value, a more general social and economic legacy of business events has been also recognised (Getz & Page, 2016). Such events can be seen as 'communication vehicles' with internal audience (personnel training, board and sales meetings, annual congresses, etc.) as well as with external audience (product launches, press briefing, general meetings or conferences). In broader sense, they represent "a diverse mix of communications events" (Rogers, 2013, p. 3).

The UK Conference and Meeting Survey (2018), reveals an estimated £18.1 billion of direct expenditure generated by conference and meeting delegates in venues and in wider destination spend in 2017. There were an estimated 92.8 million delegates accounting for approximately 147.4 million delegate days.

To maintain and maximise the benefits of business events, a long-term strategising is required. Many cities across the globe has shifted their ad-hoc approach to business events to the strategic planning of portfolios of events which requires consolidation and collaboration from different institutional organisations, commercial sector and local community.

Manchester as a business event destination

The city of Manchester is an industrial national hub located in the northern part of England in the United Kingdom. It is a central city within a metropolitan county of Greater Manchester (GM), which also comprises Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. As of 2013, the GM economy generated £48 billion GVA (Gross Value Added) which is a 4% share of the national economy (GM Integrated Support Team, 2013). In 2017, Manchester was ranked the 3rd most visited city in the UK. It was included in the Top 10 most intriguing places to visit in 2017. It was number one European city for FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) and the fastest growing city and most economically productive in the UK (Marketing Manchester, 2017a).

One of the city's strategic objectives is to promote Manchester as a leading business event destination. In the city strategies, launched recently (Table 10.1),

business events have been described as one of the four strategic aims for overall destination development, alongside the positioning of Manchester as a leading international destination, improving the quality of visitor experience and maximising the overall capacity for growth.

Table 10.1: Destination development in Manchester. Key documents.

Documents	Year	Brief summary
Greater Manchester Destination Management Plan (GDMP)	2017	The action plan for the visitor economy for Greater Manchester that is connected to the tourism strategy for 3 years. It states what has been achieved, where the city is positioned now and its aims & targets for 2020.
Conference Value & Volume	2016	The biennial report on business tourism activity in the Greater Manchester.
The Greater Manchester Strategy 2014-2020 'Stronger Together'	2013	Overall strategy for the Greater Manchester development.
Manchester City Council Report for Resolution	2016	Marketing Manchester's report – overview of the Manchester's visitor economy.
Marketing Manchester Visit. Meet. Invest. Study.	2017	Report on collaboration of Manchester's stakeholders and its priorities and strategies.
Greater Manchester Strategy for the Visitor Economy 2014-2020	2014	Sets out strategic directions for the visitors' economy in Greater Manchester.
The Greater Manchester Internationalisation Strategy	2017	Manchester's strategy for reaching international markets

Indeed, the value of business events is rather significant. The MICE sector generates around 5 million delegates a year, contributing £823 million annually to the Greater Manchester economy. In total, 40,100 direct and indirect jobs have been generated by the corporate event sector in the city (Marketing Manchester, 2017b).

The planning and implementation of all city event and destination related strategies is operated by the two key agencies, Marketing Manchester (MM) and Manchester Convention Bureau (MCB). MM is the agency responsible for promoting Greater Manchester on the international and national level. The MCB team is part of the MM and works proactively in identifying international and national conferences; it also facilitates event bid proposals. In 2016/17, MCB won 38 bids to host major international business events, and over 15,000 delegates were welcomed to the city (Marketing Manchester, 2017c). Such results contributed positively to the brand of the city and allows Manchester to compete against cities such as Frankfurt, Prague and Barcelona (Manchester City Council, 2017).

Overall, the value of business events in Manchester can be summarised in two ways. First, business events have been viewed as economic contributors to the city prosperity. Second, business events enhanced the city's profile by increasing the awareness of Manchester as a leading business tourism destination.