
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BUSINESS TOURISM SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE ROLE OF EXHIBITIONS

ABSTRACT

Business Tourism, a sub-sector of the tourism industry, is growing in international recognition having received wide attention from tourism professionals, governments and academics over the past few decades. This trend demonstrates the integral role that business tourism plays in the development of tourism as a whole. The benefits and impacts of meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions and events on a destination can create considerable opportunities for a city or country's economy. With the caveat that the balance is maintained between the demand and supply sides of the industry, a destination can successfully use business tourism to achieve pre-defined development goals.

Traditionally, the Northern hemisphere developed countries have held the greatest proportion of the business tourism market, both as contributors and recipients. More recently, developing countries are starting to claim their share of this lucrative market as meeting planners, organisers and business travellers look to new, exciting destinations for their meetings. South Africa falls into this category of emerging destinations, becoming a recognised competitor in the global business tourism industry. In terms of the primary components of the business tourism mix, the exhibition component has received the least attention in the South African market to date although there is a growing understanding of the benefits that can be derived from participation in this sector. The aim in this report is to examine the role of exhibition sector, assessing the industry's contribution to the overall significance of the business tourism sector in South Africa.

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Submitted: **June 2007**

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