

MICE

Marketing essentials
and new opportunities

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Introduction

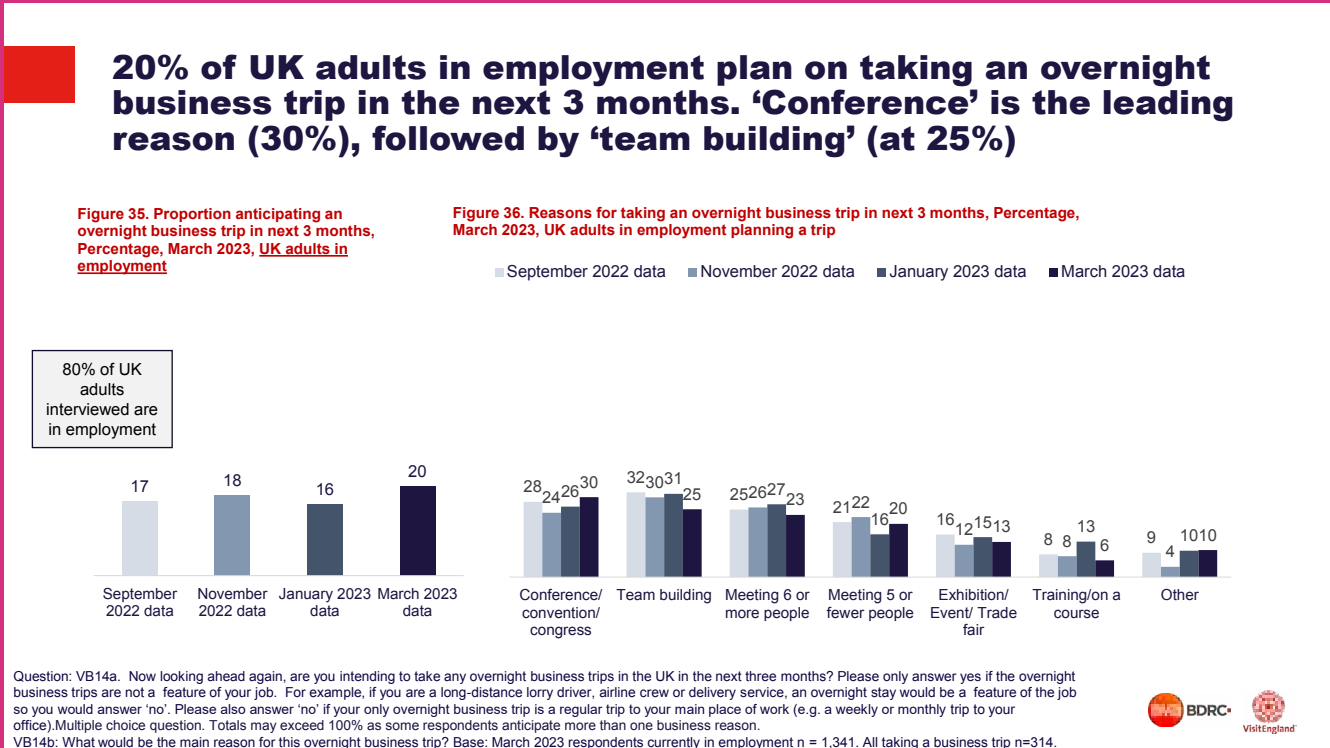
The acronym MICE stands for meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions. MICE tourism is a niche sector catering to groups of people who come together in a particular place and for a particular reason.

The need for an elaborate marketing strategy is based on the components of MICE tourism that have mixed characteristics of a touristic product and a business event.



A standalone MICE offer is an important source of business for most hotels, even if you can only cater to one or two of the four components. In April 2023, ResearchAndMarkets.com released a report stating "The global MICE market size is expected to reach USD 1,563.29 billion by 2030, registering a CAGR of 7.5% from 2023 to 2030."

In the same month, the April 2023 sentiment tracker from VisitBritain revealed that 20% of UK adults in employment plan on taking an overnight business trip in the next 3 months. Conference is the leading reason for taking one (30%) followed by 'Team building' (at 25%).





Influencing this increase in market size is the normalisation of working from home which has created previously unseen levels of demand for extended and 'work away' holidays. Whether travelling for business, visiting while on assignment, or merely doing business while travelling the upshot is that travellers are increasingly looking for extended stays. This presents a whole new range of opportunities for MICE to capitalise on.

Regardless of whether the MICE capacity at your property is for 3 or 3,000, why wouldn't you want to leverage this financially lucrative growth sector?

The following pages explain in detail what MICE is and what's required to attract this type of business to your property or venue.

MICE _____ What's it all about?

MICE makes up a significant portion of global business travel as every industry has regular events of some kind. The main goal is always to bring professionals together, foster connections, promote new ideas, and push growth.

In the wake of almost three years of Zoom windows, Teams meetings, and remote work fatigue, businesses and employees have a newfound appreciation for in-person events. Spontaneous conversation during breaks, enjoying a meal together, eye contact, and body language are all hard to replicate online. Therefore, meetings and events that encourage connection and meaning are well-positioned for success in the future.





MICE tourism was evolving even before the coronavirus pandemic, and it has taken yet another turn since business and leisure travel resumed. That said, the essence of the four pillars remains largely unchanged, they've just taken on new purposes with the demand for hybrid and virtual events skyrocketing. This creates a broader scope in which the MICE industry can grow.

Traditionally, MICE encompasses mostly business events. Leisure events such as concerts or festivals fall into a different category. However many organisers now add leisure elements to larger events with the purpose of improving engagement with attendees and creating a more memorable experience. This usually involves working with event planners and MICE bookers to tailor an event to a particular theme or specific client brief.

FOUR COMPONENTS OF MICE



A diagram illustrating the four components of MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions). The central text 'FOUR COMPONENTS OF MICE' is in large, bold, white capital letters. Surrounding this central text are four white circles, each containing a component name in white text: 'Meetings' (top-left), 'Incentives' (top-right), 'Conferences' (bottom-left), and 'Exhibitions' (bottom-right).

Meetings

Incentives

Conferences

Exhibitions

Meetings

Generally a single-day event held in hotel rooms or at convention centres. They can vary in size from only a small group of senior executives to larger gatherings such as annual shareholder meetings.

The purpose is to bring together people from one company, industry, or project to address challenges, discuss plans, and set goals. Catering is often kept simple and there's rarely an entertainment requirement.

The ideal spaces are closed off allowing for important discussions with a board or collaborative workshops. However, hybrid events with mobility have replaced the traditional lecture room or auditorium-style seating configuration to better fulfil the needs of clients.

THE NEW OPPORTUNITY: Following the 'Stay-at-home' instruction at the onset of the pandemic in 2020 many businesses downsized their office premises and switched to long-term remote working arrangements. This has created a new demand for locations where teams can convene in person to focus, connect, and collaborate in temporary meeting spaces on a regular basis.





Incentives

Incentives are probably the most fun part of the MICE segment. They include all types of travel rewards a company offers to individual staff, teams, or partners (e.g. affiliates). In this context, the goal of an incentive is to thank people for their great performance, boost morale, or recognise loyalty.

Incentives can take different forms depending on the company organising them. Some may send their team for an all-inclusive trip to an out-of-town resort. Others might plan a variety of activities closer to home to encourage staff to bond in an informal setting.

It is important to pay close attention to what is driving demand in the MICE sector. Incentives are one route for hospitality brands to expedite their return to pre-pandemic occupancy levels. Not only do they enable hotels to fill their rooms on week days, it's also a great opportunity to entice travellers to stay over the subsequent weekend.

THE NEW OPPORTUNITY: An incentive is a business reward from the employer but it doesn't have to be all about tangible takeaways to use in the office. As more people weigh up whether they should spend three or four days away from home, it boils down to a simple question: how can I make the destination attractive enough to inspire a guest to extend their stay beyond the company away-days?

Conferences

Think of conferences as supersized meetings. They often last more than one day and can vary in size, usually from 100 attendees upwards. As with incentives, conferences can look very different depending on the organisers and the industry behind them. Sharing new insights and research is a big part of the event. As are networking and team-building activities.

It is important for venue providers to understand the common activities at conferences and communicate the facilities on-site to accommodate these. This can include one, a mix, or all of the below:

Panels: A group of experts discuss a topic and present new findings. A moderator asks questions and may take questions from a live audience.

Presentations: At a company conference, senior leaders may present the latest successes or results of the business. At public industry conferences, thought leaders are invited as guest speakers to share the latest insights.

Speeches: Also known as keynotes, they mark the beginning or end of a conference. Typically an industry leader will address an important issue and share ideas for solutions.

Discussions and Workshops: Break-out groups of participants work on a specific case study or research a certain topic. This approach is a great way to offer attendees an interactive learning experience.



THE NEW OPPORTUNITY: According to the 2023 American Express Global Meetings and Events Forecast, 80 percent of planners say their organisations take sustainability into account when planning events. As event planners look for ways to make sure their attendees are pleased with their sustainability efforts, picking the right venue partner can make a huge difference.

We explore sustainability around MICE later on in this paper.

Exhibitions

Also referred to as trade shows, exhibitions are usually massive events that draw thousands of visitors and exhibitors from around the world. They can last anywhere from several days to a week. Exhibitions are usually very industry-specific and have a well-defined target market.

Exhibitors go to trade shows to present and promote their product or service, drive business, and liaise with existing and potential partners. Industry professionals go to network, find clients or jobs, and discover new ways to solve problems. Since trade shows want to promote growth and innovation in their industry, there's often a dedicated event for new business pitches.

Common activities at exhibitions can include one, a mix of, or all of the activities present at conferences, as well as networking parties for subgroups among their attendees. These are often held at smaller venues in hotels close to the exhibition venue. Typical examples are bespoke B2B cocktail parties, product launches and award shows.

THE NEW OPPORTUNITY: Experience travel is one of three trends we identified in our 2022 whitepaper on tourism recovery; [Beyond the Blip](#). The what, how and why of real life encounters to explore and discover a place is a significant element of an exhibition's appeal. Bearing in mind that travel is often about earning bragging rights it boils down to a simple question. What kind of should-have-been-there stories will attendees want to share from your venue?

FOUR INFLUENCES OF MICE ON HOTEL OCCUPANCY & REVENUE

Four influences of MICE on hotel occupancy and revenue

MICE tourism is a growing niche within the travel sector. The reasons behind its significance for hospitality are fourfold. Each of these gives leverage for hotels to promote ancillary facilities and extended stay offers generating additional revenue.

First, exhibitors and attendees fill many rooms at hotels with meeting facilities or those that are close to convention centres.

Second, it is one of the fastest growing segments in the travel sector generating millions of pounds in revenue every year. Typical target sectors for MICE include IT companies, banking, retail, pharmaceuticals, hospitality and food production companies.

Third, it's an opportunity to charge premium room rates. Hotels that host on-site meetings or conferences may offer slightly discounted rates to organisers, but they can drive additional revenue from meetings and food & beverage packages.

Fourth, remote working and lifestyle trends are a driving force behind the extension of MICE stays when combined with leisure packages. The normalisation of working from home has created previously unseen levels of demand for extended and 'work away' holidays.

Whether travelling for business, visiting while on assignment or merely doing business while travelling guests are increasingly looking for extended stays, and that presents a whole range of opportunities for MICE venues to capitalise on. Consideration must be given to the "when" and "how" to communicate those opportunities in the guest booking journey and on your website.



How a MICE strategy helps

Historically it's been enough for hotels to attract business and MICE travellers by stating their venue capacity and options for seating layouts. But with the change in business needs and the addition of a remote working culture, the hospitality approach needs a much more sophisticated marketing strategy to be competitive on the MICE market.

MICE bookings are generated directly when there is a compelling offer advertised on a hotel website or marketed through specific MICE agencies, who book bespoke MICE venues that can deliver for their clients, domestic and international.

The way you market your MICE events would depend on the type of services, destinations, your target audience and whether you're marketing your services through a MICE events organiser or you're promoting your venue for direct MICE bookings.

AS A STARTING POINT, you need to have a branded MICE offer. In the same way that would be required to promote a new seasonal campaign or stay promotion; give your MICE product an identity that aligns with your brand and promote the elements that you can best deliver on.

Work with event bookers

To attract MICE business you need to nurture event planners and organisers through your hotel CRM software. Work with your event planners to understand the specifications of the MICE market and create a signature branded MICE offer unique to your hotel or venue.

Specific companies, agencies and event planners offer services of MICE planning, organisation and on-site management. Event planners are continuously scouring and sourcing new venues for their clients, looking to partner with MICE providers who can deliver a service that their brand is renowned for, consistently and reliably, and yet provides the flexibility to tailor the event to whatever brief the client requests.

Likewise when venues receive a MICE related request directly and need extra advice to elevate the guest experience, yet stay within budget, external event planners become a trusted part of the delivery team. If you don't have capacity within your in-house team or don't hold enough events to warrant a full-time person dedicated to MICE, event bookers are key to your MICE success.

Either way, working with event bookers helps you to gain a competitive advantage and become a key player in the growing multi-billion pound travel sector.



WORKING WITH EVENT PLANNERS



Valuing the experience

A new emphasis on the MICE experience is cited in a recent report from Skift Meetings - **Meetings Industry Trends to Watch in 2023**. The report quotes Anick Beaulieu, vice president of growth and partnerships for C2 International, the company behind C2 Montreal, *"Creating wow just for wow isn't enough,"* said Beaulieu. *"Storytelling must be part of it ...must also leverage the senses, bringing the experience to the next level."*

With in-person meetings and events back in demand since the end of the pandemic, their design has been reimagined. *"It's about designing for the human and not the corporate function and creating the context for deep connections and collaboration,"* adds Beaulieu.

To achieve this, event planners need to know the foundations that your venue can deliver, and from there they can craft memorable experiences with freedom to style according to the event and vision of their client.



meet
events

London-based event planners - Meet Events - deliver industry-leading live, virtual and hybrid events for clients around the world. They too are seeing human-centric and experience trends shape their clients' requirements.



After the last few years, human connection is more important than ever before and business events are reflecting this. MICE events are increasingly more experience led with mindfulness and mental wellbeing of attendees at the forefront of the agenda. With businesses continuing 'working from home' and downsizing offices, the importance of human connection is magnified and MICE seems to be an answer to this.

We are seeing less packed itineraries in order to allow delegates time to experience more than the 4 walls of the conference room with high expectations on the human networking opportunity, the quality of food, the venue facilities and a chance to experience the destination.

"As event planners, understanding these elements of your MICE offering means we can build a story of what you can do for our clients and how we can help them bring their teams, clients and people together at your venue.



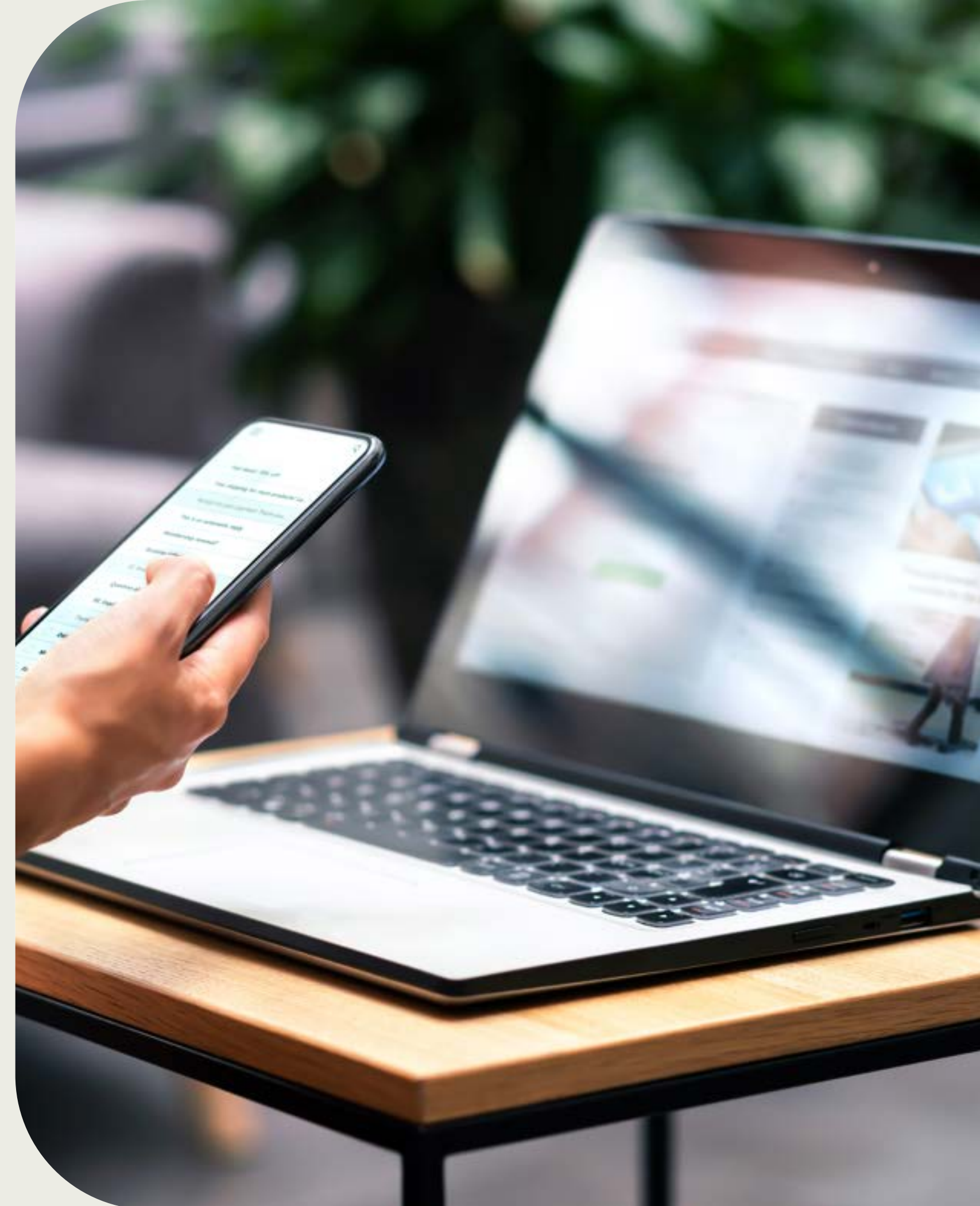
Stefani Goodrem
Client Services Director

Where to showcase your MICE offer

To be considered as an event location, a successful MICE hotel strategy needs to be designed to grab the attention of MICE events companies and MICE travel agents. This is a very different audience from the leisure traveller.

Creating a unique landing page on your website helps to explain clearly what facilities and services you are providing and it also separates your positioning for MICE tourism, which can be quite different from a leisure travel market positioning.

Content for your MICE landing page should include information about the destination, facilities of the hotel and its experience in hosting MICE events. Ideally with a link to a tailored brochure.



GETTING THE ESSENTIALS RIGHT

Sustainability

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) recently reported that 69% of travellers are actively seeking sustainable travel options in 2023. Incorporating Green Credentials into all marketing collateral and venue products meets this accelerating demand, empowering guests and potential MICE clients to make conscious and responsible travel choices.

Global Hotel Alliance (GHA) is the world's largest alliance of independent hotel brands. This year they launched their Green Collection, bringing under one umbrella nearly 200 hotels, resorts and palaces operated by GHA hotel brands that are actively undertaking sustainability initiatives.



We're getting to a point now where business travel could be hurt by the sustainability drive, because people are questioning the need to travel for meetings, wondering if a zoom call would do the job instead. On the other hand, people do need to travel for these meetings. So, companies are going to choose brands that are committed to sustainability goals – there is a clear incentive – by creating a Green Collection, you're also creating a reason for corporate and business customers to choose your hotel. A lot of hotels, depending on their region, are now going to be forced into tracking their carbon footprint and then doing something to counteract it. [...] So, it's better to start now.



Chris Hartley, GHA CEO



Event planners are also looking to assess the impact of their events on the environment, the local community, and the organising body's wider reputation. The demand to meet in-person responsibly has never been more significant. So when event planners conduct the site selection process, a venue that can deliver the complete package is now more important than ever.

Displaying green credentials is one way to ensure a venue is well-positioned to cater to the growing demand for sustainable events that add value or align with an event host's sustainability goals. In particular, Business & MICE travellers are increasingly conscious of their environmental footprint, playing into the bottom line of the ESG balance measuring the impact on the planet, people and profit.

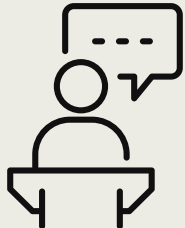
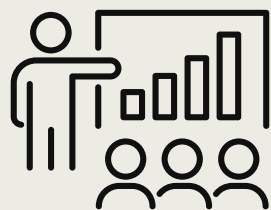
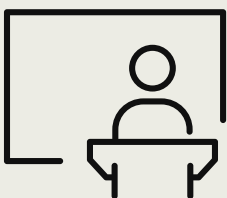
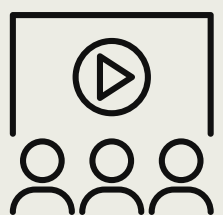
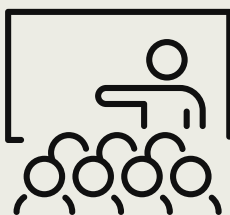
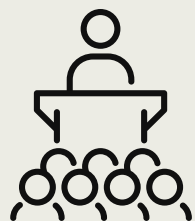
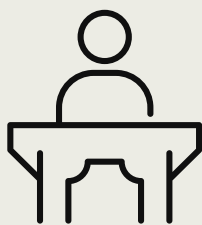
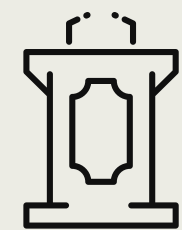
Two companies currently (specifically) pioneering the MICE Carbon Neutral space in the UK are Isla and Greengage.



Capacity

This is nuts and bolts - how many people can your venue cater for in different scenarios and room layouts, and to what budget. Presented succinctly and clearly this element of the MICE sales and marketing strategy can bring long-term business benefits for hoteliers.

This is where working with an event planner becomes crucial to the seamless flow and success of an event. With each element, there is a consideration to the guest capacity and timing throughout the day.



Catering

Event planners are looking to shine with their knowledge of innovation, surprise and enjoyment across every element of an event. That includes catering, and that's the one MICE element where a hospitality provider can truly shine the most. Catering for events is not just about the what, but more importantly the how.

Gastronomy is increasingly being perceived as an art form and the catering at an event is also a way to communicate to attendees. Success is mostly due to the quality of the produce used, but also to the production and presentation of the dishes. Any MICE marketing strategy must showcase your culinary prowess, along with information at a glance on the catering and restaurant capacities.



Bleisure

People can travel for a meeting, conference or event and then spend an extended holiday in the area while they work remotely. That's the idea behind 'bleisure travel', a pandemic-fueled trend with staying power. Part work, part downtime. Time in the boardroom paired with time in the countryside or city.

Combining a work trip with an extended holiday or work-away stay before, during or after the actual work event has seen tremendous growth over the last year. Extended stays are also a variation of incentives that are on the rise thanks to an increasing number of 'digital nomads' – people who travel the world while working online in search of the perfect work-life balance.



The popularity of the bleisure trend lies in the fact that by travelling this way, people can experience the world and its cultures irrespective of their annual leave allowance. This is rapidly becoming the new normal and presents considerable opportunities when included in a MICE portfolio by offering new packages, services and amenities that appeal to travellers looking to blend work and fun in one stay.

Trending Tip

Bleisure Wedding Guests - According to The UK Wedding Report 2023 by global wedding planning app Bridebook, hotels were the most popular venue type in 2022, hosting a quarter of all weddings. The report showed couples are increasingly taking advantage of midweek availability in restaurants and hotels to meet their budget requirements. This presents an opportunity to package a mid-week guest stay offer that combines remote working with Wedding Bleisure. That might include access to a business club lounge, meeting facilities etc on the days either side of the wedding celebration, thereby reducing the number of days annual leave potential guests may need to take. If your venue is promoting mid-week weddings, there is untapped revenue in the guest list.

THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

What does success
look like?

Increased market share of MICE business, boosted revenue, and ultimately a higher loyalty and engagement from a previously untapped guest segmentation.

There are three key stages to achieve MICE success as a venue and hospitality provider:



MICE
clients

1

Stand for something

MICE products and offers are getting lost in a sea of sameness. If you want to truly stand out in 2023 and 2024 as a MICE venue, you need to stand for something.

But what? Here at the fabl we call it the narrative. In the past the hospitality sector called it a philosophy, a manifesto, or even simply a stance. Whatever you call it, you need to have a belief about the way you work that aligns with your brand pillars.

2

Give it an identity

Once you stand for something, you can make it memorable with words and images. An identity is a great way to make sure your views and philosophies stick in people's minds.

We're bombarded with information from the second we wake to the moment we put our head on the pillow. If we're going to remember something new, it needs to feel new.

3

Design a guest journey

The final element you need will help you build a following. Looking after guests is what your team does best, and the best venues have a way to transfer their guests from the original channel they connected on. A recent Gallup report on Customer Centricity had found that guests who are fully engaged with your property will spend an average of 46% more than disengaged guests. That's the difference between a guest spending £300 and spending £438 during their stay.

Think about the next step in your guest's journey and how you can communicate with them. Once they've stayed with you, where will the conversation lead? Guide the dialogue and over time you'll see huge development in the quality of relationships you create with your guests.

APPENDICES

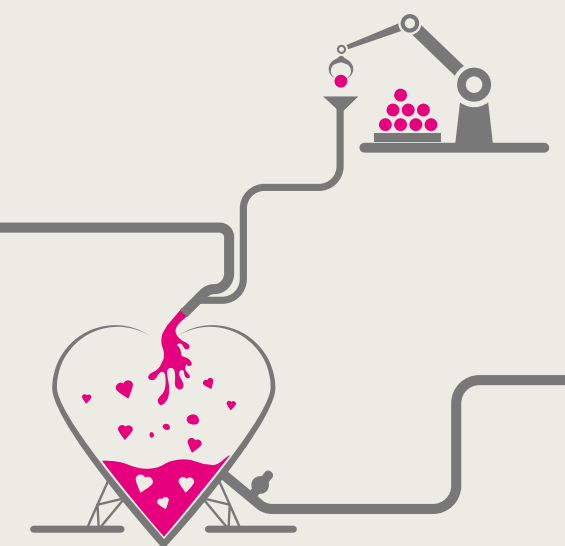
About The Fabl

Want to work on your MICE concept? You'll need a striking identity and strategy that connects you to the MICE market and gives you the power to work efficiently with event planners and bookers.

The fabl has been helping businesses grow since 2006. At the fabl we know a lot about the business and consumer environment as well as visitor interest in our region, domestic and inbound. We have built a team for this scope of work that brings together the perfect balance of hospitality operational insight with strategic brand and destination development. Our portfolio demonstrates the ability to develop brand identities, concepts, marketing strategies, deal with multiple stakeholders and make your budget work hard for you.

Changing perceptions or building awareness is a process. At the fabl, we have a formula which has been proven since our founding in 2006. It's called Storygelling™. We believe that every client has a great story to tell and we specialise in finding that story and communicating it in the most effective, engaging and innovative ways. As Storygellers, we will find your story and make it stick.

If you'd like to know more, head to **thefabl.com** or email **storygellers@thefabl.com**



Key UK statistics*

The UK event industry is
estimated to be worth

£42 BILLION

In 2018, over

5 MILLION

business professionals visited the UK
for an event, generating spending of

£3.5 BILLION

The business sector of the industry
is expected to be worth

**£27.6 BILLION
BY 2026**

**775,000
JOBS**

provided by the
UK Event industry

**35% OF
THE UK**

visitor economy is
accounted for by events.

There are over

**10,000
VENUES**

to choose from
in the UK

85 MILLION

people attend events each
year in the UK.

**OVER
£1 BILLION**

of new infrastructure investment
is being stimulated by events.

*Source: Quadrant2Design

VisitBritain: Historical MICE Statistics

VisitBritain conducted 2,200 interviews at 84 business events across Britain between March and November 2017. For incentive trips they gathered data by telephone and online through Destination Management Companies and incentive agencies covering 38 trips and 5,263 delegates. That research revealed that international events attract much higher average spend than their domestic equivalents. The two main reasons being:

- > Overseas delegates stay much longer on average (3.7 nights) than domestic delegates (1.0 nights)
- > International events charge much higher registration fees

Consequently overseas delegates spend considerably more than domestic delegates, and this also increases in relation to distance from the UK. Delegates from outside Europe spend £1,748 on average. This compares to £990 for overseas delegates from within Europe, and £329 for UK delegates.

For incentive trips, the average spend per delegate is £1,893. It is highest for trips from North America (£2,311), the main reason

being the higher av. length of stay (4.9 nights) compared to other markets. Average spend varies by region of Britain: London (£2,332), Scotland (£1,518), rest of England (£1,118).

Delegates who extended their trip for leisure spent £1,942 on average. Without the extension, the same delegates would have spent £991 (average).

Average spend by event type and delegate origin

Event Type	Av. spend per delegate
Association conference - international	£1,021
Corporate conference or meeting - international	£856
Association conference - domestic	£448
Exhibition/trade fair - international	£352
Corporate conference or meeting - domestic	£299
Exhibition/trade fair - domestic	£203
Overall	£613

Interestingly at the time of that research in 2017, the main reason given for not extending the trip was work, and it also held back those who did extend from doing it more often. With the new 2023 approach to remote working that decision barrier to extend a MICE visit has been removed.

Another opportunity the 2017 research revealed was that the actual event destination appeal (or lack of) played little part in the decision around an extension of stay. Unlike with general leisure tourism, those who extend a business trip for leisure are not too fussy about whether a destination is iconic or not. The attraction is merely seeing a place they would otherwise not prioritise to visit.

THE NEW OPPORTUNITY: To capitalise on extended work trips, there is a short window of time between registering for an event and deciding how long to stay – i.e. when the travel arrangements are researched. This window presents the only good opportunity to influence that decision. This is why a strategic approach to MICE marketing and packages is so important and needs to be included very early on in the consideration process.





If you think that your brand has great growth potential we would love to chat. You can reach us through the usual channels.

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