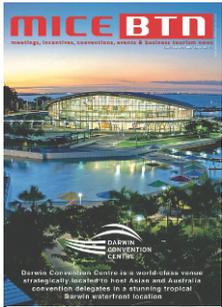


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Events spinoffs boost cities' - ECM

Thursday, July 02, 2015

Cities increasingly use events to improve their image, stimulate urban development and to attract visitors and investment, the annual meeting of the European Cities Marketing (ECM) in Turin has heard.

Keynote speaker Valentino Castellani, president of Torino Strategica and former mayor of Turin gave a local example of the positioning of Turin as a city on the international scene with the Olympics: The Piedmont capital faced the challenge of post-industrial transformation and the Olympic Games forced the city to convert from a manufacturing town to a European regional capital. The 2006 Games were a turning point from the depression of the early 90s to a "new pride in affiliation".

Elsewhere:

- After the 2008 banking crisis that put Iceland on the list of terrorist states and the Eyjafjallajökull volcano that erupted in 2010 paralysing all European airtraffic, Reykjavik decided to improve its image in 2010 by organising many winter festivals. As a result, 99 per cent of winter visitors said they would recommend Reykjavik to friends and arrivals and bed nights doubled in less than four years.

- In the case of Istanbul, the infrastructure changes for the expansion of convention centres (seven convention centres and three exhibition halls) transformed the city into a meeting hub, strengthening the international image of the city.

Istanbul has since then increased its arrivals and bed nights totals with more than 130 international conferences and other major events hosted each year. Congresses' tourism contribution to Istanbul's economy was estimated to be about EUR294 million in 2014.

Delegates also heard events and infrastructure are economic development tools and a means of enhancing a city's image.

The impacts of these events are multiple: they are means of revitalising cities' economies, creating infrastructure and improving cities' images. For example, changes related to the 2006 Olympic Games in Turin also saw total available rooms rise by 42 per cent between 1999 and 2014 and the number of bed nights increase by 102 per cent. The number of arrivals rose by 122 per cent.

When asked in a recent survey, ECM members the main reasons of attracting events to their cities were first, to increase the image of the city and second, to drive more bed nights.

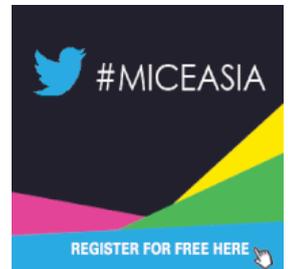
The ECM conference also featured a series of case studies of European cities and included: Festivals with James McVeigh from Festivals Edinburg and Karen María Jónsdóttir from Visit Reykjavik, convention centres rehabilitation with Özgül Özkan Yavuz from Istanbul Convention and Visitors Bureau, UEFA EURO with Marta Stawińska from Poznań Tourism Organisation and World Expo with André Moura from Turismo de Lisboa. The next ECM meeting will take place in Madrid, February 24-27, 2016.

It will discuss whether or not city branding is relevant in a digital era.

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