



ECONOMIC IMPACT: Bringing More Meetings to Your City

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Commissioned by the MPI Foundation, The UK Economic Impact Study (UKEIS) is a landmark project that demonstrates the critical role events play in the British economy. The study, conducted by the International Centre for Research in Events, Tourism and Hospitality at Leeds Metropolitan University, surveyed more than 3,400 meeting managers, venues, exhibitors, meeting attendees and destination marketing organizations (DMOs). The final report was published in July 2013.

Headline Findings.

- More than 1.3 million meetings¹ took place in the UK in 2011, attracting 116.1 million attendees² who accounted for spending³ of just under £40 billion. More than half of the attendees came to consumer shows and exhibitions; nearly 40 per cent attended conferences.
- Meetings took place in 10,127 meeting venues⁴ across the UK, 27.7 per cent of which were large hotels (more than 50 rooms) with meeting facilities. Almost 20 per cent were classed as unusual, unique or special event venues, and 14.2 per cent were purpose-built convention or exhibition centers. In total, the venues occupied 60 million square metres, or the equivalent of more than 6,000 football pitches, and offered a total seating capacity of approximately 8.5 million seats.
- On average, each venue hosts meetings about 125 days in the year. Large hotels with meeting facilities held all types of meetings: conferences, consumer shows, exhibitions and incentive events. More trade shows and business exhibitions occupied purpose-built conventions and exhibition centres than hotels. Small hotels hosted more incentive events. Resort properties, university/educational institutions and unique and special event venues without bedrooms proved a popular choice for conferences.
- On average, meeting organisations staged 147 events in 2011. The corporate sector organised more than 81 per cent of meeting overall, followed by associations with 6.3 per cent, non-Government and not-for-profit organisations with 5.2 per cent and government and public service organisations with 4 per cent.
- Nearly two thirds (64 per cent) of meetings were “small,” with fewer than 100 attendees. Nearly 30 per cent saw 100 to 500 attendees and 6 per cent attracted more than 500 attendees.
- The average length of a meeting was two days. More than half (53.8 per cent) occupied a single day or less. The most meetings happened in March and April (272,926), while

far fewer meetings happened in December (46,346). Within England, the Greater London region hosted the most meetings (362,500), followed by the South East (163,349) and the West Midlands (143,210). In other home countries, Scotland hosted the most meetings (86,524), Wales hosted 75,802 and Northern Ireland hosted 20,447.

- Nearly 80 per cent of people attending meetings hailed from within the UK and spent £21.3 billion; 21.5 per cent were international attendees who spent £10.8 billion. People who accompanied attendees spent a total of £7.7 billion. The largest average spend came from international attendees who stayed for one night or more (£717); the smallest average spend came from international attendees who did not stay overnight (£136). Domestic attendees who did not stay overnight had an average spend of £141. Domestic attendees who stayed for one night spent £474 on average. Exhibitors attended events that on average took place over four days, spending three nights at host destinations; attendees on average spent two nights at host destinations.
- The largest expense for meeting organisations in the UK was on venue hire (17.4 per cent), equipment/production (13.4 per cent) and food and beverage (11.9 per cent). The most prominent income was from delegate registration fees (38.1%) followed by exhibitor fees (31.6 per cent) and sponsorship (19.5 per cent).
- The largest attendee spend was on accommodation (20.6 per cent) followed by meeting registration fees (18.7 per cent). One-tenth (10.3 per cent) of attendee spend was on air transport, with food and beverage from restaurants, cafés and bars accounting for 9.5 per cent and 5.8 per cent spent on fees to attend optional programs such as reception events, dinners and social events.
- UK venues spent most on salaries and wages (18.6 per cent), maintenance and repairs (17.8 per cent) and other administrative expenses such as professional fees and contracted services (17.0 per cent). The highest amount of revenue came from meeting space rental (58.1%), followed by exhibition services (14.7 per cent) and food and beverage (11.5 per cent).
- Out of the four key business tourism markets surveyed, US attendees (£3.9 billion) spent more than Ireland (£2.5 billion), Germany (£1.2 billion) and France (£0.9 billion).
- Some 60 per cent of venues and meeting organisations indicated that the number of meeting attendees stayed around the same between 2010 and 2011 and would do so between 2011 and 2012. About one-fifth (21.7 per cent) of meeting suppliers felt that the number of attendees increased in 2011 compared to 2010, and 22.1 per cent felt that those numbers would decrease in 2012 when compared to 2011. Similarly, more than a third of DMOs said that their spend on the meeting industry was likely to decline in 2012.
- The total number of employees (full-time equivalent) working specifically for meetings activities was estimated to be 340,498.

The second part of the economic impact study sought to discover delegate perspectives on meeting host destinations and gather insights into practices being implemented by cities to enhance economic impacts. Organisations from London, Edinburgh and Belfast agreed to participate, and from their practices and examples alongside delegate perspectives, this how-to guide will demonstrate how organisations can build on the impact results in future years.

DELEGATE PERSPECTIVES OVERALL

Different factors help determine the success of an event destination. Attendees and exhibitors commented on the features of the city they visited and nominated up to three that they were most satisfied with.

Meetings as services are regarded as intangible products, which indicates that service quality is crucial in attracting attendees. However, tangible (physical) elements such as tourism infrastructure, accommodation, transport and restaurants add value to meetings as well. In order to improve the competitive advantage of meeting host destinations, it is important to know the perceptions of meeting attendees toward these valued-added elements.

In London, 38 per cent were most satisfied with local restaurants, 33 per cent cited local transport and 21 per cent cited accommodation. The same three features topped the list in Edinburgh, although the fourth most popular choice there was the friendliness of local residents, mentioned by 21 per cent of respondents. In Belfast, just under half (48 per cent) said they were most satisfied with restaurants they visited, 39 per cent mentioned local transport and just under one in three (32 per cent) cited availability of technology that impressed them. Infrastructure to support meetings looks to be a critical success factor for delegates and provides a mechanism for economic impact to not only increase but spread within host destinations. However, an emerging satisfaction factor appears to be technology and potentially the connectivity offered at host destinations.

Top Three Most Satisfying Features

UK	
Feature	%
Restaurants	36
Accommodation services	35
Local transport	27
Friendliness of local residents	19
Availability of technology (Internet)	19
Local environment (traffic, pollution, security)	14
Price of products and services	13
Tourism sites (museums, parks)	9
Leisure events (sports, concert, theatre)	7
Variety of retail products (gifts, souvenirs, clothing, groceries)	7
Quality of retail products (gifts, souvenirs, clothing, groceries)	7
Service of local tour operator/travel agent	5
None of the above	12

London	
Feature	%
Restaurants	38
Local transport	33
Accommodation services	31
Availability of technology (Internet)	21
Friendliness of local residents	14
Local environment (traffic, pollution, security)	13
Tourism sites (museums, parks)	11
Price of products and services	10
Leisure events (sports, concert, theatre)	8
Variety of retail products (gifts, souvenirs, clothing, groceries)	8
Quality of retail products (gifts, souvenirs, clothing, groceries)	7
Service of local tour operator/travel agent	7
None of the above	12

Edinburgh	
Feature	%
Restaurants	42
Local transport	39
Accommodation services	33
Friendliness of local residents	21
Local environment (traffic, pollution, security)	12
Price of products and services	12
Quality of retail products (gifts, souvenirs, clothing, groceries)	9
Availability of technology (Internet)	9
Tourism sites (museums, parks)	6
Variety of retail products (gifts, souvenirs, clothing, groceries)	6
Leisure events (sports, concert, theatre)	0
Service of local tour operator/travel agent	0
None of the above	15

Belfast	
Feature	%
Restaurants	48
Accommodation services	40
The availability of technology (Internet)	32
Local transport	20
Tourism sites (museums, parks)	16
Quality of retail products (gifts, souvenirs, clothing, groceries)	16
Friendliness of local residents	12
Local environment (traffic, pollution, security)	12
Price of products and services	12
Variety of retail products (gifts, souvenirs, clothing, groceries)	8
Leisure events (sports, concert, theatre)	4
Service of local tour operator/travel agent	4
None of the above	12



Attendees and exhibitors also nominated up to three features that they thought needed to be improved. Across the UK, the majority of respondents selected “none of the above” (18 per cent). Another 14 per cent thought that the price of products and services needed to be improved and 11 per cent said local transport needed to be improved. Advances within restaurants and the local environment (traffic, pollution, security) were each selected by 10 per cent of respondents.

UK	
Feature	%
Price of products and services	14
Local transport	11
Restaurants	10
Local environment (traffic, pollution, security)	10
Accommodation services	6
Friendliness of local residents	6
Availability of technology (Internet)	6
Leisure events (sporting events, concert, theatre)	4
Service of local tour operator/travel agent	4
Quality of retail products (gifts, souvenirs, clothing, groceries)	4
Variety of retail products (gifts, souvenirs, clothing, groceries)	4
Tourism sites (museums, parks)	3
None of the above	18

The findings demonstrate that meetings are reliant on destinations to support them and emphasise the importance of infrastructure to both enhance economic impact but also enhance attendee experience.

INDUSTRY PRACTICES

This how-to guide builds a link between macro-level economic impacts and micro-level individual economic performances among venues, organisers and DMOs. The macro- and micro-levels can benefit each other. Improving the business performances of firms and organisations, such as increasing investments and attracting more tourists, will increase the economic impacts of the local and national economies. On the other hand, when macro-level economic impacts increase, economies of scale will improve, which will create a promising business environment for firms and organisations.

BELFAST CASE STUDY

The city of Belfast provides great examples of collaboration that enhance the impact of meetings, largely because it has been forced to innovate and diversify in order to grow its market share.

Visit Belfast is the city’s destination marketing company, responsible for promoting the city as a business and leisure destination. Formerly known as Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau, it changed its name earlier this year as part of its growth plans. As a public-private sector partnership, it comprises more than 505 tourism, hospitality and retail members from the private sector, all of which have a direct or indirect stake in tourism. The Visit Belfast team sources between 60 per cent and 70 per cent of its events income from the UK market, but increasingly competes internationally to attract European and international events to the city.

Meeting new demands

Association events provide a key source of business, and increasingly, they are looking for added value from their events, as opposed to baseline costs.

“Associations are looking for a ‘total package’ and should no longer be getting an off-the-shelf standard deal. The days of off-the-shelf services—here’s what we do and here’s what we don’t do—are finished. We look at the client’s needs and develop solutions.”
—Belfast meeting planner

Associations are challenged with delivering bigger and better events each year, while often working with decreasing budgets. Visit Belfast has responded to this challenge and works with its members to try and secure what it terms “value add,” such as free Wi-Fi for delegates, upgrades for VIPs and delegate special offers.

Another key trend is city, or civic, support, whereby clients receive the use of civic facilities to reduce their event costs, which can make the Belfast package more attractive. An example: holding receptions in civic venues for free. It is not just about cost savings, however, Visit Belfast works with clients to advise on how they can actually enhance their events, for example, arranging for the Lord Mayor to address delegates or host a reception or organising a VIP trip to the Parliament Buildings for the association board or committee.

The team is also moving towards longer term deals, with discounts or value-add offered to clients for promises of repeat business.

What is clear is that the partnership approach means that Belfast can provide clients with a range of services: visitor information, delegate packs, support with marketing, designing itineraries and even freight solutions for exhibitors, car parking and more. The whole destination management package is possible with the support and coordination of its partners and stakeholders across the entire industry.

Ambassadors Programme

Belfast also hosts an ambassador programme, whose *raison d’être* is “supporting trade, innovation and investment within key sectors, showcasing the best of Northern Ireland and making an economic impact through events.”⁵ It currently has more than 800 medical, academic and business ambassadors in the programme.

Under a new initiative, Visit Belfast is now also partnering with the region’s economic development agency, Invest NI, and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to launch a new Business Ambassador Programme to grow the corporate market. The scheme will target top industry leaders to push business tourism in Belfast, particularly within its key economic sectors—information and communication technology (ICT) and digital, business services, renewables, connected health, life and health sciences and creative industries. The city has a huge network of people based all over the world, who are proud of their roots and delighted to help promote the area. It’s not all about simply winning events; there is a wider inward investment agenda that business tourism can support.

“Belfast has been transformed into an inspiring, new, vibrant destination. Our challenge, however, is getting this message out to people who are more familiar with the Belfast of old. Through our ambassador programme, we are tapping into the hearts and minds of local business leaders as well as our Northern Ireland diaspora across the globe. Civic pride is a key issue for Belfast, so we need to harness that using our resilience and our networks to challenge old perceptions and showcase all that Belfast has to offer.”
—Director of business tourism



Belfast recently hosted the ambassador-networking group, and now has approximately 800 ambassadors, built up over 14 years. The programme estimates that 70 per cent of event income generation is directly attributable to the ambassadors.

Out and About

Belfast is well serviced by budget flights from airports across the UK and Europe. It has direct access to more than 33 UK airports and 41 European and international destinations. For example, there are 35 flights to and from London every day, and flight costs between Belfast and mainland Britain are comparable and quite often cheaper than UK rail prices.

Belfast is also the safest city in the UK, and it’s a relatively new player in the meetings sector, effectively beginning with the Good Friday agreement in 1998. The city is an emerging, new and undiscovered destination. And its infrastructure, including venues and accommodations, is modern and state-of-the-art, having benefited from significant recent investment as part of the peace dividend.

Economic Impact

Visit Belfast is funded by the Belfast City Council, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, private-sector members and commercial income generated from marketing activities and projects. It has more than 50 key performance indicators, of which is a specific sales target for conference wins. The Economic Impact Target for 2012-2013 was £27.2 million, 21,000 delegates and 62,000 bed nights.

At the time of the interview Belfast was on target to achieve that, a 70 per cent increase on the previous year. According to the company, the secret of success, in what remains a harsh economic climate, is to instil a strategic sales approach and high-performance culture within the team and take a consultative sales approach to meet client needs.

Within the annual sales targets, the Visit Belfast team only counts those events that it has secured for the city. As a result, it now has credibility in the eyes of politicians, funders, members and the public. It has genuine proof that it is making a difference to the city. This helps in terms of credibility with partners, but also in accessing further public and private sector funding and support.

Although Visit Belfast doesn’t have employment targets, it acknowledges that about one-third of all private sector jobs in the city are within the tourism, hospitality and retail sectors. Some of those jobs are seasonal, temporary and transient; therefore, it is

difficult to establish exact cause and effect in terms of job creation.

The UK economic impact study calculated direct gross value added (GVA) generated by meetings activity in Northern Ireland to be £268 million with Belfast alone accounting for £128 million. Increasing GVA is a two-way process: increase total output (attendee spending) and reduce intermediate inputs (costs). Innovation is key to this.

Another good practice for increasing local GVA is to reduce leakages to outside vendors through sub-contracting local suppliers, which keeps expenditure in the local economy. As a membership organisation, Visit Belfast works with its members in sourcing potential work, for example hotels, entertainers and event suppliers. It is one of the benefits of membership and means that the local supply chain can be influenced and impacted. If the events can be sourced from a local supply chain, it maximises the retention of money within the city, supporting incomes, job creation and tax generation.

“Selling the destination gets us in front of clients, but helping them to actually make their event better in Belfast is what helps us to win the business. Like any company, we have to be innovative and that means always looking at new ways to meet the needs of both our customers and partners.”

—Director of Business Tourism

To influence visitor/delegate spend and the delegate experience, Visit Belfast designed a dedicated conference app that contains client branding, an event programme, an exhibitor map, a networking messaging service and other features such as restaurant offers and taxi numbers. All of the information contained in the app is event-specific and can be tailored for each event. It is an environmentally sound way of providing fingertip access to practical information and enhancing the visitor experience (and influence spend). It also provides a marketing platform for local businesses.

British Academy of Management

Belfast recently won the bid to host the British Academy of Management annual conference in 2014. For this prestigious conference, 650 delegates will come and experience Belfast for four days.

The UKEIS found the average length of a meeting is two days. More than half (54 per cent) of UK meetings in 2011 were a day or less in length, so gaining a four-day event, which increases the number of nights visitors stay and the amount they spend, is a clear success for Belfast.

The Belfast Waterfront will host the main conference with a unique “management hub” at the Victorian St George’s Market. The conference dinner will be held at Titanic Belfast. The strong link with the University of Ulster was important to winning the bid, but an innovative delegate breakout solution proposed by Visit Belfast and Warwick Corporate Events was key to securing it.

The event’s requirements are challenging. For example, it requires more than 25 breakout rooms. So, the team suggested that the market transform for three days into the management and innovation hub, as opposed to breakout rooms. This visionary concept will require event expenditure, but the cost will be funded in part by sponsors, who will all be able to brand their own rooms and sponsor key topics of interest within the hub area.

This partnership was not just a solution to secure an event, it was about providing innovative, commercial solutions with added value for the client.

“We are not a sunshine destination. We are not a Tier 1 city. So, we have to work just that bit smarter to showcase all that Belfast has to offer organisers. Then, once the event arrives in the city, we always go the extra mile to ensure that their event in Belfast is the best one yet.”

—Director of business tourism.

Best Practices from Belfast

- Deliver extra, bespoke services through strategic alliances with suppliers.
- Use innovative thinking, solutions and technology to support meeting experiences.
- Focus on repeat business; It costs five times as much to attract a new customer as it does to retain an existing one.
- Consider the range of venues that add value to large events, broaden appeal and enhance economic impact.
- Do not just rely on destination attributes to win a bid, focus on how you can help your client deliver a better event.

LONDON CASE STUDY

The UKEIS found that within England, the Greater London region hosted the most meetings at 362,500 (32 per cent). Direct GVA for Greater London amounted to £5.6 billion. The job of London & Partners as a destination marketing organisation is to promote London and the UK as a place to hold events and do business. The key to its success is described as “strong support from our partners who are convinced about what we do.” An important element of its work is geared around proving the impact of events to stakeholders.

London and Partners used to be a typical convention bureau, offering a free venue finding service for meeting planners. But what it does now is maximise the opportunities for London, in particular those that fit the corporate strategy, and has compiled a hit list of specific events to win.

“The overall concept is to make London a preferred supplier. You’ve seen that with venues but not really with whole cities.”

—Director of business tourism and major events

London & Partners offers more than simply destination and venue. It provides extra touches that make the experience special, introducing relevant suppliers to aid the meet and greet, transport offer and event hospitality, along with offering advice and guidance on potential event partners and audiences.



Typically, emerging destinations are geared to providing packages for clients. Places like Abu Dhabi, Singapore, Qatar, Sydney and Melbourne have huge government backing to give extra resources and win bids. London & Partners is striving to get the UK government to do the same.

“For every £1 we receive in grant aid, we deliver £9 to £15 of GVA, or £70 of income”

—Director of business tourism and major events

Strengthening Clusters

To enhance economic benefits, London & Partners identified four main areas of growth, namely ICT, life sciences, creative industries and banking and finance. These were cluster strengths.

The organisation works extensively on additional connections around events, for example, promoting the universities’ IT courses at a technology conference. It is not just about the event itself, it is about the wider repercussions, including long-term economic benefits.

For the Islamic Economic Forum, in October 2013, the agency pulled together various stakeholders to win an event that had never before been held outside the Muslim world. It comprised 1,500 government representatives and corporate managers from 100 companies *“to boost trade partnerships between Islamic and European markets, and explore London’s future as a global hub for Islamic Finance.”*

At the 2012 event, attendees struck deals worth an estimated RM28 billion (£5.8 billion). London sought to extend its role as a Western hub for Islamic finance, building on the £22.3 billion that had been raised to date (source: London Stock Exchange), by promoting its status as the leading exporter of financial services across the world.⁶

“The [World Islamic Economic] forum is much more than just an event, this is about how we can help reposition London, it is an opportunity to build on London’s strengths so that we can build our brand in the eyes of the rest of the world. So it’s about using these events to advance our wider strategies for promoting London.”

—Director of business tourism and major events

Another method used by London & Partners to enhance the attractiveness and awareness of the destination is social media. For example, during the Olympics, it approached 10 Chinese bloggers, who were given offices and computers and invited to tweet/blog on the Olympics. This helped to raise awareness of London as a destination on the back of this major sporting event. This strategy provides a good example of how to use social media to promote wider economic opportunities and build relationships.

For the Cardiology 2015 event, the team assembled a local bidding committee comprising industry experts. The event involves 30,000 heart specialists coming to London, and it was deemed beneficial for the advancement of their research and good for the profile of their organisation. Consequently, lots of work is being done around that event, promoting heart health, working with local partners and getting London aligned with the event showcasing—that the city is at the forefront of medical research.

Best Practices from London

- Collaborate with VIPs to gain endorsements for large events.
- Use events to deliver associated destination awareness campaigns.
- Focus on core areas of growth, rather than bidding for everything.
- Provide value added beyond the venue and destination.

EDINBURGH CASE STUDY

Marketing Edinburgh launched in June 2011 when the Edinburgh Convention Bureau, the Film Office and the Destination Marketing Alliance joined forces to become the official promotion body for the city. The partnership was designed to deliver “an integrated approach to marketing the city” and pulled the organisations together to work towards one shared goal.

Marketing Edinburgh’s members comprise the majority of key venues, hotels and conference suppliers across the city. The overall aim is to promote those members to national and international conferences to both association and corporate events. Main activities include taking enquiries, offering bid support, finding venues, conducting site inspections, finding accommodations and a range of activities that market the city. The organisation coordinates a long list of complimentary services to support event organisers.

The city of Edinburgh is successful as an event destination not just because of its position as a highly regarded tourist locale. The infrastructure, the culture, the history and the landscape all provide event hosts with an enticing backdrop, but the universities and hospitals really drive the association event market. As a result of the international recognition of Edinburgh’s research expertise, the city is naturally a popular choice for association conferences. The association market tends not to be susceptible to economic downturns in the way that the corporate market is, which works to Edinburgh’s advantage.

The team’s Ambassador Network provides the backbone of Edinburgh’s business tourism marketing. The city has more than 500 local experts (ambassadors), a large and influential group that communicates consistently with Marketing Edinburgh about connections and networks. As a result of this “insider” knowledge, team members are in a position to work together on bidding for a wide range of events.

Bids are usually in direct competition with other European city’s that can offer conference centres. Larger associations tend to alternate across continents, and when it is Europe’s turn to host their events, Edinburgh is up against other high-profile destinations such as Vienna, Madrid or Istanbul. Nationally it competes with places such as Liverpool, London, Glasgow and other cities that have the infrastructure to host a national conference. Competition is strong, and Edinburgh relies on its network of ambassadors to provide a competitive edge.

Economic Impact

The UKEIS revealed that 28,553 meetings were held in Edinburgh during 2011, 33 per cent of the total meetings held in Scotland. The direct GVA generated by meetings in Edinburgh was £601 million. Marketing Edinburgh states confidently its huge impact on the local economy.

Furthermore, the agency estimates that 30 per cent of delegates take family members or friends to events, and they all spend money independently, something that is hard to monitor. However, attempts are made to estimate the economic value of an event in terms of visitor expenditure.

The formula the agency uses for quantifying spend is called the “delegate expenditure multiplier,” and it estimates the value of different types of events. Consequently, events won through the bureau are said to be worth more than £80 million per year to the city (excluding the ones it either doesn’t know about or was not involved with). *The UKEIS* reported that Edinburgh attracted £867 million of spend in 2011, including meeting attendees and guests.

New Campaign

There is a new campaign in the pipeline to promote the city once the tram system is complete. Edinburgh, along with other Scottish destinations, is helped further by the National Bid Fund, which is pumping £2 million of (matched) funding over three years into winning events and conferences. The money is available to convention bureau and destination marketing organisations bidding for events that relate to 12 government target sectors, including aerospace, defence and marine; business processing operations; chemical sciences; creative industries; education; energy; financial services; food and drink; ICT and electronic technologies; life sciences; textiles; and tourism.

Best Practice from Edinburgh

- Create an integrated approach to business tourism so that all partners work towards the same goals.
- Build relationships with key local ambassadors to attract business through their networks.
- Quantify the results to ensure that the role of meetings is recognised.

CONCLUSION

Interviews with leading city figures from meeting organisations, venues and destination management organisations, revealed how leading agencies are innovating to enhance their abilities to both secure events and enhance the economic impact of them. Much of that economic impact is secured through positive relationships with suppliers that are supporting destinations to deliver beyond expectations and solve the challenges of large and complex events.

Delegate perspectives reveal that the infrastructure around meetings is important, as successful meetings result from the work of multiple stakeholders. Agencies that work in an integrated fashion with the varied stakeholders involved in delivering events, beyond the venue and organisers, appear to be yielding benefits.

Whilst tangible economic returns have been identified in *The UKEIS*, agencies are also focusing on long-term impacts that are more complex. From this study and the survey results, best practices show DMOs integrating strategies, strengthening supply chain relationships, developing infrastructure, innovating and using new technology and creating online and offline networks that support stakeholders, across industry, and enhance their economic impact practices in the future. Such practices will support the UK meeting industry and ensure that the value of the sector is not only recognised but growing.

USEFUL WEB PAGES

- www.londonandpartners.com/convention-bureau
- www.marketingedinburgh.org
- www.visit-belfast.com
- www.mpiweb.org/UKEIS

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- Lesley Williams, Marketing Edinburgh

*Not all participants are included, only those who opted to be acknowledged.

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- (1) The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) classifies meetings as conferences, conventions, congresses, exhibitions, tradeshows, consumer shows, incentive events and other business events.
 - (2) The research identifies the total number of meetings and attendees by referring to other studies, by Eventia (The UK Events Market Trends Survey 2012) and Oxford Economics (The Economic Impact of the UK Exhibitions Industry, February 2012).
 - (3) This figure includes attendee and guest spending. Attendee spend alone was £32.1 billion.

- (4) The research identifies total number of venues by referring to various secondary sources including Venue Finder, Cvent, Findmeaconference and the Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau (A Fresh Perspective: Conference & Meetings Guide, Belfast & Northern Ireland 2012/2014).
- (5) Belfast Business Ambassador Programme Proposal
- (6) [Press release](#)



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The International Centre for Research in Events, Tourism and Hospitality (ICRETH) combines the research and enterprise strengths of the UK Centre for Events Management as well as the former Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change (CTCC), the International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT) and the Centre for Hospitality and Retailing. ICRETH is part of the School Of Events, Tourism and Hospitality as well as the Carnegie Research Institute at Leeds Metropolitan University.

ICRETH includes three professors, two readers, three senior research fellows as well as a team of more than 20 researchers. Most research is multi- and interdisciplinary. There are some 30 doctoral students from the UK and internationally. Current thematic strengths include responsible and sustainable tourism and events; economic impacts and event impact evaluations; cultural tourism; management in events, tourism and hospitality; and sports events. The centre hosts a wide range of seminars and guest lecture series, and details of upcoming events are available on our web site.

In addition to university investment, research is funded via a range of international, national and local agencies or businesses. In recent years, these have been as diverse as Meeting Professionals International (MPI), the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), the European Commission, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the World Bank, government departments, the Institute of Travel and Tourism (ITT), the NGOs in various countries, sports governing bodies, event organisations and private companies.

Research is disseminated via industry reports, white papers, live event presentations and workshops as well as books and articles in various journals, including internationally leading, peer-reviewed publications. The centre also houses several book series and the *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism Leisure and Events, Mobilities and Progress in Responsible Tourism*. Visit www.leedsmet.ac.uk/icreth or follow @icreth on Twitter.



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Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Foundation is passionately committed to bringing vision and prosperity to the meeting and event community worldwide by investing in results-oriented initiatives and programs that shape the future and bring success to the industry. MPI is the largest and most vibrant global meeting and event industry association, comprised of approximately 20,000 members belonging to 71 chapters and clubs worldwide. For more information, visit www.mpifoundation.org.

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Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is the largest and most vibrant global meeting and event industry association. The organization helps its members thrive by building human connections through knowledge and ideas, relationships, and marketplaces. MPI membership is comprised of approximately 20,000 members belonging to 71 chapters and clubs worldwide.

For additional information or to join, visit www.mpiweb.org.

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