



INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION AT ASSOCIATION MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS REPORT

Presented by:
PCMA Industry Issues Committee
Subcommittee on International Participation at Association Meetings and
Conventions

Prepared at the request of and in cooperation with the PCMA Industry Issues Subcommittee by

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Introduction

The globalization of the world economy has implications for the meetings and conventions industry. As people cross national borders to attend these events for business and educational purposes, issues such as exchange rates, visa and immigration controls, and the overall hospitality image of a country require governments to consider how to accommodate the international audience so that they can remain competitive in the global economy. One of the major reasons that countries have vested interest in hosting more international travelers is that they generally spend more money in a destination than domestic visitors (Russell, 2005).

According to Future Watch 2006 by Meeting Professionals International (MPI), European planners expect a 3% increase in international meetings, from 26% in 2005 to 29% in 2006, with the United States (12%) and Asia (8%) listed at the top of their list. Despite heightened security measures and increased visa restrictions, this study reports that the United States remains the top destination for international meetings. Although the United States is still the number one international meeting destination for Canadian planners, many of them decided to bring more of their meetings back to Canada in 2006. Only 7% of them expect to hold meetings in the United States which is down from 16% in 2005 (Future Watch, 2006). No reasons for this decrease were reported in the study.

Against this backdrop of an increasingly global economy for the meetings and convention industry, the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) commissioned a study to determine trends in international participation at U.S. based association conventions and trade shows. Since the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, many meeting industry articles have reported a decrease in the number of international attendees at conventions and trade shows held in the United States (Helwick, 2002; Hough, 2002; Jackson, 2003; Littlejohn, 2005). There are many factors that could have contributed to decreased international participation, such as increased security measures, visa restrictions, unfavorable exchange rates, cost of participation, and negative image of the United States. However, these factors are assumptions based on anecdotal evidence. The purpose of this study is to provide empirical research of the issue that can result in reliable information for PCMA to use in bringing attention to the needs of the meeting and convention industry.

Literature Review

Decrease in International Attendance

According to U.S. Commerce Department estimates, international visitors accounted for \$93.5 billion in spending and economic activity in the United States in 2004 which is, by some estimates, 10% fewer international visitors than in 2000. The average number of attendees at major conventions was down to 1,532 people in 2003 from 1,541 in 2001 (Braley, 2004). The tourism industry was suffering a decrease in international visitation even before the attacks of September 11th in 2001. This was mostly attributed to the declining economy and possibly perceptions that trade shows do not generate acceptable returns on investment (ROI) (Hough, 2002). There are many factors to consider when looking at attendance figures. However, according to many associations, there was a hard drop in international attendance to meetings held in the United States after September 11, 2001. The decrease has been reported as anywhere from 5% to 50% from pre-September 11 to post-September 11 (Helwick, 2002; Hough, 2002;

Jackson, 2003; Littlejohn, 2005). According to surveys conducted by associations, international attendees have cited personal fears of traveling by air, travel restrictions, or having trouble obtaining visas as some reasons for not attending meetings in the United States (Helwick, 2002). Concerns for safety and security of a destination is one of the most important factors in the decision making process for travelers (Benini, 2002; Braley, 2004, 2006; Sturken, 2000). Also, show managers at the Society of Independent Show Owners (SISO) CEO Summit mentioned that the major challenge the industry is facing is the difficulties that international exhibitors and attendees have getting to U.S. tradeshows (Tradeshow Week, 2006).

Visa applications now require face-to-face interviews, digital fingerprints, and more involved personal data as part of the process. Visa applications were down 32% in 2003 from 2001 (Russell, 2005).

Rebound in International Attendance

International attendance rebounded for 2002 meetings and continued in the following years. Approximately 10% of associations enjoyed an increase from 2003 in international attendees at their meetings in 2004 (Russell, 2005). The rebound is attributed to active marketing efforts of associations. For instance, the Radiology Society of North America (RSNA) sends direct mail and e-mail marketing pieces to international prospects; exhibits annually at radiology meetings in Austria, Japan, France, and other countries; and contracts with a European travel agent to facilitate the registration and housing processes for individuals and groups (Jackson, 2003).

There are many strategies and tactics that associations can implement in order to keep international attendance growing. Associations have to learn how to deal with new and changing visa rules from the state department. Also, educating attendees and exhibitors is of major importance for associations. People who are aware of what to expect are generally more receptive to what will happen. International attendees and exhibitors have to know what to anticipate when obtaining a visa and the security process of entering the United States (i.e., fingerprinting, taking off coat and shoes) (Russell, 2005). A survey done by RSNA of their international attendees revealed that they were not happy with security procedures which the association had not educated them about. Twenty-one percent of international attendees were dissatisfied with the security at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport. The problem was that it took 62% longer to go through security than it had in previous years (Russell, 2005).

The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI)

In the past, U.S. citizens and some citizens of other countries in the Western Hemisphere (i.e., Canadians) have not been required to present a passport or other specific forms of secure identification to enter the United States. The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA) mandated that the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security and State develop and implement a plan to require U.S. citizens and foreign nationals to present a passport or other appropriate identity and citizenship documentation when entering the United States (DOS, 2006c).

The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) is a change from prior travel requirements that requires all travelers, including U.S. citizens, to and from the Caribbean,

British Overseas Territory of Bermuda, Central and South America, Mexico, and Canada to have a passport or other accepted document that establishes the bearer's identity and citizenship to enter or re-enter the United States. The goal of the initiative is to strengthen border security and facilitate entry into the United States for U.S. citizens and legitimate international visitors (DOS, 2006c).

The WHTI will affect all U.S. citizens traveling within the Western Hemisphere and certain foreign nationals who currently are not required to present a passport to travel to the United States, namely most Canadian citizens, citizens of the British Overseas Territory of Bermuda, and Mexican citizens. The Initiative will not affect travel between the United States and its territories (i.e., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa) (DOS, 2006c).

The Administration is proposing to complete the implementation of the requirement in phases. The WHTI will be introduced in phases in order to provide much advance notice as possible to the affected public to enable them to meet the terms of the new guidelines. The proposed timeline will be as follows (Department of Homeland Security, 2006b; DOS, 2006c):

January 8, 2007 – Requirement applied to all air and sea travel from Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda to the United States.

January 1, 2008 – Requirement extended to all air, sea, and land border crossings.

Passports are the document of choice because of security features and internationally accepted standards for international travel. However, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is proposing two other travel documents that sufficiently denote identity and citizenship for the air and sea environment. These documents are the Merchant Mariner Document (MMD) and the NEXUS Air card. The MMD or "z card" is issued by the U.S. Coast Guard to merchant mariners and the NEXUS Air card is issued to residents of Canada and the United States, lawful permanent residents of the United States, and permanent residents of Canada. In addition, the NEXUS Air card may only be accepted when used in conjunction with the NEXUS Air program and the MMD card may only be accepted when used on official maritime business (DHS, 2006b).

The ramifications of the Initiative are potential changes occurring at the land borders in terms of different industries, businesses, the general public, and neighboring countries. The DHS and the State Department (DOS) recognize the implications and specifically mandate that the concerns of border communities be considered. The departments are issuing an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) in the Federal Register to provide vital information on the plan to the public and to request input and/or comment on the suggested documents and possible alternative documents that can meet the statutory requirements through September 24, 2006. They feel that the ANPRM will allow the affected parties to voice concern and provide ideas for alternate documents (DOS, 2006c).

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Initiatives

The DHS provides the unifying core for the vast national network of organizations and institutions involved in efforts to secure the United States. The mission of DHS is to lead the unified national effort to secure America and to “prevent and deter terrorist attacks and protect against and respond to threats and hazards to the nation. DHS will ensure safe and secure borders, welcome lawful immigrants and visitors, and promote the free-flow of commerce.” (DHS, 2006a).

DHS is responsible for protecting the movement of international trade across U.S. borders, maximizing the security of the international supply chain, and for engaging foreign governments and trading partners in programs designed to identify and eliminate security threats before these arrive at U.S. ports and borders. Also, the organization is responsible through its components, programs, and initiatives for providing immigration services and welcoming visitors (DHS, 2006a).

In light of a substantial plot to destroy multiple passenger aircraft flying from the United Kingdom to the United States on August 10, 2006, DHS took immediate steps to increase security measures in the aviation sector in coordination with heightened security precautions in the United Kingdom. DHS provides the nation’s threat level through the Homeland Security Advisory System. The United States Government raised the nation’s threat level to Severe or Red, for commercial flights originating in the United Kingdom bound for the United States, following the plot. In addition, due to the nature of the threat revealed by the investigation, the government prohibited any liquids, including beverages, hair gels, and lotions from being carried on the airplane which took effect immediately. On August 14, 2006, the United States Government lowered the nation’s threat level from Code Red or Severe to Code Orange or High for flights from the United Kingdom to the United States. The appropriate measures will continue to assure that the aviation system and the nation remains safe and secure. (DHS, 2006a).

Visa Regulations for Temporary Visitors to the United States

Visa Waiver Program (VWP)

The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) enables nationals of certain countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business for stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. The program was established in 1986 with the objective of promoting better relations with U.S. allies, eliminating unnecessary barriers to travel, stimulating the tourism industry, and permitting the DOS to focus consular resources in other areas (DOS, 2006b).

Currently, 27 countries participate in the VWP. The participating countries are as follows (DOS, 2006b):

Andorra	France	Luxembourg	Singapore
Australia	Germany	Monaco	Slovenia
Austria	Iceland	The Netherlands	Spain
Belgium	Ireland	New Zealand	Sweden
Brunei	Italy	Norway	Switzerland
Denmark	Japan	Portugal	United Kingdom
Finland	Liechtenstein	San Marino	

Beginning on October 26, 2004, all VWP travelers must present either a machine-readable passport at the U.S. port of entry to enter the United States without a visa, otherwise a U.S. visa is required (DOS, 2006a). In addition, depending on when VWP travelers' passports were issued, other passport requirements will apply (DOS, 2006b):

Machine-readable passports issued or renewed/extended before 10/26/05 need no further requirements.

Machine-readable passports issued or renewed/extended between 10/26/05 and 10/25/06 require digital photograph printed on the data page or integrated chip with information from the data page.

Machine-readable passports issued or renewed/extended on or after 10/26/06 require integrated chip with information from the data page (e-passport).

Temporary, emergency, official, and diplomatic passports are exempted from biometric digital photo and chip requirements, but must be machine-readable.

Foreign citizens from countries not included in the VWP need a nonimmigrant visa. A nonimmigrant visa is for international travelers coming to the United States temporarily. This visa allows the visitor to travel to a U.S. port of entry and request permission of the DHS immigration inspector to enter the United States. However, a visa does not guarantee entry into the United States. In addition, the type of visa needed is defined by immigration law, and relates to the purpose of the travel. Visitors for business purposes must obtain a B-1 visa that allows visitation for not more than 1 year. The decision is made by the Consular Officer at the Embassy or Consulate in the traveler's country (DOS, 2006a). Some Consulates only provide assistance to U.S. citizens. Additionally, hours of operation vary widely.

Business Visa Center

In an effort to facilitate the issuance of visas for legitimate international business travelers, the DOS introduced the Business Visa Center on July 15, 2005. The Business Visa Center was expanded from the U.S.-China Business Initiative pilot program that began in January 2005. The Center assists businesses in the United States by providing information about the visa application process for their employees, clients, and partners seeking to travel to the United States for business purposes. The Center works with both the companies and the consular offices to communicate information effectively between U.S. businesses and the embassies and consulates worldwide (DOS, 2005).

The Bureau of Consular Affairs maintains a list of “Upcoming Conferences” to be held in the United States on the internal DOS Intranet. The list is for conferences in the United States that expect a large number of international visitors where Visa Services has received notification by the U.S. organizer of the event. In order to allow business travelers to better prepare for their visa interview and trip, up-to-date details about wait times for visa interviews and processing times are available on most embassy websites and the travel.state.gov website (DOS, 2005).

International Buyer Program (IBP)

The government of the United States encourages U.S. exhibiting companies to increase their international market share at trade shows through the U.S. Commercial Service’s International Buyer Program (IBP) (Department of Commerce, 2006). The IBP recruits more than 125,000 qualified foreign buyers, sales representatives, and business partners to U.S. trade shows each year to provide exhibitors great opportunities to expand business globally. For 2007, 28 trade shows have already been accepted into the program and the application package for 2008 will be available in the fall of 2006. (DOC, 2006).

Methodology

A survey was developed based on a review of the literature and the assumptions set by the PCMA Industry Issues Committee. The survey was distributed to committee members to assure readability, clarity, and validity of the questions. Based on the feedback from the committee members, a final version of the survey was created.

An online survey was used for this research. In order to increase participation of the survey, PCMA sent a series of emails to the members. The first email was to inform members that a link to the survey would be sent to them electronically within a few days. The second email contained the link to the survey site. The last email served as a reminder to complete the survey or thanking them for completing the survey. Emails were sent to 2,099 planner members of PCMA and 400 usable responses were received, yielding a response rate of 19%. The online survey was also sent to several thousand Convene subscribers and 359 usable responses were received from this list.

Data Analysis

Profile of Respondents

The profile of the respondents of PCMA members and Convene subscribers is described in Tables 1, 2, and 3. For PCMA members, over half of the associations have more than 10,000 members (53.9%); in contrast, the majority (70.9%) of Convene subscribers have a membership of less than 5,000 (Table 1). Most of the associations of PCMA members were described as professional associations (63.6%), followed by trade (17.1%) and educational (17.1%) (Table 2). For Convene subscribers, professional associations (45.3%) were followed by educational associations (27.7%). Lastly, for PCMA members, 47.8% of the associations' membership in this study are national and 45.6% are international and for Convene subscribers, 45.3% are national, 39.2% are international, and 11.5% are state (Table 3).

Table 1:
Size of the Membership of Association

	PCMA		Convene	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Less than 1,000	30	13.2	70	44.3
1,000 to 4,999	48	21.1	42	26.6
5,000 to 9,999	27	11.8	14	8.8
10,000 to 24,999	48	21.1	10	6.3
25,000 to 49,999	30	13.2	11	7.0
50,000 or more	45	19.6	11	7.0
Total	228	100	158	100

Table 2:
Type of Association

	PCMA		Convene	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Professional	145	63.6	67	45.3
Trade	39	17.1	31	20.9
Social	4	1.8	1	.7
Military	0	0	1	.7
Educational	39	17.1	41	27.7
Religious	1	.4	6	4.1
Fraternal	0	0	1	.7
Total	228	100	148	100

**Table 3:
Membership of Association**

	PCMA		Convene	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
International	104	45.6	58	39.2
National	109	47.8	67	45.3
Regional	4	1.8	4	2.7
State	6	2.6	17	11.5
Provincial	1	.4	1	.7
Local	4	1.8	1	.7
Total	228	100	148	100

International participation

Planners reported various levels of international participation at their 2005 annual conventions or trade shows. According to the survey results, 90.4% of the PCMA respondents held their annual convention or trade show in 2005. Table 4 shows that slightly more than half of all events attracted less than 2% of their exhibitors and less than 5% of their attendees from international markets. Only a small percentage of planners reported that they don't know the number of international participants. In comparison, 77.4% of Convene respondents held their annual convention or trade show in 2005 with the majority attracting less than 2% international attendees (52.3%) and international exhibiting companies (68.1%) (Table 5).

**Table 4:
Registered International Attendees and Exhibiting Companies at a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show (PCMA)**

	International attendees		International exhibiting companies	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Less than 2%	104	33.8	177	57.5
2% to 5%	54	17.5	45	14.6
6% to 10%	51	16.6	31	10.1
11% to 15%	28	9.1	14	4.5
16% to 25%	18	5.8	9	2.9
More than 25%	44	14.3	11	3.6
Do not know	9	2.9	21	6.8
Total	308	100	308	100

**Table 5:
Registered International Attendees and Exhibiting Companies at a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show (Convene)**

	International attendees		International exhibiting companies	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Less than 2%	123	52.3	160	68.1
2% to 5%	34	14.5	24	10.2
6% to 10%	30	12.8	17	7.2
11% to 15%	15	6.4	7	3.0
16% to 25%	14	6.0	7	3.0
More than 25%	17	7.2	13	5.5
Do not know	2	.9	7	3.0
Total	235	100	235	100

Respondents were asked to compare the number of international attendees and exhibiting companies at their 2005 annual convention or trade show with 2004 numbers. The majority of both PCMA members and Convene respondents reported no change for both international attendees (59.7% and 58.7%, respectively) and international exhibiting companies (83.1% and 79.1%, respectively) (Table 6 and 7).

**Table 6:
Number of International Attendees and Exhibiting Companies at a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show Compared with the Numbers in 2004 (PCMA)**

	International attendees		International exhibiting companies	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Increased	101	32.8	46	15.0
Decreased	23	7.5	6	2.0
No change	184	59.7	255	83.1
Total	308	100	307	100

**Table 7:
Number of International Attendees and Exhibiting Companies at a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show Compared with the Numbers in 2004 (Convene)**

	International attendees		International exhibiting companies	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Increased	74	31.5	33	14.1
Decreased	23	9.8	16	6.8
No change	138	58.7	185	79.1
Total	235	100	234	100

The results were the same when respondents were asked to compare their 2005 numbers with pre-9/11 numbers. Most of the respondents reported no change for both international attendees (52.6% and 60.3%, respectively) and international exhibiting companies (75.9% and 79.4%, respectively) (Table 8 and 9). Only a small percentage reported a decrease. However, the decrease was greater when 2005 numbers were compared with pre-9/11 attendance numbers.

**Table 8:
Number of International Attendees and Exhibiting Companies at a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show Compared with Pre-9/11 Numbers (PCMA)**

	International attendees		International exhibiting companies	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Increased	88	28.8	51	16.8
Decreased	57	18.6	22	7.3
No change	161	52.6	230	75.9
Total	306	100	303	100

**Table 9:
Number of International Attendees and Exhibiting Companies at a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show Compared with Pre-9/11 Numbers (Convene)**

	International attendees		International exhibiting companies	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Increased	61	26.1	27	11.6
Decreased	32	13.7	21	9.0
No change	141	60.3	185	79.4
Total	234	100	233	100

Of the respondents, 47.8% of PCMA members and 53% of Convene subscribers have already held their 2006 annual convention or trade show. When respondents were asked to compare the number of international attendees of 2006 with the 2005 numbers, 51.3% of PCMA members reported that there was no change and 38.8% saw an increase (Table 10). Similarly, 58.8% of Convene readers reported no change, followed by 27.5% increase. For those who did not hold their 2006 annual convention or trade show, 58.9% of PCMA members and 58.8% of Convene readers predicted that there will be no change in the number of international attendees from 2005.

**Table 10:
Number of International Attendees at a 2006 Annual Convention or Trade Show Compared with the Numbers in 2005**

	PCMA		Convene	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Increased	62	38.8	44	27.5
Decreased	16	10.0	22	13.8
No change	82	51.3	94	58.8
Total	160	100	160	100

A few questions were related to government initiatives regarding international visitors to the United States. First, 82.3% of PCMA members and 78.9% of Convene respondents currently have a passport. Three questions were asked to find out how familiar respondents are with the government initiatives. The majority of PCMA members responded that they were “somewhat familiar (54.4%)” with visa regulations, followed by “very familiar (24.6%)”. Most of the respondents were “not at all familiar (51.1%)” with the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, followed by 34.2% being “somewhat familiar”. When respondents were asked about their familiarity with Department of Homeland Security initiatives, the majority responded that they were “somewhat familiar (55%)”, followed by “not at all familiar (28.5%)”. Overall, respondents did not appear to be familiar with government initiatives regarding international visitors entering the United States (Table 11).

Table 11:
Familiarity of Government Initiatives for Visitors to the United States (PCMA)

	Visa regulations		Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative		Department of Homeland Security initiatives	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Extremely familiar	24	7.2	14	4.2	15	4.5
Very familiar	82	24.6	35	10.5	40	12.0
Somewhat familiar	181	54.4	114	34.2	183	55.0
Not at all familiar	46	13.8	170	51.1	95	28.5
Total	333	100	333	100	333	100

For Convene respondents, the results of familiarity of government initiatives were similar to PCMA responses. The majority of Convene readers responded that they were “somewhat familiar” (57.9%) with visa regulations, followed by “not at all” familiar (21.1%). Most of the respondents were “not at all familiar” (62.5%) with the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, followed by 28.8% being “somewhat familiar”. The majority responded that they were “somewhat familiar” (50.8%), followed by “not at all familiar” (41.8%). Overall, Convene respondents were less familiar than PCMA members with government initiatives regarding international visitors entering the United States (Table 12).

Table 12:
Familiarity of Government Initiatives for Visitors to the United States (Convene)

	Visa regulations		Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative		Department of Homeland Security initiatives	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Extremely familiar	19	6.4	5	1.7	6	2.0
Very familiar	44	14.7	21	7.0	16	5.4
Somewhat familiar	173	57.9	86	28.8	152	50.8
Not at all familiar	63	21.1	187	62.5	125	41.8
Total	299	100	299	100	299	100

Tables 13, 14, 15, and 16 compare attendance numbers between international and national associations for the years 2004 – 2006 as well as comparisons between 2005 and pre-September 11, 2001 of PCMA and Convene respondents. First for PCMA members, the largest increase for international associations was found in 2006 from 2005 international attendee numbers (47.8%) and the smallest increase was found when comparing 2005 numbers with pre-9/11 numbers (Table 13). Also, for national associations, the largest increase was found in 2006 from 2005 numbers (34.9%) and the smallest increase was in 2005 compared to pre-9/11 (21.9%). However, for national associations, the majority reported “no change” across the board. Overall, international and national associations reported a relatively small decrease in the number of international attendees compared to previous years or pre-9/11. In addition, a statistical analysis was done in order to find statistically significant difference between the two associations. For international attendees, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups when 2005 numbers were compared with 2004 ($p < .01$) and pre-9/11 ($p = .001$).

Table 13:
Comparison Between International and National Associations in their Change in Number of International Attendees at an Annual Convention or Trade Show (%) (PCMA)

	International			National		
	Increased	Decreased	No Change	Increased	Decreased	No Change
2005 vs. 2004	46.1	11.8	42.1	23.8	6.7	69.5
2005 vs. pre-9/11	36.3	23.5	40.2	21.9	12.4	65.7
2006 vs. 2005 ^a	47.8	15.2	37.0	34.9	9.5	55.6
2006 vs. 2005 (prediction) ^b	46.6	10.3	43.1	34.8	6.5	58.7

^a Associations that held their 2006 annual convention or trade show

^b Associations that have not held their 2006 annual convention or trade show

For Convene respondents, the largest increase for international associations was found in 2006 from 2005 international attendee numbers (46.9%) and the smallest increase was found when predicting 2006 numbers (26.9%) (Table 14). Also, for national associations, the largest increase was found in 2005 from 2004 numbers (27.9%) and the smallest increase was again when predicting 2006 numbers (13.3%). Similar to PCMA respondents, for national associations of Convene readers, the majority reported “no change” across the board. Overall, associations reported a relatively small decrease in the number of international attendees compared to previous years or pre-9/11.

Table 14:
Comparison Between International and National Associations in their Change in Number of International Attendees at an Annual Convention or Trade Show (%) (Convene)

	International			National		
	Increased	Decreased	No Change	Increased	Decreased	No Change
2005 vs. 2004	36.5	17.3	46.2	27.9	9.8	62.3
2005 vs. pre-9/11	34.6	15.4	50.0	19.7	14.7	65.6
2006 vs. 2005 ^a	46.9	21.9	31.2	21.6	10.8	67.6
2006 vs. 2005 (prediction) ^b	26.9	7.7	65.4	13.3	6.7	80.0

^a Associations that held their 2006 annual convention or trade show

^b Associations that have not held their 2006 annual convention or trade show

When looking at the change in number of international exhibiting companies, the majority of both international and national associations of PCMA members reported “no change” for 2005 from 2004 (83.3% and 81.9%, respectively) and for 2005 from pre-9/11 (72.6% and 79.0%, respectively) (Table 15). A statistical analysis showed no statistically significant difference between the two groups. Also, for Convene subscribers, most of the respondents of both international and national associations reported “no change” for 2005 from 2004 (75.0% and 78.7%, respectively) and for 2005 from pre-9/11 (80.8% and 82.0%, respectively) (Table 16).

Table 15:
Comparison Between International and National Associations in their Change in Number of International Exhibiting Companies at an Annual Convention or Trade Show (%) (PCMA)

	International			National		
	Increased	Decreased	No Change	Increased	Decreased	No Change
2005 vs. 2004	15.7	1.0	83.3	17.1	1.0	81.9
2005 vs. pre-9/11	19.6	7.8	72.6	14.3	6.7	79.0

Table 16:
Comparison Between International and National Associations in their Change in Number of International Exhibiting Companies at an Annual Convention or Trade Show (%) (Convene)

	International			National		
	Increased	Decreased	No Change	Increased	Decreased	No Change
2005 vs. 2004	15.4	9.6	75.0	16.4	4.9	78.7
2005 vs. pre-9/11	7.7	11.5	80.8	13.1	4.9	82.0

Tables 17, 18, 19, and 20 compare the attendance numbers among the different types of associations: professional, trade, and SMERF. For PCMA members, the majority of professional associations reported “no change” when comparing international attendee numbers (Table 17). Most of the trade associations reported an increase in attendance numbers except for when predicting 2006 from 2005 numbers. Also, the majority of SMERF groups selected “no change”. Overall, the associations did not show a big decrease in international attendance numbers over the years. A statistical analysis did not show any statistically significant difference among the three types of associations.

Table 17:
Comparison Between Different Types of Associations in their Change in Number of International Attendees at an Annual Convention or Trade Show (%) (PCMA)

	Professional			Trade			SMERF ^a		
	Increased	Decreased	No Change	Increased	Decreased	No Change	Increased	Decreased	No Change
2005 vs. 2004	31.2	10.6	58.2	54.1	5.4	40.5	20.9	7.0	72.1
2005 vs. pre-9/11	25.5	19.2	55.3	43.3	13.5	43.2	25.6	13.9	60.5
2006 vs. 2005 ^b	44	12	44	47.1	17.6	35.3	20.8	8.4	70.8
2006 vs. 2005 (prediction) ^c	44.3	7.1	48.6	31.8	9.1	59.1	25	10	65

^a Social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal associations

^b Associations that held their 2006 annual convention or trade show

^c Associations that have not held their 2006 annual convention or trade show

For Convene respondents, the majority of professional, trade, and SMERF associations reported “no change” when comparing international attendee numbers with previous numbers (Table 18). Overall, the associations did not show a big decrease in international attendance numbers over the years; however, trade associations reported a larger decrease than increase in attendance numbers in 2005 compared to pre-9/11.

Table 18:
Comparison Between Different Types of Associations in their Change in Number of International Attendees at an Annual Convention or Trade Show (%) (Convene)

	Professional			Trade			SMERF ^a		
	Increased	Decreased	No Change	Increased	Decreased	No Change	Increased	Decreased	No Change
2005 vs. 2004	33.8	6.2	60.0	28.6	10.7	60.7	22.0	19.5	58.5
2005 vs. pre-9/11	24.6	9.2	66.2	14.3	25.0	60.7	34.1	12.2	53.7
2006 vs. 2005 ^b	36.7	10.2	53.1	36.4	18.2	45.4	16.0	16.0	68.0
2006 vs. 2005 (prediction) ^c	22.2	5.6	72.2	20.0	0	80.0	12.0	20.0	68.0

^a Social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal associations

^b Associations that held their 2006 annual convention or trade show

^c Associations that have not held their 2006 annual convention or trade show

When looking at the change in number of international exhibiting companies, the majority of both PCMA members and Convene subscribers reported “no change” in 2005 numbers when compared with 2004 or pre-9/11 (Tables 19 and 20).

Table 19:
Comparison Between Different Types of Associations in their Change in Number of International Exhibiting Companies at an Annual Convention or Trade Show (%) (PCMA)

	Professional			Trade			SMERF ^a		
	Increased	Decreased	No Change	Increased	Decreased	No Change	Increased	Decreased	No Change
2005 vs. 2004	10.7	1.4	87.9	37.8	0	62.2	11.6	0	88.4
2005 vs. pre-9/11	12.8	7.8	79.4	32.4	5.4	62.2	16.3	4.6	79.1

^a Social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal associations

Table 20:
Comparison Between Different Types of Associations in their Change in Number of International Exhibiting Companies at an Annual Convention or Trade Show (%) (Convene)

	Professional			Trade			SMERF ^a		
	Increased	Decreased	No Change	Increased	Decreased	No Change	Increased	Decreased	No Change
2005 vs. 2004	15.4	4.6	80.0	14.3	3.6	82.1	12.2	9.8	78.0
2005 vs. pre-9/11	12.3	3.1	84.6	7.1	7.1	85.8	7.3	14.6	78.1

^a Social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal associations

Respondents’ familiarity with government initiatives for visitors to the United States were compared among different associations. When comparing international and national associations, the *t*-test showed a statistically significant difference only between the two types of associations in visa regulations for both PCMA ($t = 2.463, p = .015$) and Convene ($t = 2.298, p = .023$) respondents (Table 21 and 22). However, when comparing professional, trade, and other associations, the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test revealed no statistically significant differences among the groups for both PCMA and Convene respondents.

Table 21:
Familiarity of Government Initiatives for Visitors to the United States (International and National) (PCMA)

	International		National		<i>t</i> -test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> value	Sig.
Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative	1.77	.884	1.70	.833	.612	.541
Visa regulations	2.44	.774	2.18	.760	2.463	.015*
Department of Homeland Security initiatives	2.04	.775	1.86	.787	1.644	.102

Note: 1 to 4 scale; 1 = Not at all familiar, 2 = Somewhat familiar, 3 = Very familiar, and 4 = Extremely familiar

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

**Table 22:
Familiarity of Government Initiatives for Visitors to the United States (International and National)
(Convene)**

	International		National		<i>t</i> -test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> value	Sig.
Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative	1.60	.748	1.45	.681	1.218	.225
Visa regulations	2.28	.768	1.96	.787	2.298	.023*
Department of Homeland Security initiatives	1.74	.609	1.64	.711	.834	.406

Note: 1 to 4 scale; 1 = Not at all familiar, 2 = Somewhat familiar, 3 = Very familiar, and 4 = Extremely familiar

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Respondents were asked if they have implemented a new marketing plan or strategy in order to attract/facilitate international attendance. Overall, the majority of PCMA and Convene respondents have reported that they have not implemented a new marketing plan or strategy for international attendees (78.7% and 87%, respectively) and the overwhelming majority (92.2% and 94.3%, respectively) responded that they have not implemented one for international exhibiting companies. Tables 23, 24, 25, and 26 compare the responses between associations by membership and type.

**Table 23:
Implementation of a New Marketing Plan or Strategy to Attract/Facilitate International Attendees and Exhibiting Companies (International and National) (%) (PCMA)**

	International		National	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
International attendees	29.8	70.2	19.3	80.7
International exhibiting companies	7.7	92.3	10.1	89.9

**Table 24:
Implementation of a New Marketing Plan or Strategy to Attract/Facilitate International Attendees and Exhibiting Companies (International and National) (%) (Convene)**

	International		National	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
International attendees	19.0	81.0	13.4	86.6
International exhibiting companies	5.2	94.8	4.5	95.5

**Table 25:
Implementation of a New Marketing Plan or Strategy to Attract/Facilitate International Attendees and Exhibiting Companies (Type of Association) (%) (PCMA)**

	Professional		Trade		SMERF ^a	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
International attendees	24.1	75.9	17.9	82.1	27.3	72.7
International exhibiting companies	5.5	94.5	17.9	82.1	9.1	90.9

^a Social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal associations

**Table 26:
Implementation of a New Marketing Plan or Strategy to Attract/Facilitate International Attendees and Exhibiting Companies (Type of Association) (%) (Convene)**

	Professional		Trade		SMERF ^a	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
International attendees	16.4	83.6	16.1	83.9	8.0	92.0
International exhibiting companies	3.0	97.0	12.9	87.1	0	100.0

^a Social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal associations

As mentioned and seen in the above tables, most of the associations have not implemented a marketing plan or strategy to attract or facilitate international attendance. However, associations that have implemented a plan or strategy were asked to briefly describe it in order to see what kinds of efforts have been undertaken to increase international participation. Tables 27 and 28 show the types of marketing plans or strategies that associations have implemented. PCMA members and Convene subscribers responded similar plans or strategies.

**Table 27:
Marketing Plans or Strategies that Associations have Implemented to Attract/Facilitate International Attendees (PCMA)**

Web-based initiatives or enhanced web features

- Increased information on website (e.g., passports, visa process, registration, security, application for letter of invitation, how to help attendees, etc.)
- Hyperlinks to pertinent U.S. government websites regarding international travel
- Offering different languages on websites

Greater use of electronic marketing and targeted print materials

- Targeted electronic and printed marketing
- Increased communication with international attendees electronically and by printed materials

Other marketing initiatives

- Starting the process earlier for international attendees (e.g., registration process, posting letter of invitation, sending information, etc.)
- Working closely with international organizations (e.g, marketing companies, exhibiting companies, travel agencies) in respective countries
- Special pricing or special invitations for international attendees
- Attending international events

**Table 28:
Marketing Plans or Strategies that Associations have Implemented to Attract/Facilitate
International Attendees (*Convene*)**

Web-based initiatives or enhanced web features

- Increased information on website (e.g, passports, visa process, registration, security, application for letter of invitation, how to help attendees, etc.)
- Offering different languages on websites

Greater use of electronic marketing and targeted print materials

- Targeted electronic and printed marketing
- Increased communication with international attendees electronically and by printed materials

Other marketing initiatives

- Starting the process earlier for international attendees (e.g., registration process, posting letter of invitation, sending information, etc.)
 - Working closely with international organizations (e.g, marketing companies, exhibiting companies, travel agencies) in respective countries
 - Offering incentives for booking early
 - Working with the Department of State to shorten time to obtain visas
 - Attending international events
 - Choosing general locations or gateway cities to encourage more participation
-

Some associations work with intermediaries who help organize travel for international attendees to their annual convention or trade show. However, the majority of the survey respondents (79.9% of PCMA and 84.2% of *Convene* respondents) do not work with intermediaries. For the associations that work with intermediaries (20.1% of PCMA and 15.8% of *Convene* respondents), Tables 29 and 30 show what intermediaries they work with and how they assist them.

Table 29:
How Associations Work with Intermediaries (PCMA)

Use travel agencies (international, national, regional, in-house) that assist with

- housing
- meeting registration
- coordinating groups
- transportation
- tours
- other travel assistance

Associations assist intermediaries with

- providing documentation to facilitate international travel to the U.S., such as Letter of Invitation
- visa information
- housing
- registration
- finding sites
- negotiating contracts
- consulting

Work with other intermediaries

- Custom brokers for shipments of exhibits and convention goods
 - Airlines and ground transportation companies
 - Conference management companies
-

Table 30:
How Associations Work with Intermediaries (Convene)

Use travel agencies (international, national, regional, in-house) that assist with

- housing
- meeting registration
- flight
- activities
- other travel assistance

Associations assist intermediaries with

- providing information they need

Work with other intermediaries

- Airlines and ground transportation companies
 - Conference management companies
 - Department of Commerce
 - Consulting firm
 - Local company overseas
 - Event planners
 - Religious agencies
 - DMCs
 - Local CVBs
-

The results of this study also showed that only 14.1% of PCMA members and 10.7% of Convene subscribers have surveyed their international members about why they do not attend their annual convention or trade show. The number one reason stated was related to cost (e.g., travel cost, high registration fee, etc.) (36.5% of PCMA and 34.7% of Convene). The second most stated response was visa issues (19.5% of PCMA and 22.4% of Convene), followed by time related (e.g., time constraints, timing of conference) (15.9% of PCMA and 20.4% of Convene). Some of the other reasons included location, distance, and political disagreement with U.S. policies.

Respondents were asked to report the destination of their annual convention or trade show held in 2005. The top ten cities are listed in Tables 31 and 32. The top ten cities were all located in the United States except for one. The number one destination for both PCMA and Convene respondents was Chicago, IL (7.0% and 9.0%, respectively), followed by Washington, D.C. (6.7% and 7.8%, respectively). The third destination for PCMA members was Orlando, FL (6.1%) and for Convene subscribers was Las Vegas, NV (7.0%). The top city outside of the United States was Toronto, Canada with eight responses (2.6% of PCMA and 2.9% of Convene).

**Table 31:
Top 10 Cities for a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show (PCMA)**

City	Frequency	%
Chicago, IL	22	7.0
Washington, D.C.	21	6.7
Orlando, FL	19	6.1
Las Vegas, NV, San Francisco, CA	17	5.4
Atlanta, GA, New Orleans, LA	15	4.8
Philadelphia, PA, San Diego, CA	14	4.5
Nashville, TN	9	2.9
Boston, MA, Toronto, Canada	8	2.6
Dallas, TX	7	2.2
Los Angeles, CA, New York, NY	6	1.9
Total	314	100

**Table 32:
Top 10 Cities for a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show (Convene)**

City	Frequency	%
Chicago, IL	22	9.0
Washington, D.C.	19	7.8
Las Vegas, NV	17	7.0
Orlando, FL	16	6.6
Dallas, TX	11	4.5
San Antonio, TX	9	3.7
Minneapolis, MN	8	3.3
Toronto, Canada	7	2.9
Houston, TX	6	2.5
Boston, MA, New York, NY, Philadelphia, PA	5	2.0
Total	244	100

Tables 33 and 34 show the top destinations where an annual convention or trade show was held in 2005 by state. For PCMA members, California (17.4%) was number one, followed by Florida (10.9%) and Illinois (7.5%) (Table 33). For Convene respondents, Texas (14.8%) was number one, followed by California (13.2%) and Florida (11.9%) (Table 34).

**Table 33:
Top 10 States for a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show (PCMA)**

State	Frequency	%
California	51	17.4
Florida	32	10.9
Illinois	22	7.5
District of Columbia	21	7.1
Texas	18	6.1
Nevada	17	5.8
Pennsylvania	16	5.4
Georgia, Louisiana	15	5.1
Arizona, Tennessee	9	3.1
Massachusetts, Missouri	8	2.7
Total	294	100

**Table 34:
Top 10 States for a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show (Convene)**

State	Frequency	%
Texas	36	14.8
California	32	13.2
Florida	29	11.9
Illinois	26	10.7
District of Columbia, Nevada	19	7.8
Minnesota	8	3.3
Pennsylvania	7	2.9
Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon	5	2.1
Hawaii, North Carolina, Virginia	4	1.6
Maryland, Missouri, Tennessee	3	1.2
Total	243	100

Respondents were also asked to list the top three countries excluding the United States for registered attendees and exhibiting companies at their 2005 annual convention or trade show. The top two countries were the same for PCMA members and Convene subscribers. The majority came from Canada (24.4% and 23.1%, respectively), followed by the United Kingdom (17.4% and 16.6%, respectively) (Tables 35 and 36). The third top country for PCMA members was Japan (10.1%) and for Convene respondents was Mexico (6.7%). Overall, most of the attendees and exhibiting companies came from Europe (Tables 37 and 38).

Table 35:
Top 10 Countries (Excluding the U.S.) for Registered Attendees and Exhibiting Companies at a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show (PCMA)

Country	Frequency	%
Canada	157	24.4
United Kingdom	112	17.4
Japan	65	10.1
Germany	53	8.2
Mexico	47	7.3
China	26	4.0
France	20	3.1
Australia	18	2.8
Brazil	13	2.0
Italy	12	1.9
Total	643	100

Table 36:
Top 10 Countries (Excluding the U.S.) for Registered Attendees and Exhibiting Companies at a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show (Convene)

Country	Frequency	%
Canada	103	23.1
United Kingdom	74	16.6
Mexico	30	6.7
Japan	28	6.3
Germany	27	6.1
Australia	21	4.7
China	17	3.8
Brazil	10	2.2
India, Israel, South Korea	7	1.6
Italy	6	1.3
Total	445	100

Table 37:
Registered Attendees and Exhibiting Companies at a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show by Continent (Excluding the U.S.) (PCMA)

Continent	Frequency	%
Europe	236	36.7
North America (Canada)	157	24.4
Asia & Pacific Rim	144	22.4
South America	87	13.5
Middle East	12	1.9
Africa	7	1.1
Total	643	100

Table 38:
Registered Attendees and Exhibiting Companies at a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show by Continent (Excluding the U.S.) (Convене)

Continent	Frequency	%
Europe	146	32.8
North America (Canada)	103	23.1
Asia & Pacific Rim	91	20.4
South America	59	13.3
Africa	10	2.3
Middle East	7	1.6
Total	445	100

Comparing PCMA members and Convене subscribers

A statistical analysis was conducted in order to find any mean differences between the PCMA members and Convене subscribers. There were statistically significant differences found in some categories. These are described in the following tables.

Table 39 compares the percentage of registered international attendees and exhibiting companies at a 2005 annual convention or trade show between the two groups. There was a statistically significant mean difference in registered international attendees ($t = 3.481, p = .001$) between the two groups. The PCMA groups had more international attendees than the Convене group.

**Table 39:
Comparison of Registered International Attendees and Exhibiting Companies at a 2005 Annual Convention or Trade Show**

	PCMA		Convene		<i>t</i> -test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> value	Sig.
International attendees	2.70	1.822	2.18	1.616	3.481	.001*
International exhibiting companies	1.71	1.374	1.70	1.374	.073	.942

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Table 40 compares the familiarity of PCMA members and Convene subscribers with government initiatives related to travel to the United States. The results show a statistically significant difference between the two groups for all of the three categories. PCMA members were more familiar with government initiatives for visitors to the United States.

**Table 40:
Comparison of Familiarity of Government Initiatives for Visitors to the United States**

	PCMA		Convene		<i>t</i> -test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> value	Sig.
Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative	1.68	.826	1.48	.701	3.297	.001*
Visa regulations	2.25	.782	2.06	.781	3.032	.003*
Department of Homeland Security initiatives	1.92	.763	1.68	.669	4.346	.000*

Note: 1 to 4 scale; 1 = Not at all familiar, 2 = Somewhat familiar, 3 = Very familiar, and 4 = Extremely familiar

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Table 41 compares the PCMA and Convene groups in their implementation of a marketing plan or strategy in order to attract/facilitate international attendees and exhibiting companies. The results show that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups for only international attendees ($t = 2.781, p = .006$). This means that more PCMA members have implemented a new marketing plan or strategy to attract/facilitate international attendees.

**Table 41:
Comparison of Implementation of a New Marketing Plan or Strategy in Order to Attract/Facilitate International Attendees and Exhibiting Companies**

	PCMA		Convene		<i>t</i> -test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> value	Sig.
International attendees	.21	.410	.13	.337	2.781	.006*
International exhibiting companies	.08	.269	.06	.232	1.065	.287

Note: 1 = Yes, 0 = No

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Conclusions

This study was conducted to determine the trends in international participation at annual conventions and trade shows held in the United States. Industry articles have reported a decrease in the number of international attendees at U.S. based conventions and trade shows. However, the results of this study revealed that overall there was no change in attendance numbers for international attendees and international exhibiting companies. Also, there were more increases than decreases in attendance numbers. These results could be explained by the nature of the respondents. The majority (63.6%) of the PCMA respondents represent professional associations. These associations have different characteristics than other associations. The international membership of professional associations is primarily from European countries that are included in the visa waiver program. Therefore, they might not have had much of a difficulty as other countries in attending U.S. based meetings. This could have contributed to the different results from previous industry articles.

Another interesting result is that most of the respondents are not familiar with government initiatives regarding international travel to the United States. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, for example, has been written about extensively in industry publications, such as *Convene*, *Tradeshaw Week*, and *The Meeting Professional*. However, about half of the respondents (51.5%) reported that they are not at all familiar with the initiative. With the January 8, 2007 deadline approaching, it is crucial for planners to be aware of the requirements in order to provide better assistance to members in the western hemisphere traveling to the United States.

Overall, it appears that PCMA planner members have not been proactive in terms of increasing global market share at their annual conventions or trade shows. Only a small percentage of associations have implemented a new marketing plan or strategy in order to attract/facilitate international attendance. In addition, only a small percentage has surveyed their members about why they do not attend the annual events. Similarly, a small percentage works with intermediaries to facilitate participation in their events. These results are surprising given the fact that industry articles (Braley, 2004; Helwick, 2002; Hough, 2002; Jackson, 2003; Littlejohn, 2005) have been reporting a decrease in international participation for the past few years.

The United States is competing in a different global marketplace than it was just 5 years ago. Many countries surpass the U.S. in terms of marketing themselves globally. Emerging economies in different regions of the world are creating new marketplaces that attract international visitors to meetings, conventions, and trade shows. PCMA must support the recommendations of the U.S. Travel & Tourism Advisory Board contained in the September, 2006 report entitled "Restoring American's Brand". This document, written for the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, provides an excellent blueprint for maintaining our fair share of the international travel market, including travel for business purposes.

Recommendations

- **Travel Initiatives:** PCMA must become the resource for planners where they can easily obtain current information regarding travel to the United States. PCMA has several media outlets where they can effectively educate their members about the changes and initiatives. These include the Website, *Convene* magazine, the annual conference, and educational programming for chapters. Through these media, PCMA should educate members about visa regulations and process, up-to-date information on government initiatives, and basic travel guidelines to the United States. PCMA's Website should offer hyperlinks to international travel related government websites, such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for quick and easy access to new travel restrictions and airport security.

Recommendation 1: Through *Convene*, PCMA's Website, the Annual Meeting and Chapter Programs provide an integrated, and regularly updated education for members about Visa regulations, government initiatives and travel guidelines to the United States

Recommendation 2: Through *Convene*, PCMA's Website, the Annual Meeting and Chapter programs provide education form members about the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.

- **International Buyers Program:** In addition to educating members about visa and travel restrictions, PCMA should provide information to planners about the International Buyer Program. This government initiative promotes U.S. based exhibitions abroad. PCMA should also work to expand the program since it only represents a limited number of trade shows. Similarly, PCMA needs to educate members about the listing of upcoming conferences maintained by the Bureau of Consular Affairs that is distributed to consulates around the world.

Recommendation 3: Become a resource for information about the U.S. International Buyer Program.

Recommendation 4: Work with the appropriate U.S. agencies to expand the U.S. International Buyer Program.

Recommendation 5: Encourage members to participate in the listing of upcoming conferences maintained by the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

- International Attendee: PCMA should recommend that planners become aware of what their international members prefer when traveling to a convention or trade show, such as traveling in groups. Organizing business delegations by groups would be a method to encourage international participation at annual events. This could be done through travel intermediaries, such as travel agencies, and perhaps professional congress organizers outside of the United States. Furthermore, research should be commissioned to determine if international participants at meetings, conventions, and trade shows combine business and pleasure travel. If this is the case, PCMA could partner with Destination Marketing Association International to provide guidance on promoting travel opportunities for these visitors specifically.

Recommendation 6: Educate about and encourage members to work with travel intermediaries in organizing international participants travel to US meetings.

Recommendation 7: Conduct research to determine if international participants at US meetings combine business with pleasure.

Recommendation 8: Conduct a follow-up study of the international market to determine the barriers that prevent them from participating in U.S. based conventions.

- PCMA should recommend that planners provide information on their Web sites and in conference registration materials that will help international visitors feel more comfortable, such as tipping guidelines, currencies and exchange rates, travel distances, airport security guidelines, taxes, voltage, metric vs. U.S. measurements, and phone systems. It might be necessary for PCMA to develop templates or guidelines for this type of program. Information in languages other than English could prove to be very helpful.

Recommendation 9: Develop templates for use by members on their Websites and in their conference materials for use by international visitors regarding visa requirements, US Customs, airport security, currency conversion etc.

Moreover, PCMA should collaborate with sister organizations (i.e., MPI, IAEM, and CESSE), the Convention Industry Council, and the Travel Industry Association of America in order to develop lobbying efforts for more consistent visa regulations for international travelers attending U.S. based meetings. By increasing the number of international participants at conventions and trade shows based in the United States, associations will be providing greater membership value through enhanced business opportunities.

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