



Beijing chasing the World's Top 3

► For decades now, Paris leads the global ranking in tourist arrivals. In 2010, the French capital welcomed 15.1 million visitors, just before London with 14.6 and third-placed New York with 9.7 million. Although Beijing is not yet in the Top Ten, their 2010 result with 4.9 million guests is astonishing in view of the short tourism history in China. Yet, the Beijing Commission of Tourism Development (CTD) aims even higher and plans to double its performance, and thus to overtake New York's position, by 2016. The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games certainly helped in creating a global awareness, but now seems already a reminiscence of the past. The Beijing Inbound tourism industry looks only forward and seemingly to a very prosperous future. CTD estimates that, in 2010, 30.5 billion Euros were generated by this industry sector; this goes in hand with the overall performance of China and its 55.7 million visitors in total.

Beijing already number 3 in Asia's Congress Industry

► The meeting and convention sector is known to be the most lucrative segment of the inbound industry. International delegates of corporations and Associations stay in better hotels, dine at great restaurants or unusual venues, and usually enjoy a full-service program: their 'per night/per person' expenditure often is two-and-a-half times higher than the ones of leisure travellers. Every year, the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) publishes a widely recognised ranking of the global meeting towns. And Beijing has made there its successful appearance too. In 2010, nearly 100 international congresses and conventions were held in the Chinese capital, putting it to place 12 on the ICCA-ranking.



In Asia, only Taipei (#11) and Singapore (#5) are ahead of Beijing, and in China, Shanghai and even Hong Kong are now behind the capital. CTD has announced its objective to become the number 1 congress city in Asia.



In order to achieve this, the Bureau offers substantial support to international congress organisers in form of financial, administrative and promotional kind. CTD sees the meeting and convention sector as a main tool to achieve the '10-million visitors' level, aimed for 2016. In view of the global hub airport, fantastic sightseeing spots in the capital and its surroundings, efficient transport means and a great hospitality infrastructure, this objective will surely be attained.

The Flipside of the Coin

► But of course, the unbridled growth has its negative sides too: Traffic in Beijing has become more than just an irritation. For example, city transfers can unpredictably get stuck in congestions at any given hour of the day or the evening. And, on certain days, air pollution is so bad, that



outdoors events have to be cancelled and sightseeing tours are really unpleasant. More importantly, the UK-based Research Agency The Right Solution stated in its 2011 'The China Meetings Industry Research Report' that international organisers' satisfaction with venues and service providers in China has decrease over the last year: in 2009, 60% of all foreign respondents declared the overall services as 'very good' or 'excellent'; in 2010, the same descended to 44% only. On the other hand, 22% of all respondents judged the services in 2010 as 'bad' or 'just acceptable'.

This negative trend may be understandable in view of the arrival of thousands of new and uneducated staffs which are needed to support the development in the tourism industry. On the same time, maybe, the euphoria which surrounded the preparation and operations of the 2008 Olympics is gone and the then city-wide initiated politeness and foreigner-focused attitude somewhat in the past. And, English is still a problem, even at some 5* properties, and that obviously does not help the service quality. The fact is that foreign travellers are no longer 'news' to Beijing citizens or to the Beijing service industry. While this may be comprehensible, it still is a handicap on the way to becoming a truly global and leading hospitality destination.



International visitors, and particularly the global meetings and incentive industry, will require full attention to its needs. Simply a clean bus at the airport and a modern hotel room are not enough. The international market requires faster administrative support (for example use of a public facility), more flexibility in time planning, more openness to short-term changes, and readiness in adjusting catering to international standards.

► The huge task for the Chinese Tourism Industry will be to achieve such quality standards in view of the overwhelming quantity objectives.

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