A STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING JORDAN’S MICE SECTOR
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INTRODUCTION

Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions – more commonly referred to by the acronym MICE – is a specialized economic activity that involves facilitating the gathering of large groups of people in a place for a particular purpose. MICE is closely connected to the tourism industry, and it big business around the world; a multi-billion dollar that ranges from small meetings to major global conferences and exhibitions that draw tens of thousands of people.

Each year a total of 400,000 conferences and exhibitions are held worldwide, and a total spend of US$280 billion is spent on these1. Annual MICE industry output value has already reached US$1.16 trillion (including US$400 billion for conferences and US$760 billion for exhibitions), and thus MICE could be counted on to bring enormous economic benefit to the countries and cities that host them2.

For Jordan, the revenue from MICE is around $50 million, which equates to about 1.7% of the country’s total tourism revenue3. While the figure is significant, there is great potential to gain dramatically more economic benefits for Jordan from MICE travel.

In this respect, Jordan is seeking to enhance its competitiveness and enlarge its position as a meetings industry destination. With its iconic places, high-profile World Heritage sites and authentic cultural experiences Jordan has established itself as a compelling leisure and incentive travel destination. However, despite modern meeting industry infrastructure and international organization presence, Jordan has struggled to establish itself as a high profile meetings destination.

Jordan has many of the necessary elements to increase its level of competitiveness in the global meetings industry. This strategy document is designed to guide Jordanian stakeholders towards establishing the elements of a sustainable meetings industry ecosystem. As much as anything else, the strategies and action plans are a call for industry leadership and stakeholder collaboration. Implemented together, they will make Jordan a meetings industry marketplace force to be reckoned with in the future.

1. Figures from the Taiwan Ministry of Economic Affairs 2012
2. According to the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI)
3. 2012 Tourism Satellite Accounts
MISSION

Grow tourism receipts by capitalizing on the globally-competitive MICE industry.
VISION

Jordan is one of the top-three MICE destinations within the MENA region and the top MICE destination among the Levant countries.
BRIEF ON CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

An assessment of the meetings industry in Jordan report presented two primary insights:

1. Jordan has most of the necessary infrastructure required for a successful and competitive meetings industry. However, it lacks several key elements that make up an effective industry ecosystem. These include the absence of a national industry leadership organization, needed networks and widespread industry accreditation programs.

2. Jordan remains insufficiently known as a meetings destination (incentive travel being the exception) and misperceptions exist about Jordan’s security situation, which is the result of a lack of consistent engagement and market-specific messaging.

CURRENT ENVIRONMENT SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

• Modern and sufficient infrastructure for meetings and events with full array of global brands.
• Excellent incentive travel positioning.
• Authentic and compelling local content for delegates experience.

OPPORTUNITIES

• Create a national meetings industry organization.
• Promote cultural richness and potential to provide content for meetings and events.
• Promote Jordan independently from neighboring countries as part of strategic communications plan.
• Business potential from pharmaceutical, medicine and humanities.

WEAKNESSES

• Marketplace security misperception.
• Lack of national industry leadership and collaboration.
• NO consistent marketplace effort to support the meetings industry.
• Insufficient and expensive air connectivity.
• Lack of industry education and accreditation.

THREATS

• Competition can outspend and out discount Jordan.
• Security misperception could escalate if not addressed.
• Continued government tax grabs.
• Lack of specialized meetings industry could taint destination as unsophisticated in the meetings and events marketplace.
Jordan is Well Established as a Competitive Incentive Destination

Of the four types of business opportunities within the meetings industry (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) Jordan has a successful history in attracting incentive groups from European and North American companies that consider its historic World Heritage attractions compelling enough to create experiences to motivate their executives. While Jordan has a well-established incentive travel sector with award-winning operators, receptive tour-operators that currently focus primarily on leisure visits and guided tours to historic and natural sites who want to enter the highly profitable incentive market will have to invest in education for their operators, transportation infrastructure and other enhancements to create more complete and sophisticated products for this highly demanding market segment.

Exhibitions: An Opportunity for Further Investigation

Opportunity, community and marketplace drivers for exhibitions are significantly different than those for the meetings industry and cannot be developed solely by government and/or private sector tourism stakeholders. To be successful, it is necessary to get stakeholders from the economic development and international trade departments to be key partners in opportunity development for Jordan. As an immediate action, strategic partnerships should be explored with organizations such as the International Association of Exhibition and Events and Union of Fairs International, to develop the networking environment needed for exhibition industry stakeholders to interact, and to assemble educational resources and credentialing (Certified Exhibition Managers) programs and research tools from these organizations.
FIVE STRATEGIC PILLARS FOR DEVELOPMENT

I. INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP
Meetings industry ecosystems are complex and rely on a result-driven coalition approach led by an effective and respected leadership organization to implement the required ecosystem elements, lead an effective marketplace and community presence, and create and monitor transparent performance goals to build trust and collaboration. Jordan needs to establish a dedicated promotion organization to focus on this competitive niche segment.

II. MARKETPLACE INVESTMENT AND RESOURCES
The global meetings industry is highly competitive and requires committed government and private sector marketplace investment. To ensure credibility with priority market segments, dedicated and consistent investment is mandatory.

III. INFRASTRUCTURE
Meetings industries are both capital and labor intensive, requiring specific ongoing investment and development in hardware (e.g. venues), software (e.g. education) and transport to support a destination’s success and credibility. Jordan needs to boost air transport to Jordan by opening new international routes and increasing national carrier capacity in addition to improving local market knowledge and capabilities through related certification and accreditation.

IV. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS
Meetings industries are dynamic and are impacted by local and world events. Effective strategic communications can exploit opportunities and mitigate challenges. Jordan needs to develop and implement a strategic communications plan to address misperceptions about the safety of Jordan as a destination in addition to developing a MICE brand for Jordan.

V. ENGAGEMENT
Effective meeting ecosystems require comprehensive alignment of the marketplace, the community and the industry. This is best accomplished through a commitment to ongoing engagement and communications protocols. Jordan can attract regional and international congresses by bidding in partnership with Jordanian businesses from priority markets and segments.
OBJECTIVES

1. Establish a dedicated MICE promotion organization to focus on this competitive niche segment

2. Attract regional and international congresses to be hosted in Jordan by bidding in partnership with Jordanian businesses from priority segments

3. Boost air transport to Jordan by opening new international routes and increasing national carrier capacity.

4. Improve local MICE knowledge and capabilities through related certification and accreditation.

5. Develop and implement a strategic communications plan to address misperceptions about the safety of Jordan as a destination.

6. Develop a MICE brand for Jordan.
STRATEGIC SECTORS

PRIORITY SECTORS
1. Pharmaceuticals
2. Medical
3. Humanities
4. IT
5. Religious studies

Given Jordan’s good regional transportation connectivity and strong regional profile in health care, religious studies and the humanities (e.g. archaeology, history), there is good potential for developing solid regional association/not-for-profit business opportunities in the short-term. Jordan also has a well-established community of local professional leaders interested in being hosts for these events. These opportunities will also extend beyond Amman and the Dead Sea to Aqaba when facilities currently under construction there come on-line in 2016-17.

SECOND PRIORITY SECTORS
1. Regional associations
2. Regional non-for-profit events

Successfully securing and hosting regional association/not-for-profit events will position Jordan well with corresponding international association/federations for global event opportunities. These entities are typically based in the Eurozone (e.g. Brussels, Geneva). Recently hosted regional association/not-for-profit groups in Jordan should be immediately pursued for international opportunities. The new SBU should also support strategic communications activities to demonstrate to decision-makers in vertical corporate markets that in Jordan they will find an environment to produce productive events.

THIRD PRIORITY SECTORS
1. Corporate groups
2. Regional non-for-profit events

Proactive corporate group opportunity development should be confined to regional opportunities given Jordan’s good regional transportation connectivity. These opportunities will also likely extend beyond Amman to Aqaba when facilities currently under construction come on-line in 2016-17. Corporate group appeal beyond the Middle East/GCC region will be limited because of current direct air connectivity capacity issues. The new SBU should also support strategic communications activities to demonstrate to decision-makers in vertical corporate markets that in Jordan they will find an environment to perform productive events.
STRATEGIC SOURCE MARKETS

The meetings industry client marketplace is not structured by geography. End-user decision-makers and enterprise headquarters are scattered across the globe with concentrated clusters of international associations located in Geneva and Brussels, with smaller, less international clusters in Washington, DC and London. Incentive houses and exhibition management companies are located randomly around the world. Therefore local hosts (“ambassadors”) of qualified business opportunities from high potential end-user meetings business segments must be identified and cultivated.

Based on Jordan’s current air connectivity, infrastructure and MICE visitor numbers and demand, the following markets have been identified that should be focused on over the five-year period of this strategy:

PRIMARY SOURCE MARKETS
1. Arab countries
2. Europe
3. Asia

SECONDARY SOURCE MARKET
1. USA
IMPLEMENTATION

Based on each of the stated objectives, the following implementation steps must be taken.

ESTABLISH A DEDICATED MICE PROMOTION ORGANIZATION TO FOCUS ON THIS COMPETITIVE NICHE SEGMENT

PRIORITY TASKS:

- Utilize existing structure of JTB to house a MICE Strategic Business Unit to target the MICE market with a dedicated budget.
- Create MICE Advisory committee of Jordanian meetings industry leaders and priority market segment stakeholders to define short term implementation focus areas and help cultivate new MICE business. The committee should be led by a private sector representative and should have participation from key meetings industry destinations in Jordan, including Aqaba and the Dead Sea.
- Concurrently begin work towards creating an independent National Convention Bureau (NCB) with a partnered funding model, a collaborative plan development framework and performance accountability metrics. This should be implemented through JTB SBU, expanding the focus and planned activities to align with NCB plan recommendations and available resources within 24 months.
In its first year of operation, the JTB MICE SBU should focus almost exclusively on the development of a meetings industry “ecosystem”. This includes developing processes around opportunity research, Jordanian community engagement and collaborative bid development for Jordan through the following three mission priorities:

1. **Market Opportunity Research**: Quickly develop information and knowledge capability backbone and a process for harvesting and sharing essential information on potential marketplace business opportunities. JTB SBU must identify, within international association databases, world congresses/events that can rotate within the Middle East region and be suitable for Jordan according to seasonality, price and economic alignment.

2. **Jordanian Host Organization Development**: Undertake a program of targeted Jordanian business, academic and professional leader engagement, in conjunction with other Jordanian meeting industry stakeholders, seeking their personal and organizational support to invite their professional and/or corporate colleagues to meet in Jordan.

3. **Bid Development**: Establish processes for developing bid strategies that produce compelling templates and submissions for identified event prospects.
Proposed NCB funding model based on Jordan’s industry dynamics:

National Convention Bureau Conceptual Revenue Structure

- Private Sector Stakeholders
- Non Traditional Suppliers/Sponsors
- Cooperative Campaigns
- Sales and Marketing Packages
- In-Kind Contributions
- Sourced different sources (Tourism Tax, Visa Fees and Sales Taxes)
- NCB Budget
- Contribute Personnel and overhead operating structure
- Private self Assessment of 1% point on accommodation
- Government contributes % of total tourism investment to meetings industry (SBU or NCB)
- Jordan Tourism Board
- Hoteliers (Criteria defined upon meetings infrastructure of market share)

**JTB:** Staffing and office overheads of the NCB are contributed by the JTB

**Government:** Contribute % of income obtained through a number of existing tourism-driven sources

**Private Sector:** Government financial contributions should be matched by private sector marketing partners/stakeholders cash contributions:

- **Hoteliers:** voluntarily contribute a fixed percentage (1-2 percentage points) of occupied rooms for specific designation to the NCB as part of a multi-year funding agreement.

- **Industry Stakeholders:** develop specific co-operative/partner sales and marketing packages giving private sector partners opportunities to buy-in to specific co-operative marketing opportunities (e.g. on-line guide) or marketplace sales initiatives (e.g. tradeshow or roadshow participation).
• Appoint a Task Force to identify steps to evolve the SBU into a National Convention Bureau (NCC) model through a highly-engaged national development process involving government; business and meetings industry stakeholders.

• Engage government and industry throughout Jordan to determine support for NCB vision using a combination of digital and face-to-face engagement strategies.

• Develop an NCB governance model to support its objectives based on Jordanian industry stakeholder’s preference for an independent organization controlled by Jordan’s private sector stakeholders. Establish processes on how the government and private sector can participate in policy and strategy development in partnership with JTB. The model should also align with the parameters of its funding model.

• Develop a dedicated funding model to ensure long-term sustainable and effective operations of the NCB, with commitments from both the government and the private sector.

• Secure government and private sector funding commitments for a NCB by presenting credible meetings industry performance and economic impact information, and specifically identify the incremental social and economic contributions generated (or expected to be delivered in the future) as a result of SBU activities.

• Make a decision about launching an NCB based on a comprehensive government and industry engagement process and taking into account the level of committed private sector stakeholder financial investment and the JTB SBU’s twelve-month performance results.
ATTRACT REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES TO BE HOSTED IN JORDAN BY BIDDING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH JORDANIAN BUSINESSES FROM PRIORITY SEGMENTS

PRIORITY TASKS:

- Develop a database of meeting and congress business opportunities that align with Jordan’s identified business priorities per above, which will become Jordan’s primary meetings industry relationship management platform.

- Implement a local “host” support program whereby motivated and supportive local Jordanian “hosts” are assigned to lead bids or proposals produced by the JTB SBU or NCB, which will partner with the “hosts” to develop bid strategies, secure industry support and services, produce bid documentation as well as provide financial support for the host to deliver the bid. Hosts can include local universities and chambers of commerce.

- Clearly define industry communications policies and business opportunity support services as new business opportunities are developed for Jordan. Establish a transparent communication system with Jordanian industry business partners to share information about participation opportunities and pending business opportunities.

- Implement local strategic communications to create greater awareness of SBU activities and how meetings and events contribute to Jordanian social and economic value.

- Establish processes for developing bid and bidding strategies (in conjunction with a local host per above) and submissions for qualified event prospects.
**BOOST AIR TRANSPORT TO JORDAN BY OPENING NEW INTERNATIONAL ROUTES AND INCREASING NATIONAL CARRIER CAPACITY**

**PRIORITY TASKS:**

- Create an Air Services Development (ASD) Task Force. This volunteer-led effort is to include government and private sector industry leaders who will work together to expand Jordan’s air services. JTB, Royal Jordanian Airlines and the Ministry of Transport should be core members. If possible, ASD experts with access to relevant air services data, deep industry relationships and familiarity with global and regional air transport regulatory policies should be retained to support this process.

- The ASD Task Force must determine a strategy to advance air services development in Jordan focusing on the target markets and on policy change, working in collaboration with sector stakeholders. The objectives of the ASD strategy should focus on:
  1. Expanding air services in priority geographic markets
  2. Improving air services between Amman and Aqaba
  3. Improving air services between large regional hubs and Jordan

- Identify potential funding models to support ASD strategy recommendations, including financial incentives, based on a combination of government and private sector contributions.
IMPROVE LOCAL MICE KNOWLEDGE AND CAPABILITIES THROUGH RELATED CERTIFICATION AND ACCREDITATION

PRIORITY TASKS:

• Identify education stakeholders and create an industry education committee. Engage representatives from key government ministries, such as higher education, economy, tourism and antiquities, as well as tourism academic communities and international associations specializing in certifications and the business community of the meeting industry. Establish a Meetings Industry Education Committee within the new SBU/NCB sphere that is driven by members of the academic community who can develop champions in each one of the meetings industry sector specialties and give guidance on curriculum and skills development.

• Develop quality education programs to broaden available specializations in response to the different market opportunities (corporate conventions, association congresses, industry exhibitions and incentive programs) through university academic programs and/or private sector training initiatives.

• Establish international association partnerships to spread overall awareness of Jordan as an international congress/convention destination, provide formal education to meetings industry suppliers, provide access to research tools to identify Jordan’s potential in different vertical markets and generate concrete lead generation opportunities for Jordan’s destinations.

• Establish local programs for global credential development such as CMP (Certified Meeting Professional), CASE (for Association Sales Executives), CEM (Exhibition/TradeShow Market), CMM (Corporate Meeting Suppliers and Planners), CSM (convention service management) and CIS (Certified Incentive Specialists) by creating strong international meetings industry association partnerships.

• Industry stakeholders to organize a regional meetings industry education summit to accelerate adoption and distribution of education and certification programs. Through the JTB SBU/NCB invite industry suppliers and planners from the region and partner with the CIC (Convention Industry Council) and other international meetings industry associations to provide recognized credentialing content as well as other organizational resources.
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DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN TO ADDRESS MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE SAFETY OF JORDAN AS A DESTINATION

PRIORITY TASKS:

- Develop a strategic communications and market engagement program that includes a key message and story framework for Jordan’s MICE sector, which can be adapted to suit key target markets. This must be widely and consistently used by all industry stakeholders to successfully inspire the market to consider Jordan as a meetings destination.

- Retain an international strategic communications firm with a well-developed crisis management team to provide JTB and all Jordanian meetings industry stakeholders with strategic communications support on marketplace security misperceptions.

- Deploy social media initiatives and mobilize Jordanian meetings industry stakeholders to support social media activities. JTB SBU or NCB to make social media engagement and message dissemination a permanent distinct function within their structure.

A meetings industry social media plan should be designed to address two objectives:

1. **Marketplace Engagement:** Deploy content-based key messages to inform and engage the meetings industry marketplace as well as other opinion-influencers about Jordan’s “story” and role in the meetings industry. Identify when new brand opportunities or new brand challenges emerge. Engagement activities will help Jordanian stakeholders better understand existing marketplace perspectives through feedback and competitive insights shared by social network connections. Social media is not a message broadcast channel; keep engagement through social media vibrant, fresh and engaging to stimulate ‘conversation’.

2. **Community/Industry Engagement:** Use social media to engage Jordan’s industry stakeholders in collaborative marketplace action as well as sharing marketplace intelligence. Use social media to engage non-industry partners (e.g. Jordanian organizational “hosts” looking to invite their colleagues to Jordan) in the activities of the meetings industry. As part of the social media plan, the JTB SBU/NCB will undertake an explicit collaboration program of social media adoption by all Jordanian meetings industry stakeholders. For better results, all Jordanian stakeholders to connect their own social media networks to the efforts of the national meetings industry organization.
• Disseminate key strategic messaging to high-priority marketplace audiences by prioritizing participation in international meetings industry associations. Take advantage of key networking opportunities to develop solid and professional relationships to be part of global trends conversations and decision-making processes.

• Gain client and attendee testimonial support in order to capture authentic customer perspectives rather than paid advertising, the credibility of which is waning. Use global user-generated review websites like TripAdvisor and Yelp!.

• Establish a regular brand monitoring and tracking protocol, including specific focus on meetings and events, through social media monitoring and surveys for sharing with all meetings industry stakeholders.

The JTB SBU/NCB should pursue a dual testimonial/review strategy to support its strategic communications initiatives:

1. **User Review Websites:** The JTB SBU/NCB should rally Jordanian meetings industry stakeholders to make support and monitoring of identified sites a collaborative priority. Ensure destination reviews on all key sites are kept current and receive responses when required.

2. **Jordanian Meeting Industry Web Platform:** JTB SBU/NCB will prioritize collection, production and dissemination of client reviews and testimonials for its web platform. Jordanian meetings industry stakeholders should support the JTB SBU/NCB’s efforts by securing and sharing client testimonial content.

• Develop and deploy elements of the strategic communications action plan; a brand extension for Jordan’s meeting industry must be considered as part of an overall destination brand development initiative.
DEVELOP A MICE BRAND FOR JORDAN

PRIORITY TASKS:

• Showcase Jordan as a compelling and differentiated (from its key competitors) meetings destination
• Demonstrate that meetings/events in Jordan can contribute to strategic organizational and attendee needs; and
• Embed the fact that Jordan is safe, secure and sophisticated.

JORDAN: THE AUTHENTIC ARAB GLOBAL GATHERING PLACE FOR THE CELEBRATION OF HUMANITY

WE BELIEVE JORDAN IS:
A sanctuary for collaboration and exploration.
A gathering place where diverse people pursue a common dream through different eyes.
That will expend your perspective on personal opportunity and human potential.
A harmonious crossroads for commerce, education and religion.
Where the health of our environment is as important as the health of our people and our visitors.
And where the wonders of our past are celebrated as much as our visions for the future.

WHAT MATTERS TO US:
• Harmony
• Hospitality as a way to create connections to bridge differences
• Spirit
• History
• Health and wellness
• Education

OUR SPACE:
AN AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE THAT CELEBRATES ARAB CULTURE AND JORDAN’S POLE IN THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF HUMANITY.

OUR ATTITUDE:
• Welcoming and hospitable
• Connecting: Bringing people and ideas together
• Sharing
• Spiritual
• Global

WHO MATTERS AND WHY THEY SHOULD CARE:
People and organizations looking for a new perspective to build richer networks and ideas.

MEETING PLANNERS:
Those looking for an authentic, harmonious experience to gain new perspectives and opportunities for their organizations and communicates.

THE IDEAL EXPERIENCE:
FUNCTIONAL: Safe, authentic and accessible Arab hospitality and professional connections.

BRAND ESSENCE:
A SANCTUARY TO DISCOVER THE WONDER AND VITALITY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT
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