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PREDICTING THE MEETING ENVIRONMENTS OF THE FUTURE & IMPROVING MEETING DYNAMICS

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PREDICTING THE MEETING ENVIRONMENTS OF THE FUTURE & IMPROVING MEETING DYNAMICS

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INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the *IACC Meeting Room of the Future*™ report began providing a pulse on global meeting industry trends. Five research and trends report's later, the initiative has been instrumental in identifying new trends and take a deeper dive into select changes occurring in the meetings industry.

This report takes the research one step further by focusing on a specific region – Latin America. The goal being to identify geographic trends as well as differences in meeting planner objectives and goals, when compared with the rest of the world. Similar to the global study, this report, *IACC Meeting Room of the Future*™- *Latin America,* seeks to answer the following questions among meeting planners operating in the Latin American market, and compare it to global trends:

- *How have the objectives and goals of meetings changed over time?*
- *Is experience creation going to be more important when planning meetings in the future?*
- *What are the ideal physical elements of meeting space and how have they changed over time?*
- *How is food and beverage changing to support delegates needs better?*
- *What will be the most critical technology needs over the next three to five years?*

While there are findings in this report that align closely to those findings from the global report, there are also distinct differences illustrating those trends that that are unique to the Latin American market.

Mark Cooper, IACC's CEO comments "Whilst having a global perspective is very useful, partnering with IBTM on a Latin Americas survey will help us understand regional differences in terms of delivery of meeting today and what planners feel will change in the coming years. Understanding these differences will better equip both planners and those who serve this market with venues and other products".

Understanding current meeting planner objectives and goals – especially how they differ by world region, and how these are projected to change meeting element demands will allow venues to thrive in this increasingly competitive environment. Data for this report was obtained through a detailed survey with similar questions from the 2018 global report. A total of 130 meeting planners from Latin America provided their detailed insights, allowing IACC to identify and deliver key trends on what will be required in meeting rooms of the future and to help venues within this region respond to these trends.

THE EVOLUTION OF MEETING OBJECTIVES

> Five years ago, the objectives were very simple, today I work to ensure that each event has something new to offer. Achieving customer expectations have been a challenge..."

> "Meetings today need to be dynamic. Attendees no longer come simply to listen. They want interactive activities, networking opportunities, and venues that are technologically advanced."
> -Survey Respondent

Like meeting planners across the globe, Latin American planners are increasingly impacted by changes and advancements in technology, changes in delegate behaviours and preferences, and shifting demographics. Meanwhile, planners across the globe are constrained by increasingly tighter budgets, requiring them to "do more with less" to meet the goals and objectives of the meeting experience.

This iteration of the *IACC Meeting Room of the Future™* report series, focusing on the Latin American market, found that meeting planners in this market believe that the objectives of meetings now are significantly different than the objectives of meetings five years ago. Similar to the global research conducted in 2017, Latin American meeting planners report that the objectives and goals are largely pointing towards delegate engagement and more technology-intensive interactive sessions with the ultimate end goal of creating highly *memorable experiences.*

There is a distinct difference however, in the degree to which meetings objectives have changed over time among this year's respondents versus respondents to the global study conducted in 2017. In the global study, planners reported that the financial return on investment (ROI) was a significantly more important objective currently versus its importance in the past. Meanwhile, this year's research shows that the importance of the financial ROI has not changed significantly over the past five years. This may illustrate the belief that the importance of the financial ROI in this market has always been of high importance so while this has remained constant, there is now a greater emphasis on other elements that are more critical to memorable experience creation.

According to the survey, planners in Latin America are more driven by ensuring attendee satisfaction levels compared to five years ago and this is second only to the objective of personal development – not mutually exclusive objectives by any means.

Planners also feel that the value of developing personal connections, through networking with colleagues and creating business connections, is also a stronger objective of meetings and events compared to five years ago. The presentation of relevant and strong educational content is also perceived to be a significantly different objective compared to several years ago.

Figure 1: The Difference in Meeting Objectives Now Versus the Past Five Years
(1=not at all different, 10=significantly different)

	Average Rating
Personal Development	**8.0**
Attendee Satisfaction Levels	**7.5**
Networking with colleagues	**7.5**
Business Connections	**7.5**
Education	**7.0**
Financial ROI	**7.0**
Networking with delegates from other events in the same venue	**6.5**

While relationship building is clearly believed to be a more important objective now, planners felt that the importance of networking with delegates from other events while at the same venue was not drastically different compared to its importance five years ago indicating that delegates are primarily focused on networking and establishing connections with other attendees specific to their events.

While most planners would agree that the objectives of meetings have changed over time, the degree to which certain elements are more or less important are subject to debate. That being said, those objectives that directly impact the end goal of memorable experience creation are viewed as increasingly more important than those objectives not directly tied to this outcome.

MEETINGS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

CREATING MEETING EXPERIENCES

For the past several years, "experience creation" has been the end goal of meeting planners and this seems to be particularly true among Latin American meeting planners. Nearly 92 percent of respondents reports that their current role involves more "experience creation" for delegates versus five years ago. This compares to only 80 percent of respondents to the global survey in 2017. However, experience creation can be a challenge. As one planner reports, "People are more experienced…they've seen so many new things that it's harder to generate a brand new and unique experience".

Figure 3. My current role in planning meetings involves MORE "experience creation" for delegates compared to my role planning meetings five years ago.

True	92%
False	8%

It's also clear that experience creation is closely tied venue elements and most importantly, to the use of technology. Planners are increasingly called on to integrate multiple venue elements – technology, flexible space, net-working spaces and food and beverage offerings – to develop a more holistic approachto creating these highly sought after memorable experiences.

Meeting planners do not anticipate this role to decrease anytime soon. When asked to think five years ahead, respondents agree that experience creation will be increasingly important when planning meetings. Planners pointed to numerous drivers of this trend including the desire for new ways to learn things, decreasing attention spans, and as a way to generate a memorable event especially to impact future sales.

> "
> Meetings must be memorable, they need to generate the "wow effect" so that people talk about the event…a lot of technology is required that will provide the attendees with information, location, etc."

> "Access has led youth to rely less on info they receive from teachers and parents. Consequently, they are less interested in lectures, and more interested in having their specific questions addressed. Indeed, helping delegates learn how to find answers will be much more valuable than what the answers are. Connecting them to the right subject matter experts, the right partners and the right peers will be far more valuable than delivering content that may or may not be valuable to them. Content delivery can be easily accomplished via online vehicles; meetings will be a means of connecting people."

-MPI, Future of Meetings Research

The clear majority of meeting planners agree that incoming generations are influencing meeting formats. Meeting planners report this new cohort of delegates are looking for;

1. Increased integration of new technology (especially mobile connectivity)
2. More opportunities for interaction, collaboration, and stimulation
3. Shorter, quicker sessions replacing long-form presentations
4. More emphasis on creativity

Meeting planners and venues, more than ever, must work together to provide these experiences. As was seen globally, meeting planners report more openness to sharing the roles and responsibilities of the meeting planning process than in years past. Respondents reported their willingness to outsource the sourcing of local services (i.e. entertainment, printing, etc.) as well as production. Globally, 43 percent of planners report their willingness to outsource production which is considerably lower than the figure seen among Latin American planners (57%).

Mark Cooper, IACC CEO highlights the opportunity for venues and supplies to meetings to embrace planners in this region, who have a desire to outsource non-critical elements, such as registration, printing and entertainment. Venues are becoming more like travel agents, matching local experiences and attractions with the needs of their conferences.

Figure 4. Venue Elements Planners Consider Outsourcing

Sourcing of local services	59.2%
Production	57.4%
Off-site activity arrangements	49.0%
Housing management	48.1%
On-site registration	44.4%
Participant registration	34.2%
Post-event feedback	31.4%
Education components	25.0%
None	3.7%

In addition to the continued importance of experience creation, meeting planners agree on the growing emphasis on delegate productivity and networking. The level of productivity and networking are just two measurements of return on investment as well as justification for investing on experiential events. Leading planner association MPI has developed a formula for measuring the ROI of learning and networking; once considered unquantifiable, many organisations are finding unique ways to identify quantitative means for calculating business value.

Figure 5. Thinking five years ahead, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements on the future of meetings (1=strongly disagree to 10=strongly agree)?

Statements	2018 LATAM	2017 Global
Experience creation" will be increasingly important when planning meetings	9.0	8.5
I believe there will be a greater emphasis on encouraging delegate productivity	9.0	8.5
I believe incoming generations are influencing meeting formats	9.0	8.1
There needs to be a greater emphasis on networking	8.5	8.0
Art/design elements in meeting spaces are important to motivate delegates	8.0	8.0
The format of breaks and meals should change	7.5	7.0
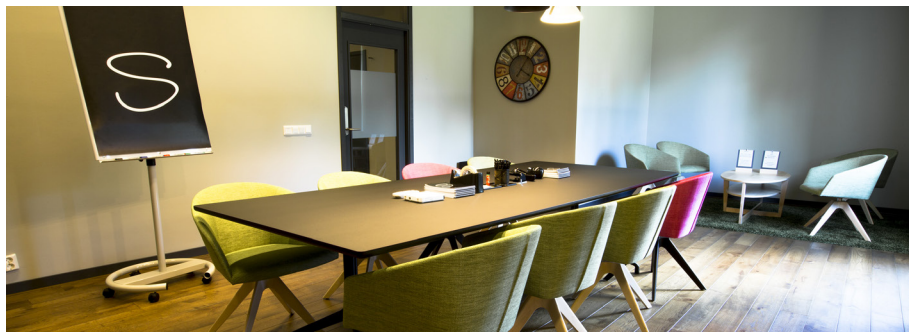
MEETING VENUE ELEMENTS

Critical to experience creation are the specific meeting venue elements. As was seen in the global study, Latin American meeting planners are very aware that meeting environments influence the way delegates learn and communicate and that a good meeting environment will foster productivity, learning and collaboration. Respondents to this year's study were asked to rank select venue elements on a scale from 1(most important) to 7 (least important). The findings on those elements of most importance are as follows:

1. Access to interactive technology (i.e. audience participation, collaborative communication platforms like Skype and screen-sharing devices, etc.)

2. Flexibility of meeting space (ability to move furniture etc.)

3. The food and beverage offer (service styles, presentation and quality)

4. Networking spaces adjacent to the meeting/event space

5. Access to authentic local area experiences

6. Availability of team building activities

7. Other

In line with the 2017 global study, access to interactive technology and the flexibility of meeting space are among the most important venue elements indicating that these are global issues and not specific to one geography. Also similar is the lower importance placed on access to local area experiences. While access to these experiences could significantly aid the creation of memorable experiences, planners are consistent in the opinion that technological advances are a more critical meeting venue element and when considering the return on investment, are more likely to choose technology upgrades.

As a result, it is no surprise that meeting planners report that the elements that are important today will also be of most importance in five years.

Figure 6. Meeting Elements That Will Be More Important in the Future

Access to interactive technology	**85.0%**
Flexibility of meeting space	**35.0%**
Networking spaces adjacent to the meeting/event space	**35.0%**
Delegates discovering the locality and regional culture	**33.0%**
The food and beverage offer	**32.0%**
Access to authentic local area experiences	**28.5%**
Availability of team building activities	**20.0%**
Other	**4.5%**

Given that flexibility of meeting space is critical, careful consideration at the sourcing stage of venues, should be given to their ability to offer environments that can easily facilitate changes in layout at multiple times throughout the day.

Respondents believe that people are looking for different ways to learn. Traditional forms of learning are now perceived as boring and incapable of fostering interaction. Attendees no longer want to come, sit, and listen to speakers. Technology is a great catalyst for the creation of new experiences, better learning, and stronger events.

BIG BRANDS INFLUENCE ON MEETINGS

For many, branded venues can provide a level of confidence and reassurance that a meeting and services will be of very high standards. Specifically, among the planners surveyed for this report, 54% feel that brands raise the level of meeting product and services.

Figure 7. Can brands alone give confidence and reassurance that the meeting product and services will be of a high standard?

Yes	54.5%
No	24.0%
Unsure	21.5%

Similar to the global research, respondents report that branded venues have the least influence on creativity of a meeting product. When asked how they believe major branded venues (Hilton, Marriot Hyatt, etc.) influence meeting elements, meeting planners indicate that in general branded venues had positively influenced venue elements such as food and beverage quality, meeting space design, staff, and technology. Flexibility of the space is the one element where there appears to be more negatively impacted by using branded venues although only 11% report this negative influence.

Question	Positively	Negatively	No Difference
Creativity	62.0%	6.0%	32.0%
Flexibility	65.0%	11.0%	23.5%
Staff	75.5%	1.0%	23.5%
Technology	76.5%	3.0%	20.5%
Meeting Space Design	80.5%	0.0%	19.5%
F&B Quality	83.5%	2.0%	14.5%

Meeting planners report creativity as an important consideration in meeting design, however, the majority, 60 percent, are still using major hotel brand venues over independent and small group venues.

While a brand may be a door-opener and often appear to be the safer option, meeting planners are carefully assessing the standards, capabilities and incentive programs of venues before placing a meeting there.

PHYSICAL MEETING SPACES AND DESIGN

WHAT PHYSICAL ELEMENTS MAKE A SUCCESSFUL MEETING?

On a global level, the physical meeting venue elements deemed critical to the success of meetings have largely remained constant over the past several years. These same elements are also important to planners in Latin America. Broadband, meeting room acoustics, and lighting are reported to be the most important physical elements of meeting venues. Jeff Loether of Electro Media Design notes that venues and meeting planners can use portable technologies to supplement or compensate for poor lighting, Wi-Fi, sound & video. But fixing poor acoustics is extremely difficult unless you put headphones on everybody. Background noise, reverberation & echoes, and poor isolation from adjacent spaces, for example, can have negative effects on meeting room acoustics. Good acoustics must be baked into the room and systems design from the beginning or during renovations.

Figure 9. Agreement on the Importance of Meeting Venue Elements
(1=strongly disagree, 10= strongly agree)

Availability of high quality broadband is critical in meeting venues	9.5
Meeting room acoustics impact the overall quality of the meeting/conference	9.0
Meeting room lighting impacts the overall quality of the meeting/conference	9.0
I am looking for different meeting space elements today than I was five years ago	8.5
It is important to have the flexibility to change layouts in meeting rooms during the day	8.5
It is important to include the use of outdoor areas in my meetings	8.5
It is important to have plenty of networking spaces outside of the meeting room for informal gatherings	8.0

As meeting planners work hard to create engaging experiences, these same elements are projected to remain important, with access to collaborative meeting space & technology and higher quality broadband becoming increasingly more important in the years to come than in the past.

Figure 10. Importance of Elements in the Future

Statements	2018 LATAM	2017 Global
Access to collaborative meeting space & tech will become more important in the next five years	9.5	8.5
Access to higher quality broadband will become more critical in the next five years	9.0	8.5
Access to outdoor meeting spaces will become more important in the next five years	8.0	7.0

Mark Cooper, IACC's CEO comments "Access to outdoor spaces to run elements of the meeting, either breakouts, networking, team activities or dining are more important in Latin American events. Venues which make their outdoor spaces fit for purpose and enticing, will be helping create memorable experiences".

INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE

Reliable and high-quality internet infrastructure is critical to planners today and will be more important in the coming years. Meeting planners and venues increasingly need to consider the contention rate for Wi-Fi. It is not just the speed of the internet in a venue, but the load that it can handle at any one time, when multiple meetings and delegates are using it simultaneously. Venues are increasingly looking to dedicated Wi-Fi capacity for each event, to ensure each event gets the quality and capacity they need.

Many meeting planners report Wi-Fi should be included in venue rates, and request this service be provided at a low rate, or even free. While it is important for venues to supply high quality Wi-Fi at an affordable rate, venues can ease tension by raising awareness of the expense of the service at various levels, including this information at the beginning of the venue inspection process.

Helpful Tip for Meeting Planners: When inspecting a potential site for a meeting, download an Internet Speed Test App on your mobile device to test various areas throughout the venue.

"

While it's fantastic to see that over half of the respondents have implemented interaction technology in the last five years, it's clear that more can be done to help them get the most from using it at their meetings. As planners become more familiar with their technology, meeting design leveraging the full potential of those tools will play a huge part in them achieving their strategic aims."

– Peter Komornik, CEO, Slido

THE MEETING ROOM DNA

When presented with several options of room types and asked to rank their likelihood of using the room type (on a scale of 1=not likely to 10=highly likely), as was the case in the global research, meeting planners in Latin America were most likely to use flat-floored meeting rooms offering flexible layouts, or rooms offering a homelike lounge style informal seating. Auditoriums and rooms with no natural daylight are not favoured by planners.

Figure 11. Preferred Meeting Room Types

Statements	2018 LATAM	2017 Global
Flat-floored meeting rooms (flexible layouts)	8.0	9.0
Rooms offering home-like lounge style informal seating	7.5	8.0
Rooms full of colour and design features to inspire (maybe at the expense of some comfort for acoustical qualities)	7.5	7.0
Auditoriums (fixed desks and seating)	5.5	7.5
Rooms with no natural daylight	5.5	5.5

While planners prefer rooms with natural daylight, if it comes to choosing between a clearer view of the screen and a room with natural daylight, a majority of respondents report that a clearer view of the screen is the priority. It's important to note that good design provides both, especially with direct-view flat-panel displays instead of projection technology.

Figure 12. Choosing Natural Daylight or Clearer View of Screen

Natural Daylight	24%
Clearer View of the Screen	76%

ALTERNATIVE SPACES

In addition, meeting planners reported flexibility in rooms (such as ability to move furniture), and the presence of alternative spaces for networking as the leading differences in the meeting spaces they're looking for today versus the spaces they required five years ago.

The flexibility of a room is determined by how easy or difficult it would be to assemble and disassemble furniture without venue staff, which ultimately saves time at the event.

These alternative spaces are essential as networking is promoted throughout the event, especially with the presence of new technology.

Alastair Stewart, MD of ETC. Venues feels that the incoming generation of delegates want a different meeting experience from their parents at conferences and events and the emergence of city located non-residential day meeting venues is tapping into this desire, where urbanisation is playing a part in buyer location preferences.

"

"In the future I expect to use different hotels and venues all together because the current ones have no flexibility. Venues will need to offer both flexibility ,and a special experience. For example, museums, cinemas, exposition halls will be used more because they are much more flexible."

– An individual at Eventos e Incentivos, Mexico

COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION

INTERACTION, ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION

Meeting planners are increasingly seeing the link between technology and experience creation. As all generations demand the latest in technology advancements to keep engaged and interacting with meeting content, technology is becoming of critical importance in venue selection.

Meeting planners, regardless of where they are geographically located, are looking to incorporate technology that boosts delegate interaction and engagement, and with the success of these new technologies in improving communication, integration of new technology is not slowing down anytime soon. Importantly, investment in technology significantly contributes to the highly sought after "wow factor".

Creston Woods, General Manager at Deloitte University feels a focus on learning and networking can be stimulated during the planning process. Deloitte's delegates use *Proxfinity* technology to attach detailed profiles to their name badges, helping delegates discover each other based on shared interests.

This year's research however shows that according to respondents, not all technologies are created equal or helps achieve the desired goals of enhanced communication and collaboration. Figure 13 shows those technologies that have been implemented by respondents and how they have impacted communication with delegates. Audience polling and Q&A, although popular, was not as effective at improving communication among this audience versus global respondents (91% vs 44% in Latin America). Meanwhile, 11% of those respondents who have used a conference app report that it hindered communication rather than improving it.

Figure 13. Implemented Technologies and Their Effect on Communication

|	Implemented in past 5 years	Improved communication	Hindered communication
Telepresence/Virtual Participation/Remote Presenters	48.5%	46.5%	5.0%
Conference App	48.0%	41.0%	11.5 %
Live Event Streaming	54.5%	38.0%	8.0%
Audience Participation/Audience Response/Social Q&A	53.0%	44.0%	3.0%
Delegate Screensharing	44.5%	44.5%	11.0%
Beacon/GPS Delegate Tracking	26.5%	49.0%	24.5%
Social Media Campaigns	57.0%	39.0%	4.0%
Other	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%
None of the above	40.0%	--	--

CONFERENCE APPS

The adoption of conference apps has not increased as quickly as expected – and in some instances declined, despite planners appreciating the value of these apps. In 2014, MPI found that 63 percent of meeting professionals had implemented a conference app. A surprisingly lower percentage of meeting planners from the global survey indicated implementing conference apps versus findings from MPI's research on app adoption and similar findings were seen in this year's survey with only 48 percent of Latin American planners using conference apps. It's popularity among meeting planners may be waning due to the high broadband apps demand.

Technology that encourages communication between hosts and delegates continues to be amongst the leading technologies implemented in meetings today. By providing delegates the opportunity to communicate directly with meeting hosts, planners can better understand delegate preferences. Planners can use this knowledge to act on trends that will be most impactful for their attendees' personal experience.

BROADBAND DEPENDENCY NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Not surprisingly, meeting planners agree that their dependency on internet/ Wi-Fi at meeting venues has increased and will continue to increase in the next five years. Most meeting planners, 59 percent, indicated that they would not even consider shortlisting a venue that did not have the guaranteed internet capacity to support the needs of their event. However, respondents are not expecting this service free of charge. 58 percent of Latin American meeting planners indicated that affordable (or free) high, speed wireless internet will be the most critical technology needed for meetings in the next five years versus 72 percent in the global study.
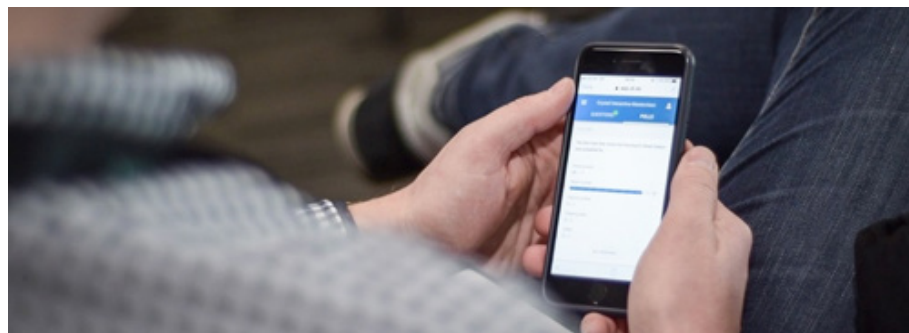
Data security is an important focus for planners both in Latin America and globally and is expected to become increasingly important in the next several years.

> " More conference apps are being developed and when you have hundreds to thousands of participants downloading / streaming / uploading to a conference or gamification app, it can create a negative vibe for the experience. I recently attended a meeting where all the participants spent 1.5 hours in gamification mode uploading photos and videos. The hotel's Wi-Fi could not handle the volume and most of the uploads were delayed. This was a small group of about 130 people divided into 16-18 teams. "

Diane Deyerler, CMP, Principal, Deyerler & Watanabe LLC

Figure 14. Future Technology Needs and Priorities

My dependency on internet/WiFi at a venue will continue to increase in the next five years

9.5

My dependency on internet/WiFi at a venue has increased in the last five years

9.5

Security of my data will become more important in the next five years at meeting venues

9.0

Virtual/Augmented Reality will play a more significant role at my events in the next five years
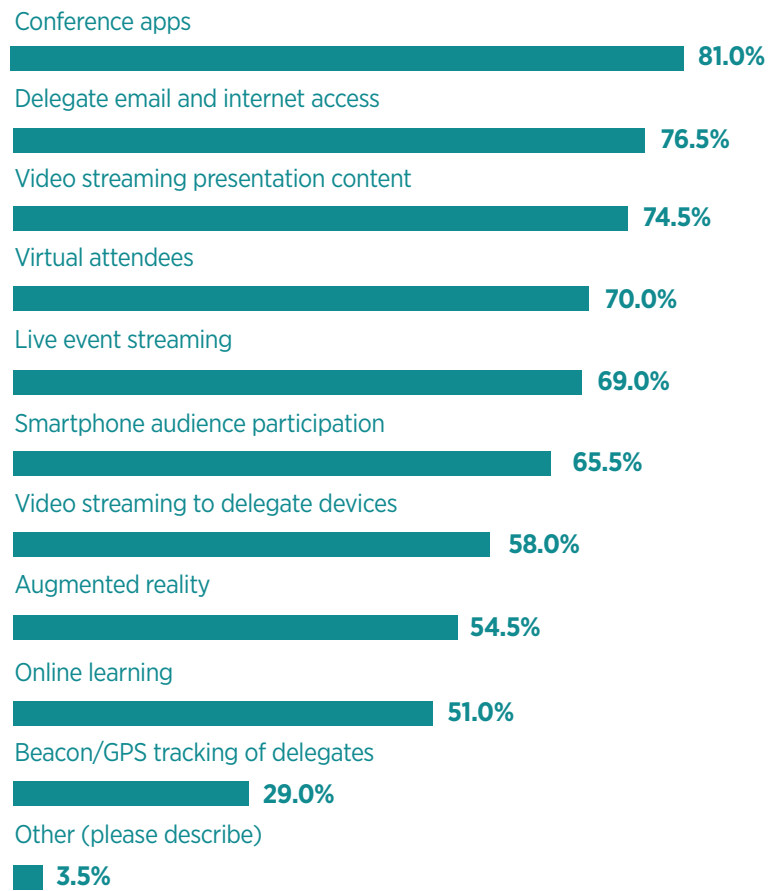
9.0

When using internet/WiFi at a meeting venue, the security of my data is a key concern

8.5

While planners appear to have mixed experiences with conference apps, this could be a result of not having enough bandwidth at venues. Yet, respondents feel that having this bandwidth to specifically handle conference apps will become increasingly more important over the next several years. And despite the goal of reducing external distractions during meetings, it's understood that delegates can't completely disconnect, and sufficient bandwidth will be required to meet these needs.

Figure 15. Tasks Requiring More Broadband the Next Five Years

Conference apps
81.0%

Delegate email and internet access
76.5%

Video streaming presentation content
74.5%

Virtual attendees
70.0%

Live event streaming
69.0%

Smartphone audience participation
65.5%

Video streaming to delegate devices
58.0%

Augmented reality
54.5%

Online learning
51.0%

Beacon/GPS tracking of delegates
29.0%

Other (please describe)
3.5%

> "In the future we will need spaces where you can have an experience in real time, suing technology like videos, animations, and virtual reality."

– An individual at The Hurricane Group

VIRTUAL & AUGMENTED REALITY

MPI's Spring 2016 Meetings Outlook report found that 20% of meeting professionals said they will use or will likely use Virtual Reality or Augmented Reality technologies within the next year indicating high adoption rates and openness to this technology.

Planners believe that VR and AR will largely be used for interactive learning, i.e. connecting people rather than showcasing. Many respondents are aware of the potential that AR or VR could provide, but the big question remains: How do we develop this technology meaningfully and cost-efficiently?

Danny Han, Lecturer & Researcher at NHTV University of Applied Sciences Breda comments *"On the actual question of VR in the survey, it could be interpreted that many respondents were not entirely sure what to expect from VR and whether it would be ready to actually be used meaningfully for their events. It was interesting to see though that participants that had an idea of VR largely referred to the **interactive** element that VR could provide, **connecting people rather than showcase.** While many respondents seem to be aware of the potential that AR or VR technology could provide, the big question is **how to develop it meaningfully and cost-efficiently?"**

Alastair Stewart of ETC Venues, predicts that as one of the highest costs for a conference, is hiring the keynote speaker, hologram technology as it evolves could soon become a more cost-effective solution. The costs of hologram technology may need to drop further before the tipping point occurs. The unattainable speaker could be attainable in future.

As planners continue to implement the new technology at meetings now and in the future, two key questions will be essential in guiding which technology to invest in, and which planners should scrap:

1. What problems are we looking to solve?
2. How will this help achieve our meeting objectives?

FOOD AND BEVERAGE OFFERINGS

This year's research found that food and beverage offerings (service styles, presentation and quality) is the third most important venue element to planners and strongly impacts experience creation.

When asked how much they agree or disagree (on a scale of 1=strongly disagree to 10=strongly agree) to a series of statements about food and beverage offerings, meeting planners provided a rating of "8.5" for the statement "food and beverage is a key part of the meeting design and experience."

Figure 16. The Role of Food and Beverage in Meetings and Conferences

Statements	2018 LATAM	2017 Global
There is a benefit in venues offering meeting and conference delegates continuous refreshment break service throughout the day versus set times for delivery.	8.5	8.5
Food & Beverage is a key part of the meeting design and experience.	8.5	8.5
Health and well-being is a primary initiative of my company.	8.5	7
In the past two years there has been an increase in the number of requests to accommodate allergies, personal eating plans or preferences.	8.5	8.5
Art/design elements in meeting spaces are important to motivate delegates	8.0	8.0
There is a link between food types served at different day parts and delegate energy levels.	8.0	8.0
Food offerings and corresponding presentation should be offered based on the time of the year (seasonality) and the venue's geographic location	8.0	8.0
Nutritional information should be visible or available.	8.0	8.0
My company(s) offers evening activities, beyond simply bar service after dinner.	7.0	8.0
The topic, tone or message influences menu planning. Example: bad news = comfort food	7.0	7.0
Food is necessary and considered "fuel" only.	5.5	6.0

The inclusion of food and beverage in the *experience* is not just about boosting the wow factor with creative food stations. Meeting planners report that food and beverage offerings directly link to attendee satisfaction and the personal experience specifically when it comes to allergies and preferences.

As seen in Figure 16, meeting planners report that, "In the past two years there has been an increase in the number of requests to accommodate allergies, personal eating plans or preferences."

Respondents also felt strongly, above all other trends, that there is benefit to having continuous refreshments versus set times.

Scott Dart, Principal, Scott Dart & Associates cites *"I can tell the traditional plated meal is going away. Probably continuous breaks (offered by many conference centers) will become more popular, offering individual attendees the ability to "break" whenever they need/desire, rather than schedule time points for everyone to do it simultaneously."*

When asked, what frustrates them the most in terms of food and beverage offerings, meeting planners cited mainly that the quality of food has been an issue. In addition, they have been disappointed by the service and presentation. Many attendees have experienced issues as venues are unwilling to accommodate dietary restrictions. Lastly, the dining experiences have simply been uninspiring as they lack healthy and trendy options.

Figure 17. Top Frustrations with Food & Beverage Offerings

1. **Poor quality of the food.**

2. **Poor service and presentation of the food.**

3. **Limited menus that do not accommodate dietary restrictions.**

4. **Lack of healthy options.**

5. **Lack of current or local culinary trends.**

Warwick Conferences Head of Food, Mark Ralph confirms that although menus at their three conference centers changing daily, they offer an allergy sheet for each service denoting the allergens in each dish. All their chefs are trained to the UK's Royal Society of Public Health level in allergen awareness.

Andrew Taylor, Operations Manager of the same venue group further suggests *"Diets based on allergens, intolerances and lifestyle are becoming ever more prominent, there is an expectation that there is a good choice for those with dietary needs. Soya Milk, Gluten free options are expected as standard, options that show a lack of imagination are viewed negatively."*

CONCLUSIONS

The Latin America study has uncovered some important differences when compared with the same study conducted in 2017 with global meeting planners. When considering geographical and cultural differences, especially in the meetings industry, it is important to consider that what meeting planners want can be aligned to their audience's preferences and these can be delegates attending from other parts of the world. For instance, the needs of conference attended by delegates from around the world in Mexico City, may well be different to the needs of a organisation running a similar meeting where delegates are all from Mexico alone attend.

There are a striking number of elements of meetings now and in the future which align with a global viewpoint, which demonstrates for instance, how technologies are advancing in Latin America, as they are in other continent's. Where there are differences though, for instance, in relation to the use and effectiveness of audience polling, the gaps are large in terms of adoption.

For planners, venues and other services providers, understanding the trends both regionally and globally will over time help take calculated risks and investments which will ensure we meet the needs of our events in years to come.

ABOUT

ABOUT IACC

The IACC Vision: IACC is a community of passionate people and organisations delivering innovative and exceptional meeting experiences.

DOWNLOADS

IACC's other research and planner guides and tools at IACCmeetings.com:

IACC Meeting Room of the Future (Global reports)

Guide to Internet for Planners

Guide to Delegate Nutrition and Dietary Management

Finding an IACC certified venue

Founded in 1981, IACC is a not-for-profit association dedicated to promoting understanding and awareness of the meetings venue industry and to giving member properties the tools necessary to provide an exceptional IACC meeting experience. Active members meet a set of stringent Quality Standards and agree to a Code of Ethics. Currently, the association includes approximately 300 members from the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Mongolia, Kenya, Nigeria, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, England, Scotland, Ukraine, The Netherlands, Germany, Russia, Hungary, Thailand and the Philippines. For more information, visit the website at **www.iacconline.org. "There are meetings and then there are IACC meetings."**

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