

## Feeling Secure

As a MICE destination, one of the advantages that Slovenia has is safety – an increasingly important factor. Guests also appreciate people's openness, kindness and knowledge of foreign languages and, because of the short distances involved, those with a little bit of time on their hands quickly fall in love with Slovenia; be it because of its cuisine, natural beauty, etc. Almost all the MICE centres, especially hotels, have completely renovated their facilities. New convention-oriented hotels are also being built; and not just in Ljubljana – new developments are underway right across Slovenia.

## Expanding Market

The ICCA has just released their latest market report "The International Association Meetings Market 1996-2005". Over the ten-year period from 1996 to 2005, the ICCA reported a 60% increase in the total number of international association meetings that take place regularly and which rotate between at least three countries. The figures presented in the report support anecdotal evidence of the growing relative importance of regional meetings, and highlight the massive growth of the meetings industry in the key Asian economies.

The new report presents a comprehensive analysis of past, present and future trends in international meetings. It gives a breakdown of global and regional association congresses. You can find figures such as the top convention countries and cities, numbers of participants and analyses of the economic value of these meetings, which give a great insight into the global as well as regional markets. The report is available online at the ICCA website: [www.iccaworld.com](http://www.iccaworld.com).

## Top 10 Lecturers

At the recently held Management in Education conference hosted by Planet GV, Mr **Aleš Lisac** was declared the winner of 2006 Lecturer of the Year award. This was the first time that the awards had been presented and they seek to recognise excellence in this demanding yet widely unheralded sphere. The organizers of the mid November event, sifted through 1,181 recommendations received from audiences across the country before selecting the eventual winner. Among the many nominees, the following were singled out for special praise (in alphabetical order): Mrs **Irena Deželak**, Mrs **Tatjana Dragovič**, Mr **Tomaz Korelc**, Mr **Robert Kržišnik**, Mr **Smiljan Mori**, Mr **Beno Štern** and Mr **Branko Žunec**.

## National Identity

# Do We Feel Love For Our New Logo?

*Slovenia has been continually confused with other countries due to its name, flag and unfortunate choice of national logos. In October, yet another Slovenian logo was unveiled, but it seems the only people pleased with it are the committee members responsible for selecting it.*

By HELENA MARKO

The similarity of Slovenia's name and flag to those of other countries contribute to confusion regarding the identity of this small nation. Most foreigners know where Italy and Austria are located, but if you ask which country borders both of them, their mind goes blank. The irony is that we have plenty to offer and foreigners who come here never forget it. The unfortunate choices of national logos have done little to make a lasting impression abroad. After the memorable "Slovenia, my country" linden leaf logo – generally regarded as the best so far – came the three flowers, which failed to convey a meaningful or memorable message. However, if you aren't memorable in the tourist market, you may as well be non-existent. Therefore, Slovenia's officials went out to public tender for a new logo, which was to correct all their past blunders and etch the name of Slovenia firmly into the memory of people around the world.

### A Clear, Short, Multi-Purpose Logo

The directive was to create "...a logo with a short, clear message

that could be used in advertising in various spheres of public life, i.e. tourism, culture, economy, etc. It is to efficiently – and within the correct context – place Slovenia on the European and world map, and to arouse interest in a foreigner the first time round. Slovenia has to be presented as a young, ambitious and orderly country with many natural treasures, a rich cultural heritage and a colourful past. As a brand, it has to originate in the unique positive Slovenian characteristics, with which Slovenians can identify, and by which the foreigners can recognize us".

In total, 115 logos and 217 slogans that matched the criteria were received, and the winners were announced on 23rd October. The selection committee consisted of ten people: six government officials (three ministers, two state secretaries and one director), a wine maker, a boatbuilder, an ethnologist – yet only one designer! A renowned columnist, Marko Crnkovič, noted in his Dnevnik column that "...it is strange that the selection committee consisted of three ministers and two state secretaries, who subsequently added four experts from the realms of art, design and ethnography; they

were only chosen to add credibility to their decision...". He also pointed out that the obsession of the current Slovenian government to control things that they are not directly responsible for was becoming increasingly worrying, leading him to conclude that the "politkomisariat" was still alive and kicking in present day Slovenia.

The winning slogan was written by the Nuit company and the logo was designed by Studio Luks. The official press release reads: "The logo used the symbols of Triglav – a national symbol of courage and creativity, the linden leaf – a national symbol representing our natural treasures – and a heart – symbolizing Slovenian heartiness. It presents them with outstanding clarity of design, recognizability and great expressive power. It was designed with geographical, historical and abstract symbols, which summarise the character of today's Slovenia. It has all the attributes to be used as an outstanding brand name, while simultaneously promoting the biggest and most fundamental virtue of the Slovenian nation – its heartiness in business, social and spiritual endeavours. The slogan 'Slovenija čutim' is an encouraging address to Slovenian citizens to really feel the success of their strive for a better future; it attempts to arouse their feelings of national identity and self-confidence. The English slogan 'I feel Slovenia' – inspired by the famous Donna Summer song [I Feel Love] – is a play on the word 'love' within the country's name. Thus, the slogan emphasizes the cordiality of the Slovene nation and the positive impression with which visitors to Slovenia leave the country".

### Are We in Need of Help?

Though state officials seem more than pleased – after all, Prime Minister Janez Janša was spotted in public wearing a cap bearing the 'I Feel Slovenia' logo more than a month before the competition was officially over – many Slovene design experts are far from happy. And what of the general public? Browsing through the most popular Slovenian Internet forums and chat rooms you quickly get a sense of the outrage. The visual associations they had after seeing the logo include: a fire brigade, a humanitarian fund, an appeal for blood donations, a sports club, etc. The organisations

mentioned use similar colours and shapes the world over, therefore a foreigner is just as likely to come up with them as any Slovenian. Perhaps choosing different colours would make a difference? Since we brag about the greenery of our country in every tourist brochure, why is there no greenery in the country's latest logo?

### Something's Rotten in the State of...

Soon after the winners were announced, Nuit stated in a public release that the government's Public Relations and Media Office ordered caps with their winning logo a year earlier, but hadn't paid copyright royalties so that the slogan could be put forward to 'compete' in the public tender process. Does that mean that by winning the public tender the government had to pay less money for the winning slogan? Does it also imply the winner of a public tender was known a year before the tender actually went public? The Brumen Foundation, an independent association of Slovene designers, who strive to improve the quality of visual messages in Slovenia, urged the public and the state to reconsider their choice of logo. Their public appeal stated the tender was "content-wise, formally and professionally insulting... it allowed the logo and the slogan to come from authors who were not working together, which is, according to the professional principles of marketing, unacceptable".

One of the signatories of the appeal, Ranko Novak, a legend of Slovene design and a professor at the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts, commented during an interview aired by the national broadcaster that the logo does not satisfy the criteria of a public tender, because its founding principles prohibit tendered works to be publicly seen or used before the conclusion of the tender process; the work has to be designed exclusively for it. "Using a heart in a logo is a bad cliché, which has been done many times before by commercial companies – including our own brewery Pivovarna Union – but to use a heart as a national symbol, now that really tops it. I cannot imagine a top Slovenian company placing this logo alongside 'Made in Slovenia' on their export products," Novak said, adding that if a university student came to him with such a design for his exam paper, he would be failed. ■



## Slovenian Convention Bureau

# A Lucrative Symbiosis

*The debate among hotel and travel agency representatives following the Slovenian Convention Bureau's autumn general meeting raised a few, very interesting issues; related to money, of course.*

By TANJA SLAPNIK & IGOR DRAKULIČ

Travel agencies are unhappy when hotels work directly with customers on MICE events; for their part, hotels are questioning of the provisions and services provided by the agencies.

### Scoring shots from the agencies...

There is a successful agency behind every successful hotel! Agencies could not survive by just organizing convention guests. We don't take guests to one hotel or another based on inducements. There are not that many hotels in Slovenia capable of organizing an incentive event for 500 guests – so they need an organizer. Agencies are the organizers of MICE events and the Slovenian Convention Bureau should find them for us. Final thought: Everything starts and ends with money. So, a big thank you to the Slovenian Convention Bureau for its successful endeavours. Let's promote Slovenian MICE tourism throughout the world together.

### and from the hotels...

Our thinking is not short-term and we would like to fully utilize all our capacity; our marketing is as directed

as any tourist agency's! Hotels cannot lower prices just to cater for the fees and inducements of travel agencies. The key factor is not the price – we are incenting those with whom we are strategically connected. Agencies with added-value have a lot of work. The Slovenian Convention Bureau should strike the deal and decide the location, the agencies should bring

the guests, and the hotels should be the last link in the chain. We have our own partners, and our customers have their own budgets – customers are using the market solution. Our hotel could be full 365 days of the year, but at what price?

Final thought: We would like to have successful agencies... hotels need you.

