

ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN EVENT ORGANISERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SLOVENIA AS A MICE DESTINATION n=342

A New Strategy for the Slovenian Meetings Industry

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General

Survey name: A NEW STRATEGY FOR THE SLOVENIAN MEETINGS INDUSTRY
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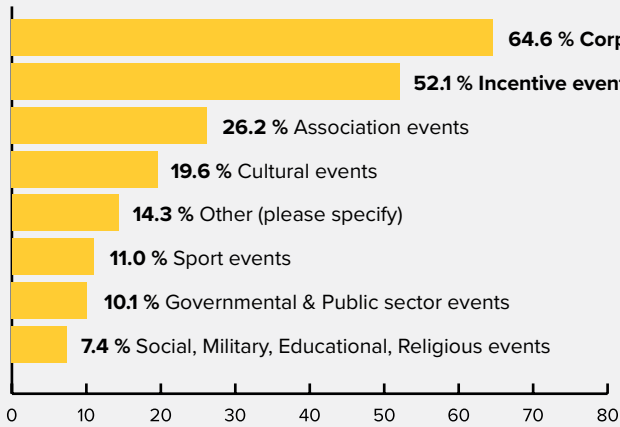
TOLERANCA

TOLERANCA MARKETING d.o.o.

Štihova ulica 4

1000 Ljubljana

1. What is your organisation's primary business?



Other:

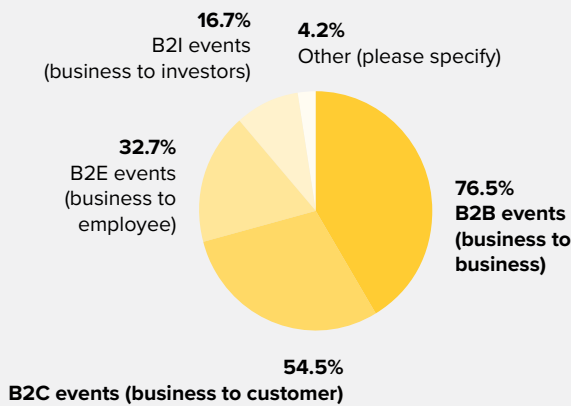
- Fairs and Trade Shows
- FIT Luxury
- Celebrations
- Media Production for Events
- Team meetings
- Luxury small events
- All of the above

“

“Are you still considered the gateway to the Balkans?”

A suggestion from a survey participant.

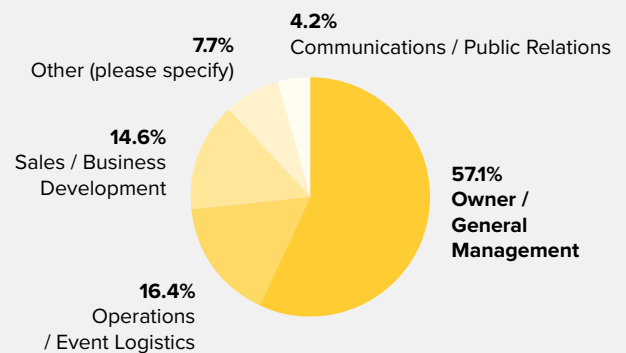
2. Which of the following event types are part of your business portfolio?



Other:

- Business to Association
- Business to Media and Media to Business
- R&D Events

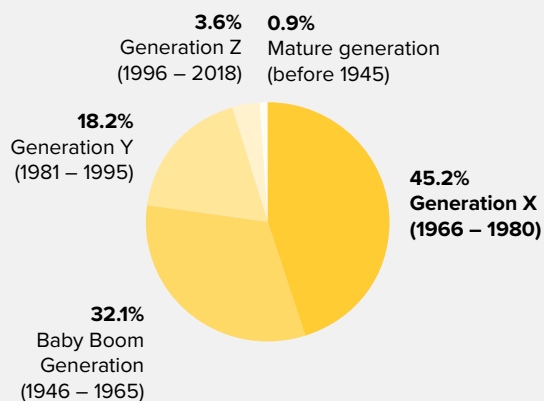
3. Which of the following best describes your primary job function at your company or organisation?



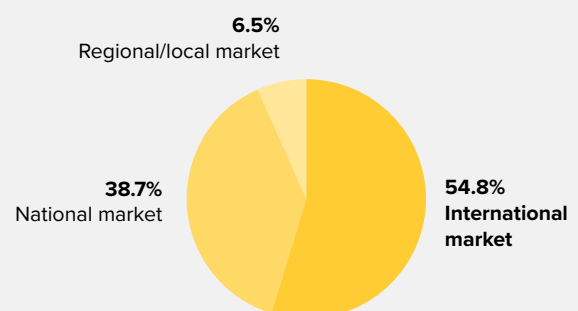
Other:

- Project Manager
- Freelance / Freelance Creative
- Event Planner
- Operational Manager
- Personal Assistant to CEO and Board

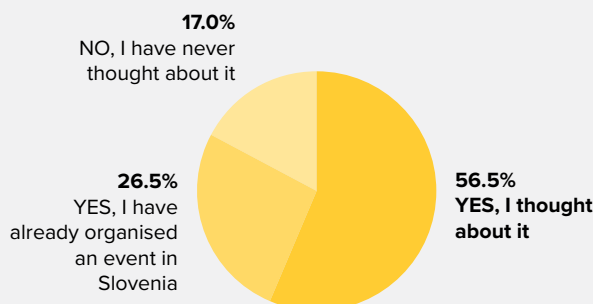
4. Which generation do you belong to according to your year of birth?



5. Which geographical markets do the majority of your clients come from?



6. Have you ever thought about organising a business event (e.g., meeting, incentive, conference/congress) in Slovenia?

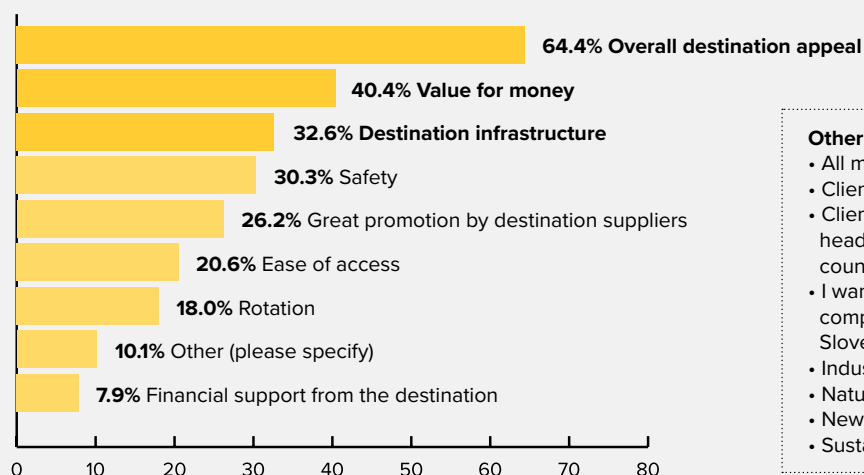


The 10 most prominent words describing the distinct features that make Slovenia unique are:

New Green Safety
Conventa Ljubljana
Sustainability Nature
Food People Culture

Word cloud created from responses to the question: What sets Slovenia apart from other destinations on the list? Write three distinct features that make it unique.

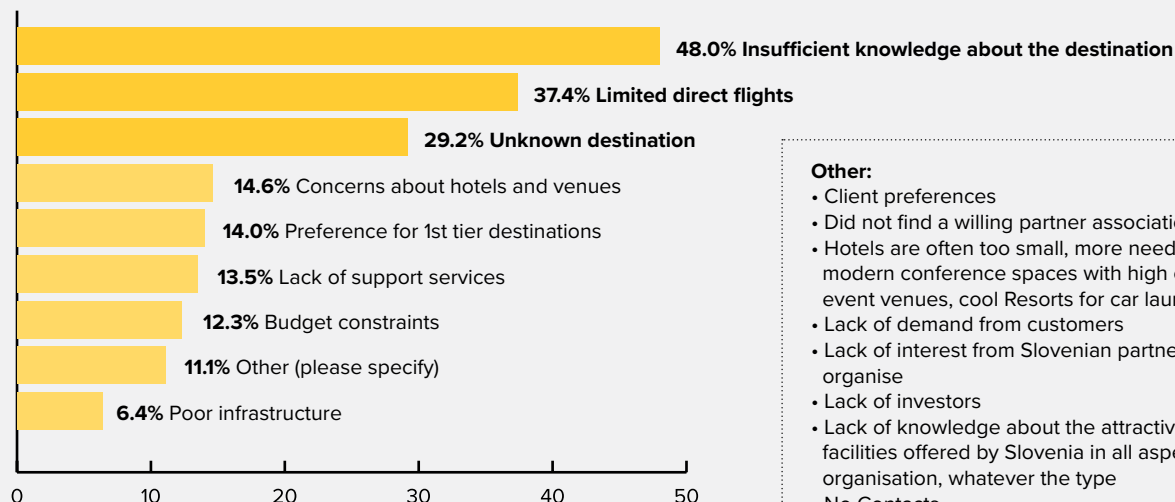
7. If YES, what were the reasons for organising the event in Slovenia?



Other:

- All mentioned above
- Client's interest
- Client's local representatives had encouraged the head office to consider this location, was a different country each year
- I want to change the mind set of Brazilian companies and offer different destinations, like Slovenia
- Industry specific (forestry)
- Nature & History
- New Destination
- Sustainability

8. If NO, what stopped you from organising an event there?

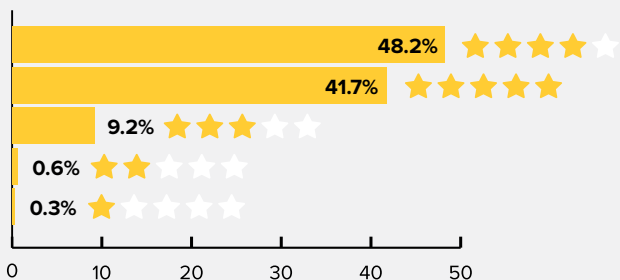


Other:

- Client preferences
- Did not find a willing partner association
- Hotels are often too small, more need of: large and modern conference spaces with high ceilings, cool event venues, cool Resorts for car launches
- Lack of demand from customers
- Lack of interest from Slovenian partner to co-organise
- Lack of investors
- Lack of knowledge about the attractiveness and facilities offered by Slovenia in all aspects of event organisation, whatever the type
- No Contacts
- Not enough demand from clients yet

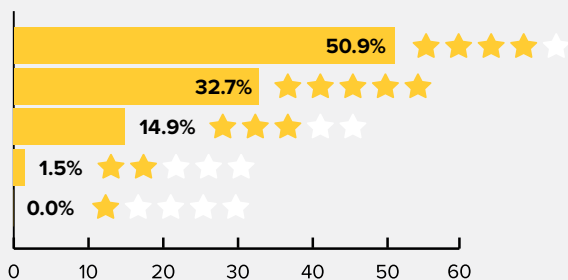
9. How exciting do you find the idea of organising an event in Slovenia?

Excitement of the idea of organising an event in Slovenia was on average rated with **4.3/5 stars**.

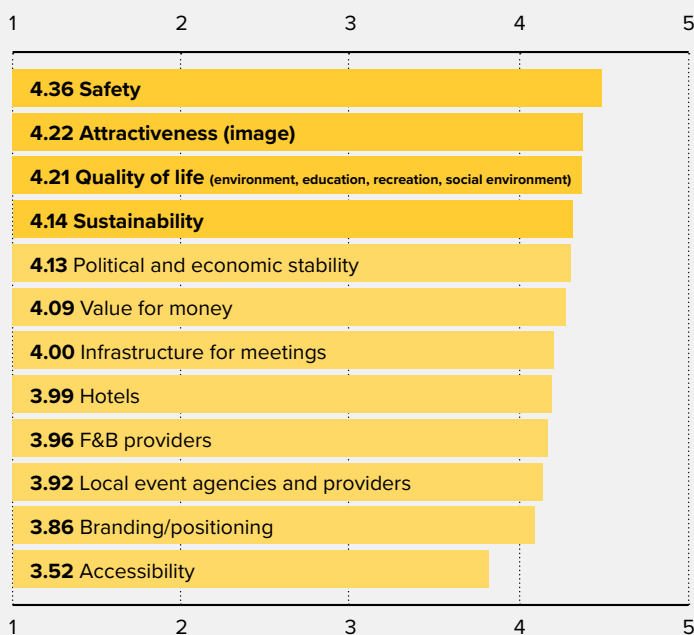


10. Rate Slovenia's appeal as a destination for business events.

Slovenia as a business events destination was rated an average of **4.1/5 stars**.



11. On a scale of 1 to 5, evaluate the following characteristics of the business event destination Slovenia, by your experience and/or perception?



Other (please specify):

Accessibility and Flight Connections

- Access from an international airport is an issue; must be within 1 hour's drive.
- Better flight connections to regional cities (outside of capitals).
- Limited direct flights prevent destination consideration, especially for long-haul markets (e.g., West Coast US).
- Airlift insufficiency and need for more 5-star properties were barriers for larger incentives (e.g., 2027 pitch).

Unique Activities and Cultural Experiences

- Activities must highlight Slovenia's unique qualities (what can we see, do, and bring back as a memorable experience).
- Adding cultural events would enhance the appeal.
- Slovenia offers a fascinating historical and cultural experience with beautiful landscapes.

Sustainability and Natural Appeal

- Slovenia is recognized as a sustainable, green destination.
- Promote natural beauty, peaceful environments, and short distances between attractions.
- Green promotion is valuable, but ensure it avoids "greenwashing."

Promotion and Marketing Improvements

- More international promotion and support from tourism boards.
- Increase engagement with agents and partners (familiarization trips would help).
- Improve marketing campaigns and visibility, as Slovenia risks losing its status post-COVID.

"Promoting hidden gems, designing thematic packages, enhancing digital tools, providing cultural immersion, and highlighting sustainability will showcase Slovenia's unique strengths. These initiatives will not only attract a diverse range of event organizers but also create a memorable experience for participants, positioning Slovenia as a standout destination in the competitive global market."

A suggestion from a survey participant.

Professionalism and Local Support

- High professionalism of stakeholders, which is not to be taken for granted in the regional market.
- Local support, including destination promotion and structured tourism assistance, is essential.
- Suppliers are seen as very professional and helpful.

Value for Money

- Slovenia offers good value for money compared to other European destinations.

Conventa

- Many respondents mention Conventa as a significant advantage and opportunity for Slovenia, which enjoys a very strong international reputation

New Destination Appeal

- Slovenia is seen as a lesser-known and undiscovered destination ripe for exploration.
- Potential to appeal as a pan-European corporate meetings destination.
- Ease of Entry (VISA and Bureaucracy)
- For international markets, VISA ease is crucial, and Slovenia struggles in this area.

Client-Specific Needs

- The destination needs to cater to high-end clients, including infrastructure like sufficient meeting rooms and luxury properties.

Information and Awareness

- Many respondents lack knowledge about Slovenia, which impacts their perception and decision-making.
- Greater interaction through trade shows like IMEX, IBTM and CONVENTA, or hosting familiarization trips, would increase confidence.

Conclusion: Slovenia has been on the map for several years as an event destination, but is losing this status recently. After COVID it lacks accessibility due to less direct flights, and the prices went up.

12. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you evaluate Slovenia's overall destination appeal for:



Other (please specify):

General Perception

Slovenia is recognized for its natural beauty, infrastructure, and uniqueness. However, most participants lack firsthand experience or knowledge of the destination and its MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) sector.

Potential for Events

Slovenia is seen as an ideal location for smaller events, meetings, and incentives, particularly with opportunities for:

- **Bleisure Packages:** Combining business programs with retreats (e.g., spa experiences, wellness, wine and cuisine tastings).
- **Cultural Tourism and Events:** Car launches, fashion shows, photo/video shoots, and stakeholder gatherings.
- **Thematic and Specialized Events:** Sports events, destination weddings, wellness programs, sales conferences, medical meetings, and pilgrimage tours.

Challenges and Perception Gaps

Many respondents lack familiarity with Slovenia and base opinions on perceptions, old experiences, or media reviews. Slovenia is not currently viewed as a location for large-scale events, but it has strong potential for smaller and niche gatherings.

Interest and Suggestions

There is a desire for firsthand experiences, such as FAM tours (hosted buyer tours), to assess Slovenia's offerings.

- Slovenia's newness as a destination is appealing, especially for outdoor events, winter sports (e.g., Planica), and wellness experiences.

Conclusion: Slovenia has untapped potential for hosting MICE events, particularly for smaller, niche, and experience-driven gatherings. To capitalize on this, more familiarization tours, client education, and targeted promotion are necessary.

“Decide on which destinations you put in the spotlight, make it clear what you offer to associations, and be quicker in responding to RFP’s and learn the venues the value of association events.”

A suggestion from a survey participant.

13. Please arrange the following countries according to their attractiveness, (most attractive on the top):

Other (Countries by mentions):

24x Spain

17x France / Mentions:

13x Germany / Mentions:

6x Greece / Mentions:

4x Hungary / Mentions:

4x Poland / Mentions:

3x Turkey / Mentions:

3x Netherlands / Mentions:

3x Finland / Mentions:

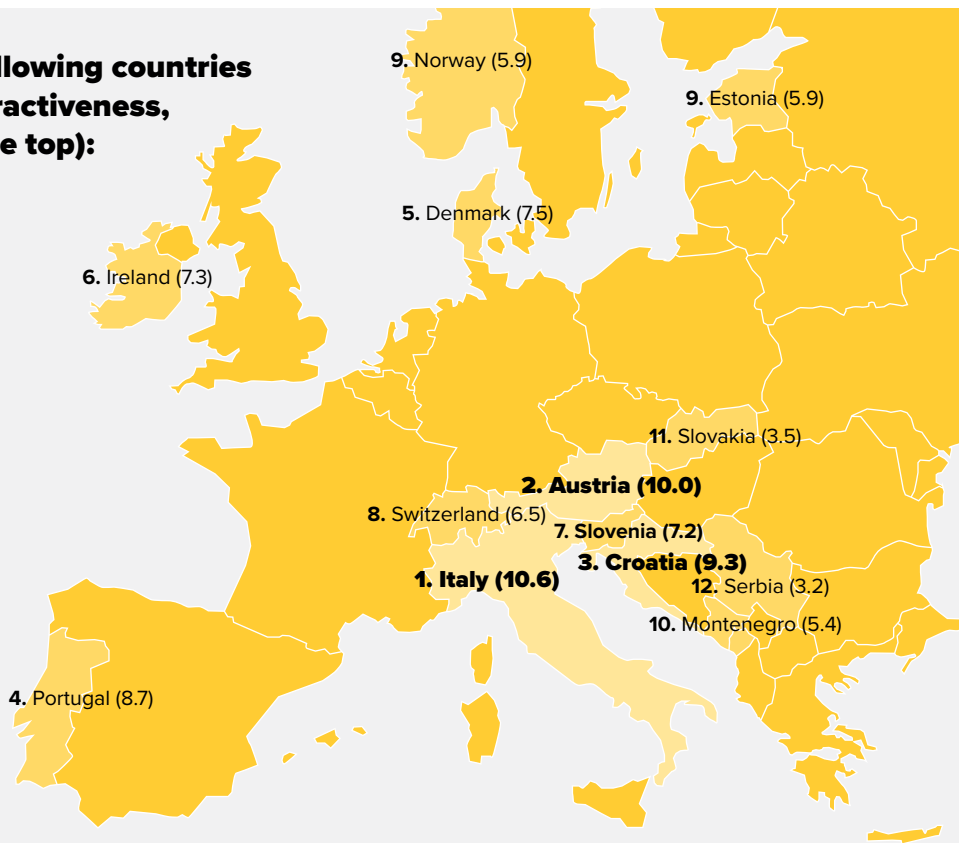
2x Iceland / Mentions:

2x Romania / Mentions:

2x Malta / Mentions:

2x United Kingdom

Received notable mentions, often paired with top destinations: Bosnia & Herzegovina, Albania, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Portugal, Serbia, Sweden, Thailand, and Turkey.



14. What sets Slovenia apart from other destinations on the list? Write three distinct features that make it unique?

1. Nature and Landscapes

Slovenia's natural beauty is the most frequently highlighted feature, with emphasis on:

- **Diverse Landscapes:** Mountains, lakes, caves, seaside, forests, and countryside (e.g., Lake Bled, Postojna Cave, Julian Alps).
- **Compact Size:** Easy access to a variety of natural attractions within short distances (e.g., "Mountains, sea, and cities in one day").
- **Green Destination:** Slovenia's reputation as a "green," clean, and sustainable environment.

Keywords: Natural beauty, diverse landscapes, compact size, greenery, crystal-clear lakes, forests, untouched nature.

2. Sustainability and Green Tourism

Slovenia is widely recognized as a global leader in sustainability and eco-tourism practices:

- **Green Initiatives:** Leadership in sustainability, green cities, and eco-friendly tourism (e.g., Ljubljana as the "Green Capital of Europe 2016").
- **Sustainable Practices:** Commitment to responsible and sustainable tourism development.
- **Environmental Consciousness:** Eco-friendly infrastructure and nature preservation.

Keywords: Sustainability, green tourism, eco-friendly, responsible travel, sustainable infrastructure.

3. Unique Culture and Heritage

Respondents noted Slovenia's rich cultural identity, blending various European influences:

- **Cultural Diversity:** A mix of Alpine, Mediterranean, and Central European traditions.
- **Heritage and History:** Historical landmarks, castles, and authentic experiences.
- **Culinary Scene:** Slovenia's wine regions, local gastronomy, and high-quality food offerings.

Keywords: Culture, heritage, history, gastronomy, wine regions, Mediterranean influences.

4. Accessibility and Compact Size

- **Central Location:** Positioned at the crossroads of Europe with easy access to neighboring countries.
- **Compact and Navigable:** Small size allows visitors to experience multiple regions and attractions efficiently.
- **Proximity to Other Destinations:** Combined trips with nearby Croatia, Italy, and Austria.

Keywords: Central location, compact, accessibility, proximity, efficient travel.

5. Value for Money

Slovenia stands out for offering excellent quality at competitive prices:

- **Affordability:** Good value for accommodations, food, and event services.
- **Quality Services:** High-quality infrastructure, hotels, and facilities at lower costs compared to other destinations.

Keywords: Value for money, affordability, cost-benefit, quality infrastructure.

6. Hospitality and Safety

- **Friendly and Helpful People:** The warmth and hospitality of Slovenian service providers were frequently mentioned.
- **Safe and Peaceful:** Slovenia is recognized as a safe destination for travelers and events.

Keywords: Hospitality, friendly people, safety, welcoming environment.

7. Undiscovered and Unique Appeal

- **Hidden Gem:** Slovenia is often described as “less traveled” and “undiscovered,” making it attractive for visitors seeking new and unique destinations.
- **Boutique Destination:** Ideal for exclusive, intimate, and smaller-scale events.
- **Authenticity:** The country offers authentic and unique experiences.

Keywords: Undiscovered, boutique destination, hidden gem, off-the-beaten-path, authentic.

Top Features in Summary

1. Nature and Diversity: Stunning landscapes, compact size, and natural beauty.

2. Sustainability: Leadership in eco-tourism and green initiatives.

3. Culture and Affordability: Rich heritage, culinary experiences, and excellent value for money.

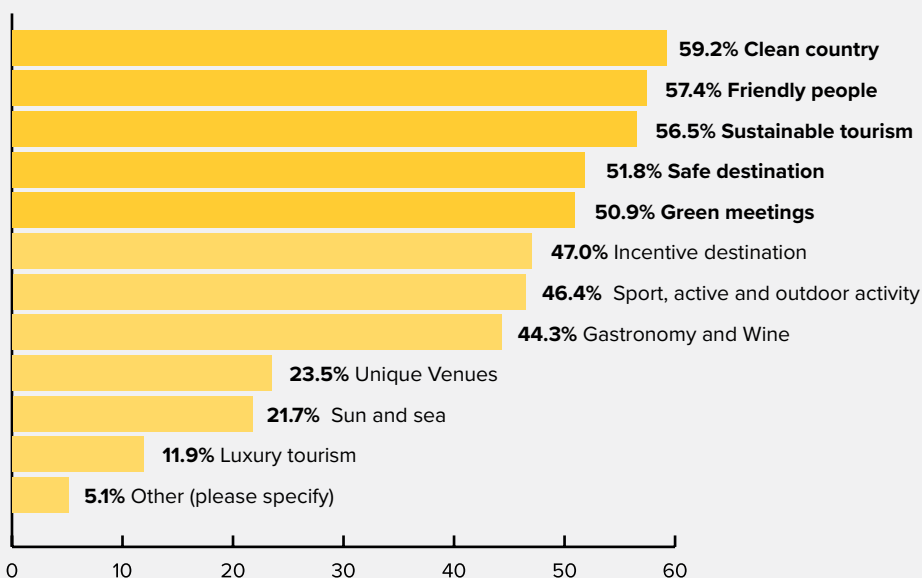
Key Insights

- Slovenia is praised for its natural diversity, commitment to sustainability, and unique cultural experiences.
- The destination’s compact size and central European location make it highly accessible and efficient to explore.
- Respondents appreciate Slovenia as an undiscovered gem with strong value for money, ideal for both tourism and business events.
- Slovenia’s friendly hospitality and reputation for safety further enhance its appeal.

Conclusion

Slovenia is distinguished by its **natural beauty**, **sustainability leadership**, and **authentic cultural experiences**, offering a boutique, accessible, and eco-friendly alternative to more mainstream European destinations.

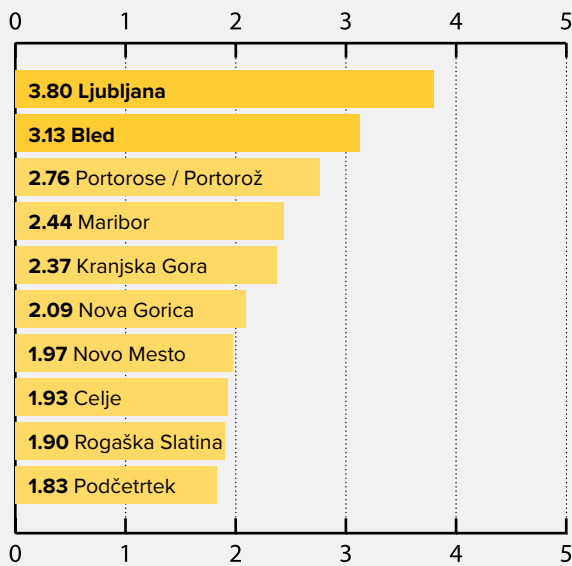
15. Which of the following do you most associate with Slovenia?



Other:

- Pogačar and Roglič
- Affordable, small, easy to go to, value for money
- Amazing Architecture
- Castle, caves and lakes country

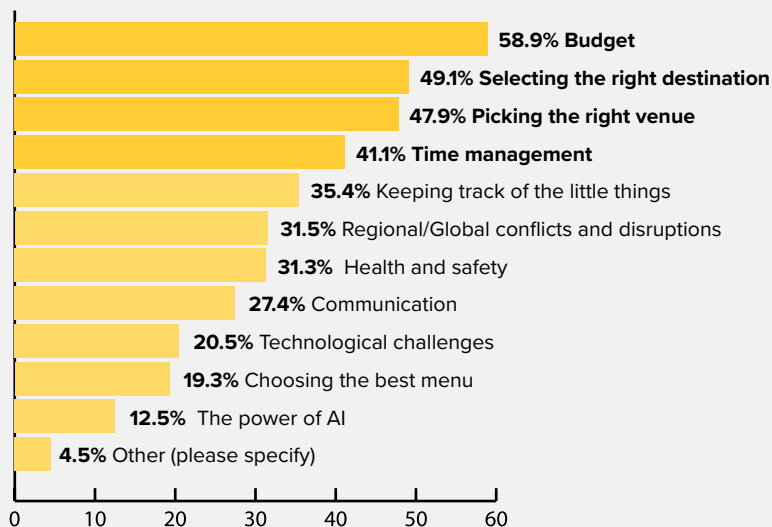
16. Please indicate your level of familiarity with each of the following Slovenian business events destinations?



“Be proactive, not reactive. Actively support destinations in developing business events by providing expertise, fostering international connections, sharing best practices, driving innovation, and creating new services and programs. Strengthen and promote the national Ambassador Program, which remains largely unknown, and embrace more innovative digital communication strategies.”

A suggestion from a survey participant.

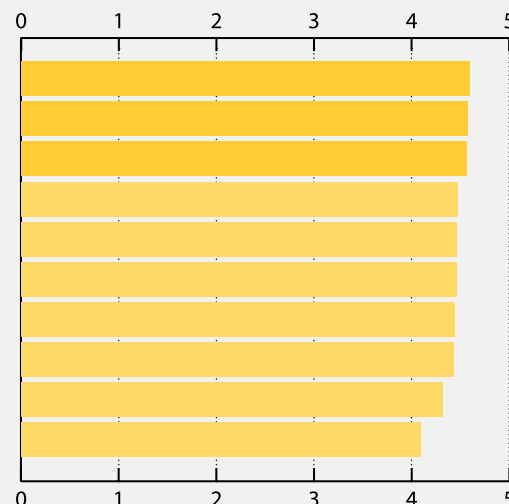
17. What keeps you up at night as an event organizer?



Other:

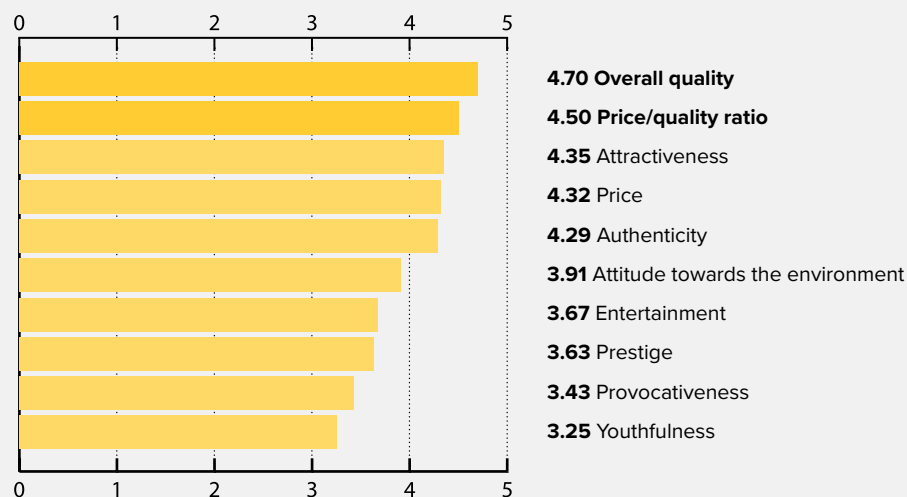
- Anticipating last-minute customer requests
- Availability of all service providers with updated technologies
- Expectation management, investor relations, community building
- Flight disruptions
- Getting suitable and trustable suppliers
- How to organise my events more sustainable
- Natural disaster
- Safety (NOT health!) + reliability of business partners/suppliers at the destination
- Sustainable organisation and ESRS reporting

18. Carefully read each of the following features of a business events destination and rate how important it is to you?

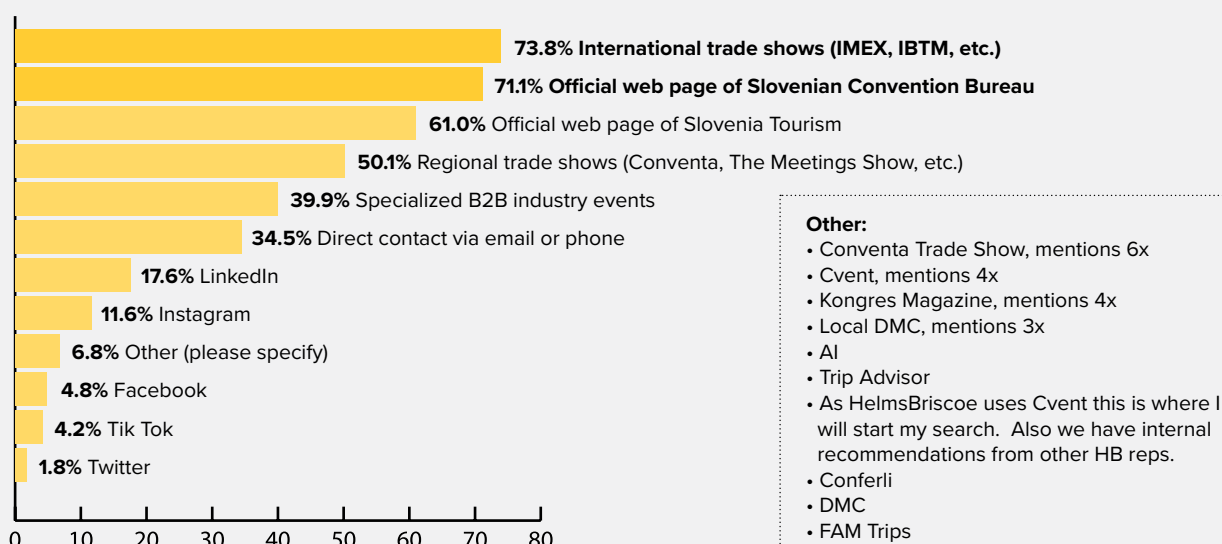


- 4.59 Quality accommodation
- 4.57 Quality of professionals
- 4.56 Quality of hotels
- 4.47 Quality of cuisine
- 4.46 Quality general infrastructure
- 4.46 Easy accessibility
- 4.44 High level of personal security
- 4.43 Good value for money
- 4.32 Quality of transportation
- 4.09 Quality of convention centers

19. What do you prioritize when choosing a destination for your next event?



20. Where would you look for information about the business event destination Slovenia?



21. Do you have any suggestions/comments for the Slovenian Convention Bureau that will help them improve their offer?

1. Increased Familiarization (FAM) Trips

A significant number of respondents emphasized the importance of **FAM trips** and **site inspections** to better understand Slovenia's offerings.

Key Comments:

- "A FAM trip can help me learn about your country."
- "The best way to sell an event destination is to know the destination itself."
- "Organize FAM tours for planners to showcase venues, hotels, and attractions."
- "Invite industry professionals for site inspections and familiarization trips."

Takeaway: Many respondents believe firsthand experience is crucial for promoting Slovenia effectively, particularly for MICE planners, buyers, and decision-makers.

2. Enhanced Accessibility and Flight Connections

Respondents highlighted the need for **better air connectivity**, especially **direct flights from key markets**.

Key Comments:

- "Better flights and direct airlift options from the USA and Canada."
- "Improve frequency of direct flights from China."
- "Plane accessibility from France is a problem."
- "Work on special transport solutions from surrounding airports if flights cannot be improved."

Takeaway: Addressing limited flight options and improving accessibility is essential for increasing Slovenia's appeal, particularly for long-haul markets.

“Promote regional diversity and hidden gems by showcasing regional offerings outside the capital. Stronger focus on unique experiences and incentives.”

A suggestion from a survey participant.

3. Promotion and Visibility

Many comments pointed to the need for **greater international visibility** and **targeted promotion efforts**.

Key Suggestions:

- “Enhance global marketing, particularly in underrepresented markets like Asia, LATAM, and India.”
- “Promote regional diversity beyond Ljubljana to showcase hidden gems.”
- “Increase presence at key trade shows like IMEX Americas and SATTE.”
- “Utilize creative, out-of-the-box ideas for promotional events.”
- “Emphasize Slovenia’s green credentials and sustainability as unique selling points.”

Takeaway: Slovenia needs broader and more focused marketing strategies, particularly in emerging markets, to raise awareness and highlight its unique features.

4. Focus on Sustainability and Unique Selling Points (USPs)

Respondents encouraged the bureau to promote **Slovenia’s sustainability leadership** and **unique attractions**.

Key Suggestions:

- “Highlight Slovenia’s green image, eco-friendly venues, and commitment to sustainability.”
- “Promote Slovenia as an unspoiled, peaceful, and safe destination.”
- “Showcase Slovenia’s natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and outdoor activities.”
- “Focus on boutique, unique experiences that set Slovenia apart from other destinations.”

Takeaway: Leveraging Slovenia’s strengths—sustainability, nature, and unique experiences—can help position it as a top-tier MICE destination.

5. Improved Communication and Engagement

Respondents requested **better communication** and **ongoing engagement** with partners and planners.

Key Comments:

- “Maintain regular contact with clients and provide updates on new venues and hotels.”
- “Create a strong, easy-to-use platform showcasing venues with detailed information (capacity, photos, SQM).”
- “Improve communication with regional partners and organize B2B meetings to foster collaboration.”
- “Provide more product updates, newsletters, and destination presentations.”

Takeaway: Strengthening communication through regular updates, digital tools, and engagement strategies is vital to keeping Slovenia top-of-mind for event planners.

6. Tailored Incentive Programs and Support

Several respondents recommended **offering financial incentives** and **tailored packages to attract event organizers**.

Key Suggestions:

- “Provide incentives like rebates or support for MICE organizers to bring groups.”
- “Offer tailored thematic packages to showcase Slovenia’s offerings.”
- “Develop a national Ambassador Program to promote the destination globally.”
- “Strengthen support for hybrid events and digital infrastructure.”

Takeaway: Offering tailored programs, incentives, and technical support can make Slovenia more competitive and attractive for international events.

7. Regional Diversity Beyond Ljubljana

Respondents urged the promotion of **other regions** and **lesser-known areas in Slovenia**.

Key Comments:

- “Showcase regions outside of Ljubljana—highlight hidden gems.”
- “Promote diverse attractions like lakes, caves, mountains, and countryside.”
- “Focus on regional diversity to provide unique and authentic experiences.”

Takeaway: Promoting Slovenia’s regional diversity can broaden its appeal and help planners discover new opportunities for events and incentives.

8. Key Markets for Future Focus

Respondents identified several key **markets that require further focus**:

- India and Southeast Asia
- North America (USA and Canada)
- LATAM (Latin America)
- France, China, and Africa

Takeaway: Expanding promotional efforts to these markets through roadshows, trade fairs, and direct engagement will help Slovenia reach new audiences.

Key Themes in Summary

- 1. FAM Trips:** Organize more familiarization tours to help planners experience Slovenia firsthand.
- 2. Accessibility:** Improve flight connections and address travel challenges.
- 3. Visibility:** Increase global marketing, especially in emerging markets, and promote Slovenia's USPs.
- 4. Sustainability:** Emphasize Slovenia's leadership in sustainability and eco-tourism.
- 5. Communication:** Strengthen communication through digital tools, product updates, and collaboration.
- 6. Incentives and Support:** Develop tailored programs and financial incentives for event organizers.
- 7. Regional Diversity:** Highlight Slovenia's attractions beyond Ljubljana.
- 8. Focus Markets:** Target India, North America, LATAM, and other key regions for growth.

Conclusion

The Slovenian Convention Bureau has made strong strides, but continued efforts in **familiarization trips**, **improved accessibility**, and **global marketing** are essential. By promoting Slovenia's **regional diversity**, **sustainability**, and **unique experiences**, the bureau can position Slovenia as a competitive and desirable destination for MICE events.

ENGAGING INSIGHTS FROM SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

“Maintain a strong presence across diverse platforms and events. Develop creative, out-of-the-box ideas for unique promotional events that capture attention and showcase the rich complexity and stunning beauty of sLOVEnia.”

“Here are a few recommendations for the Slovenian Convention Bureau to enhance its offerings and attract more international visitors, particularly within the meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) sector:

- **Boost visibility through targeted digital marketing.**
- **Develop customized incentive programs.**
- **Prioritize improvements in accessibility and infrastructure.**
- **Highlight Slovenia's green credentials and commitment to sustainable events.”**

“The best way to promote an event destination is by thoroughly understanding it. FAM trips are essential as they enable agencies to gain firsthand knowledge and recommend destinations that best meet their clients' needs.”

“In today's highly competitive environment, providing effective advice is a challenge. However, the key lies in developing an idea that is both attractive and unique—standing out from other destinations without going overboard—while acknowledging the need for significant investment. This idea should prioritize human value, reconnecting with timeless qualities and the surrounding context. It should be a concept that positions the entire country as an unmissable, one-of-a-kind destination.”

“To ensure a consistently high-quality experience, the Slovenian Convention Bureau could offer training programs for local event suppliers (hotels, caterers, transportation companies) on best practices, trends in the MICE industry, and customer service excellence.”

“The Slovenian Convention Bureau could enhance its offerings by developing a user-friendly online platform to effectively showcase venues and services.”

“Promote Unique Selling Points: Natural Beauty and Sustainability. Emphasize Slovenia’s commitment to sustainability and its breathtaking natural landscapes. Highlight green event venues, eco-friendly practices, and iconic locations like Lake Bled or Triglav National Park for meetings and incentives. Cultural Heritage: Showcase Slovenia’s rich traditions, gastronomy, and history by integrating them into events, offering attendees authentic and unforgettable experiences.

Leverage testimonials and case studies from past events to inspire confidence and demonstrate success.”

“You are doing a great job! I have attended Conventa once and I have recommended colleagues who attended. I hope to attend again.”

“See things differently (what is real USP of Slovenia I don’t know, and that’s something you should work on).”

“Work on Slovenia’s visibility, in the recent years the competition was louder. And if you can improve accessibility it wouldn’t harm!

STO
SLOVENSKA
TURISTIČNA
ORGANIZACIJA

I FEEL
SLOVENIA

20 years
Slovenian
Convention
Bureau



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