

A **MINDblowing** approach to  
winning market share on the  
international meeting market

ICCA Best Marketing Award Entry 2011



VisitDenmark



# What were the marketing challenges being addressed?

## Setting the scene

The meetings and congress market is a major focus area for Denmark as it contributes DKK 3,5 billion towards the Danish hospitality and conference industries every year. Along with our partners, it is VisitDenmark's mission to retain and increase the revenue from this segment.

The international meetings market is fiercely competitive. New destinations are entering the domain, and due to the economic crisis, price has become an even more important factor in the decision processes than previously.

## Denmark's challenge is to strengthen its position in the market

This entry for the ICCA Marketing Award 2011 draws a picture of what Denmark has done over the last 18 months in order to strengthen its position, awareness and competitiveness in the international meetings market.

## Challenges in promoting a meeting destination

One of the main challenges for a destination marketing bureau like VisitDenmark is that we do not own the products that we market. Another challenge is that, despite the meeting market being a very rational market with decision making based on how the company, the association or the client of a PCO can get best value for money, the decision also take a high level of emotional elements as f.ex how exotic the destination is perceived by potential delegates into considerations. This means that the ideal meeting destination has to fulfil both rational and emotional criteria.

Starting up the process we conducted a survey which showed the following most important criteria:

### RATIONAL criteria

- Accessibility
  - Direct flight connections
  - Good infrastructure
- Meeting facilities and hotels
  - Capacity
  - Connectivity from meeting- and hotelroom
  - Good service, english speaking people
- Price
  - Logic price compared to product and service
- Weather
  - Possibility for outdoor experiences
- Easy to buy a full package

### EMOTIONEL criteria

- The destination sounds attractive, exotic and different
  - Something nice that you would like to spend time on
  - You have something others envy
  - Wauw-effect!
- That you return enriched from the event
- Surroundings
  - Light and fresh air: preferably green and/or seaview
  - Inspiring experiences
  - Architecture, design and attractions
  - Excursions in walking distance / "sightseeing"
- Fantastic restaurant, unique venues, a special meeting structure



From the survey we saw that the attractiveness of a destination play an important role in the decision making process, simply because an interesting location will help the organiser to attract more attendees, attract the right people or get a more positive feedback on the event.

When benchmarking with the campaigns, websites etc. from the destinations in our competitive set, we realised that most destinations are focusing on the same rather rational USP's :

- Accessibility
- Price
- Hotel and conference facilities
- Service
- Food and beverage
- Sustainability / Green meetings (playing a role for most destinations today)

Some destinations also promote themselves on more emotional values such as being creative and innovative.

Given that new destinations constantly pop up, we decided that the most important task for us over the coming years was to strengthen our position in the market.

### Denmark developing a strong brand

The first step was to identify where we had the opportunity to differentiate ourselves most efficiently in the market. Our market survey showed us that the main associations with Denmark were as follows:

- Open, friendly and welcoming
- Professionelle and educated
- Trustable
- Easy to corporate with
- Good service
- Modern
- Good facilities
- Creative architecture and functional design
- Only facilities in Copenhagen
- Bad weather
- Expensive

We realised we shared many of these associations with other destinations. We needed something that could sharpen our profile. We concluded that this should be found within the area of creativity and co-creation. These values are based on the tradition of innovation and knowledge-sharing that Denmark is known for, and we actually have very unique content to offer the meeting market and therefore to base this positioning on.

In Denmark we have a history of developing meeting formats and challenging the more conventional ways of doing meetings. We have worked a lot with the discipline of meeting design. We have conceptualised it and call it Meetovation.



## Meetovation

In Denmark we started a project called the Meeting Concept of the Future back in 2003, where the first steps were taken towards a change in the old fashioned and traditional way of conducting meetings and conferences in Denmark.

The development of the concept was based on the assumption that while everything else in and around us has changed dramatically over the past couple of decades, nothing has happened to the way we meet. Apart from PowerPoint presentations, we run meetings in the same way we did a hundred years ago! New generations work in teams and are not used to endless one-way communication. They are sharing knowledge and ideas rather than just sitting down and listening.

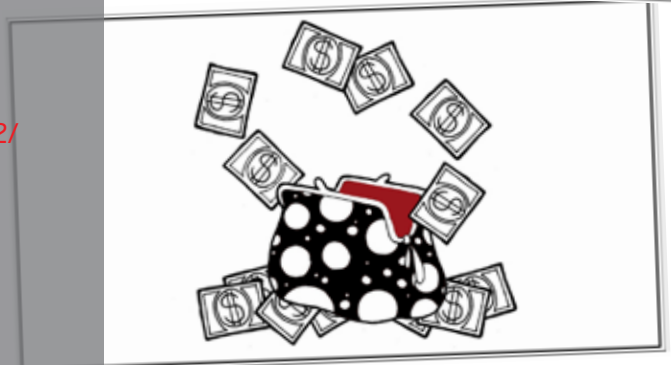
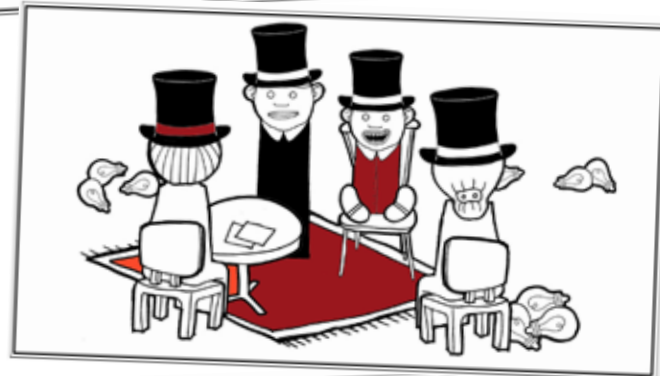
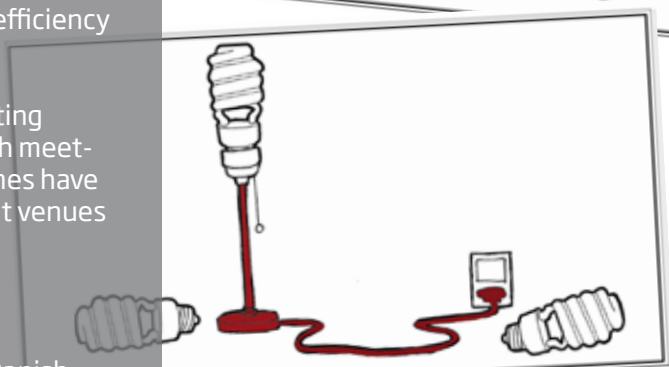
New technology opens new opportunities for the meeting industry. Globalization and cultural diversity set new demands. Meetings are recognized as an important and efficient communication tool, but highly demanding in terms of time and money. There had to be ways to improve efficiency and outcome. Something had to change!

Since the project started up in 2003, the Danish meeting industry has worked intensely with developing Danish meeting products and creative formats. Training programmes have been carried out for 200 staff members from different venues and various conferences, seminars, and inspirational workshops.

The project has been based on research studies carried out by IB Ravn, associate professor from the Danish School of Education at the University of Aarhus. He found that efficient meetings require increased attention to styles of learning, and that involving participants enhances the learning outcome.

The Meeting Concept of the Future has resulted in the Meetovation concept we now offer to the international meeting market. The aim of Meetovation is to create a better RoMI – Return on Meeting Investment – to create a better learning outcome, and thereby an increased return on the investment of the meeting. The five principles in Meetovation are: Location, participation, responsible thinking, inspiring facilities, and RoMI.

Below is a short film explaining Meetovation and the five elements: <http://video.visitdenmark.com/video/4912602/meetovation-film>



## The marketing challenges

We had certainly already used Meetovation in our market communication, but the question was whether or not to take the next step and start using it as our identity, and not just as an add-on.

Could and should we use meeting design and the fact that Denmark has been a frontrunner in this discipline as the core of our market position? We took the pros and cons below into consideration.

Based on these considerations as well as meetings with our regional partners and the trade, we decided to move on with using Meetovation as the base of our brand, and really start reaping the benefits from the pioneering work we have laboured over intensely in the past ten years in terms of meeting design.

Our biggest challenges were:

- Creating a brand and market position with limited budgets
- How to communicate a complex and innovative message to a segment which to some degree is rather conservative, in a marketplace which is very competitive and already plastered with messages in an efficient way?
- How to deliver on the brand promise with a product that you do not "own". Actually, our biggest challenge within this has been the perception within some areas of the Danish meeting industry that the Meetovation concept is no longer new, unaware that we as a destination are market leaders in the international market within this field, and that this way of thinking is still rather new to many clients

### PROS

- The Meetovation concept is totally unique in the market
- The market started to show signs (i.e. The Meeting Architecture movement, different studies on meeting design, different articles in trade magazines etc.) of being mature for our invention and way to do meetings in a different way.
- We had received extremely positive response to our first tests of market activities being carried out "the Meetovation" way in 2010
- We considered Meetovation a strong asset for us as it contains many of the values of Danish society – for example the green aspect, the involvement of people, and healthy but good food
- what could be described as a genuine brand
- The prevalent strong focus on ROI on the international market

### CONS

- When you choose to communicate something you do so to the detriment of communicating other things – at least as the anchor of your communication. For example, Denmark is also very strong on sustainability
- The risk of communicating Meetovation to the market without having control over all touch points the client would meet on the destination
- Getting all partners' support for the idea. Some partners may show resistance to change or to the idea in particular
- The challenge of communicating a rather complex message to the busy meeting market in a highly communicated marketplace

# What is innovative and creative about the project and what lessons can other ICCA members learn from your ideas?

## **We have a dream – A Meetovation Dream!**

The position is the stand Denmark takes in the international meetings industry – a position that differentiates Denmark from its competitors and satisfies meeting participants' current and future needs.

We want the Danish meeting industry to be known for its unique offer of a different approach to meeting design and execution – in a country with effective infrastructure and world class hospitality.

In order to make our dream come true and make our desired position on the meeting market a reality, we developed a communication platform. The purpose of the platform was to function as joint starting point across

the regions to ensure that the Danish meeting industry lives the brand, and that the clients experience Denmark as the most innovative and efficient meeting destination in the world in all our brand touch points.

We wanted the communication platform to warrant the creation of a common unique position for our two target groups, Business Events and International Congresses, as well as to provide guidelines for how Denmark succeeds with the continuous development of the Meetovation product.



## The communication Platform

The branding concept for the Danish meeting industry is:

## Welcome to meetings with a different **MIND-set**

The concept is our anchor. This ensures that there is continuity in all of our activities. The concept expresses the Danish destination brand promise of "Come and be part of it". This also creates a strong link and synergy with the promotion of Denmark as a leisure destination.

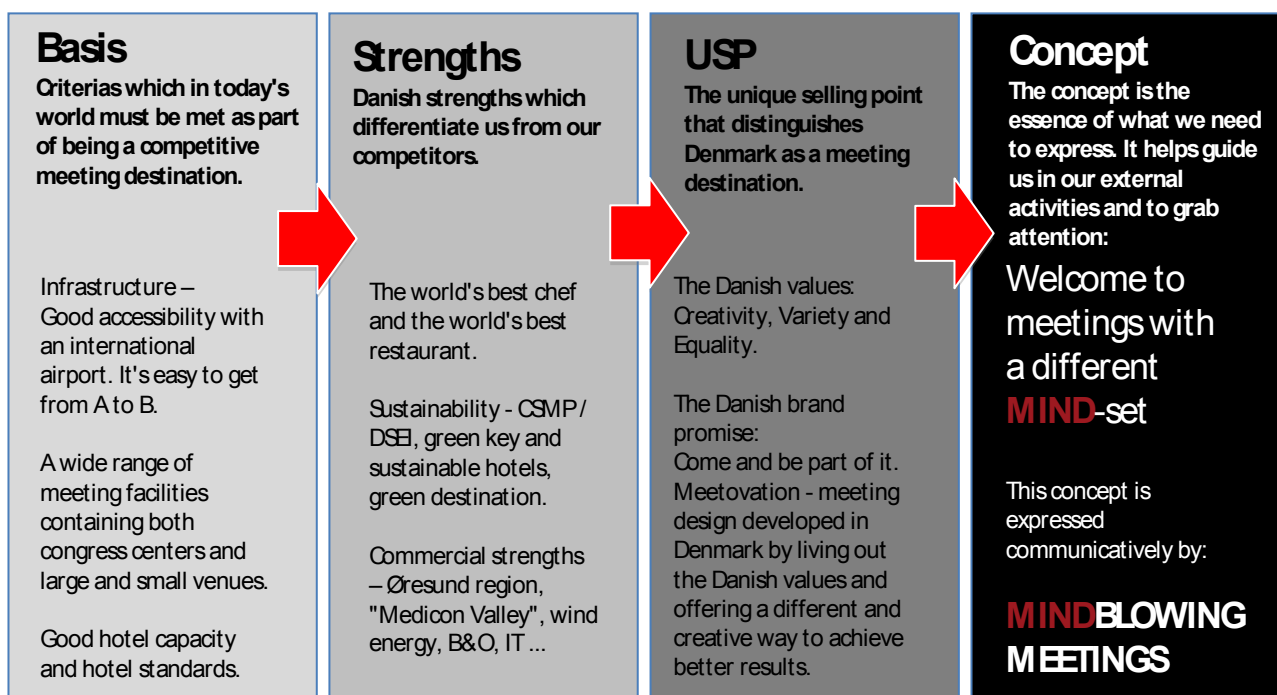
Denmark offers a different mindset, another "state of mind". Here everyone is allowed to think independently and participate actively. Here everyone is part of the solution. At this point it makes sense to ask the question "what is on your mind?", as it is crucial for the outcome of a development process.

Regardless of whether meetings are big or small, a meeting in Denmark is a meeting for "the **MIND**". This is our key message.

That is why **MIND** is the recognizable marker of our meeting concept. We are always communicating **MIND** – never alone, but as part of a sentence. This marker ignites the expectation of choosing Denmark as a meeting destination optimizes learning, meeting results and the energy the participants bring home.

We also found it important that the concept embraces our values and strengths. The point is that a meeting destination, to be competitive today, must have some fundamental things in place. Without them we can not begin to compete in the international meeting industry.

Moreover, it is good to have strengths that distinguish our destination from others and help make a difference in the choice of meeting destination. The important thing is that the content of the first three pillars are communicated, as they together ultimately will position Denmark on the world map.



### What can other ICCA-members learn from our ideas?

- In order to build up a position you need to have a strong vision and to go for it 100% – this requires leadership by people with a passion for the project, and ownership from top management as most change processes are questioned or subject to resistance

- “Practice what you preach”: A few times in the beginning of the process we held partner meetings trying to get everybody on the “Meetovation wagon” using traditional meeting set-ups. Embarrassing!

- Communication: Dare to make choices on what to communicate – and especially what not to communicate, and acknowledge that complex messages and projects need as simple communication as possible

- Consider how you will get the momentum going in a project that runs over several years by continuously setting long term goals – one of ours is the opening of a Meetovation University in Denmark offering education in Meetovation to meeting planners from all over the world



# How was the project undertaken – demonstrate the professionalism involved by setting out all the key steps?

## Execution

Based on the platform we have rolled out all our sales and marketing activities in a new way. Our existing and potential clients meet **MIND**blowing MEETINGS in many different ways, for example off and online advertising, via our website our **MIND**newsletter, and our presence on social media. We have of course also reinvented our activity portfolio and based all our activities on the Meetovation principles and the methodology behind it.

We will now give a brief description of the activities that have shown to bring the international clients closer to the option of Denmark – and therefore increased awareness and preference, and sales.

## **MIND**event

Our annual client event taking place in Copenhagen with approximately 75 international meeting planners participating in an experience that challenges the format of destination marketing events to its full. There are no hotel show rounds, there are no sales workshops with one-to-one meetings, and there are no sit down gala dinners with four-course meals.

Participants themselves become part of a **MIND**blowing MEETING. The aim of the event is to share our Meetovation concepts, our learnings and experiences with the participants by co-creating the event together with them, and also by taking our learning to a new level. By pre- and post measurements we can see that the **MIND**event participants become

great ambassadors for Denmark and our unique approach to the execution of meetings, and that the events generate a very satisfying amount of business to the destination.

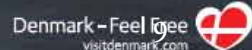
We are bold to say that the event has become an institution within the international meeting industry, and has been described as global best practise by leading actors within the meeting business. See the video from the first **MIND**event <http://video.visitdenmark.com/video/2218489/mind-2010>.

## **MIND**challenge

The **MIND**challenge is the event concept which we roll out on our five largest markets, targeting the agencies in the international meeting industry. The participants will create a unique and creative two-day programme from a predefined case – and they are encouraged to make use of the design principles of Meetovation. By participating in the **MIND**challenge, participants will work with the product and then design their own **MIND**blowing MEETING. We also find that they become ambassadors for Denmark.



Meetings & Incentive Networking in Denmark



## MINDsales

Sales tours and events aimed at both the business event segment and international congress organisers are important door openers for us. Here, key decision makers can be directly influenced. Again, we find it important that the five principles of Meetovation are used to manage content and approach. Right from the first contact, through for example E-mail, we integrate a surprising and engaging angle. At the meeting itself a traditional PowerPoint presentation is obviously a no-go. It is important to demonstrate the principles while they are being described. With a simple framework, a "MINDblowing trailer", energy filled food and practical creative examples from partners, the ideas behind the MINDblowing MEETINGS become far more tangible.

## MINDshows

Exhibitions and the actual setup of stands also provide excellent opportunities to show how the physical environment can stimulate and engage. We work with a surprising choice of furniture, different levels and imaginative use of colour, for example. It should never be boring to visit a booth where Meetovation is the theme. Indeed it should almost be impossible to ignore. We offer healthy and energy filled food for the visitors, we involve our clients, for example by having them create an inspiring meeting setup. MINDtalks At the workshops time is limited and competition is fierce. In essence this is speed-dating for meeting organizers, where the ideas behind MINDblowing MEETINGS must be relayed as very short and precise. The five basic elements must be stated and illustrated simply and efficiently. We do this by visualizing the concepts. To give an example we could use a graphical presentation of a paper cloth on the table by the customer, where 'we' can jot down ideas and then hand it to the customer afterwards. All this instead of the classic PowerPoint presentation from a laptop.

## MINDfamtrips

These trips can be considered as a mini version of a MINDevent. We offer groups of approx. 20 participants a unique experience and a concentrated introduction to design principles of the MINDblowing MEETINGS. Some of the large-scale happenings from the MINDevent we scale to fit these groups. The MINDfamtrips give the smaller – and more intimate – group the opportunity for a good connection and knowledge sharing, and for our partners to build strong relations with clients.

## MINDoffers

Every type of contact with the customer is a positioning opportunity and an opportunity to communicate. Therefore, it is also our ambition to integrate MINDblowing in the tender documents. We would like to demonstrate that we are 100% focused on RoMI, and therefore we ask thorough questions regarding the purpose of the meeting and the expectations for the outcome. We have listened carefully to wishes and demands and this is reflected in the material. In fact, we try to make it so MINDblowing that the price does not become an obstacle and the client will be able to clearly see the Return on Meeting Investment we are offering.

## MINDinspections

When potential clients come to see us to decide whether or not they should partner with Denmark for their meetings, all our sales efforts are naturally energized.

We use the opportunity to demonstrate what we mean by MINDblowing through concrete examples. We give the client a MINDblowing experience, just as the meeting participants would get. We maybe discuss details whilst riding on a Segway along the harbour, or the customer will be dragged into the kitchen and asked to put his signature on the buffet along with the chef. Anything is possible as long as it is in line with our main theme and sharpens the client's curiosity and appetite for Denmark as a destination.



Back drop on exhibition stand at EIBTM 2011 in Barcelona

A photograph of three business professionals in a meeting. A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark turtleneck and a black and white checkered jacket, is leaning over a table and smiling. Two other people, a man and a woman, are looking at her. They are all smiling and appear to be in a collaborative meeting. The background is a blurred office setting.

### **The further development of the Danish meeting product**

We have engaged with an external private partner in order to continuously offer Meetovator courses to the Danish meeting industry.

There is a track respectively for meeting venues, PCO og DMC's – and one for Danish corporate meeting planners. Offering a track for the Danish buyers provoke a pressure on our venues to deliver the Meetovation concept to the Danish meeting market, which again will improve the quality and experience of the deliverance of the concept to the international market.

When we meet with our trade partners we use Meetovation in the design of our seminars and meetings. In this way we also make sure to keep it on their present agenda.

Finally, we use any opportunity to talk, write or speak about Meetovation and MINDblowing meetings through our own channels as well as through national and international PR-opportunities.

# Set out detailed objectives/targets and explain how well these were met, covering both financial and non-financial issues.

## Financial targets

The new branding and the executions has started to show its results as stated below. When comparing the results of the activities conducted by VisitDenmark in corporation with WonderfulCopenhagen, and other regional partners in 2011 with npc tqmsq results 2010 we see a very positive development which by far has exceed the expectation we had.

## None financial targets

Uc had set up targets on the integration of Meetovation. Internaly in VisitDenmark we had set goals for redesigning our rmr\_j portefolio of activitieq, Rfcqc em\_jq f\_tc `cc l pc\_afcbglajsbgle rfcj\_slafmd u u u, kccrmt\_rgm l, bi, Rfc dsprfcpglrcep\_rgm l md Kccrmt\_rgm l gl rfc B\_lqqf kccrgle npmb sar gg\_l ml emgle npmacq,

**MIND**blowing meetings will never finish developing...

Revenue directly generated by business from our sales and marketing activities has increased with 22%

The media coverage has increased with:  
- Press cuts (articles) have almost doubled (+90%)  
- Quadruple increase in circulation (+428%)

The number of business leads have increased with 59%

Return on Investments on marketing budget:  
Every DKK 1 invested in marketing activities in 2011 gives 18 DKK in turnover to Denmark

Effects from the **MIND**event:  
72% of the participants have placed an inquiry in Denmark after their attendance in the event in 2010 or 2011  
16% claim they will place business in the future