

Amsterdam as a convention destination, Key Figures 2014

Amsterdam Marketing

ICCA Best Marketing Award Entry 2014



How Amsterdam
Marketing reveals
the beauty of its
statistical data

I amsterdam®



What is Amsterdam Marketing?

An integral city marketing organisation.

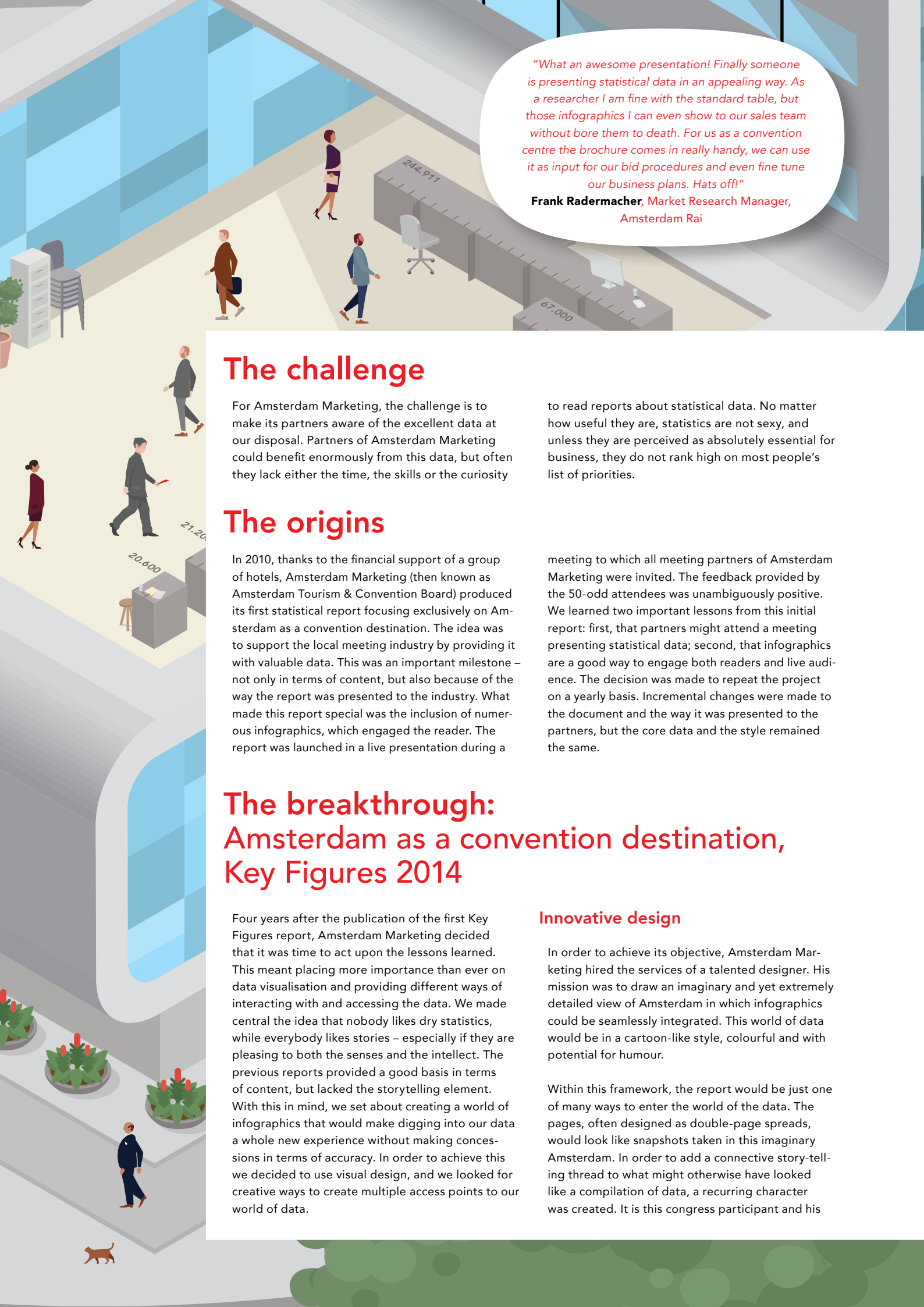
Amsterdam Marketing is the city marketing organisation of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, active in the fields of promotion, information, research and services. "I amsterdam" is the official slogan for all our activities and products. Connection and cooperation are what make Amsterdam Marketing strong and functional as a city marketing organisation with an integrated approach. As the central organisation we connect cross-sector parties. More than ever, this comes down to this key principle that "together we are stronger".

The meeting and congress industry plays an important role within the Amsterdam Marketing organisation. Firstly, this industry brings in incremental revenue to our city throughout the entire year. Secondly, many of our partners rely on this industry either directly – hotels, venues and congress organisers – or indirectly via the money spent by delegates: bars and restaurants, museums, galleries, attractions and shops. Meetings and conventions also create a platform for the local sector and corporate industries to showcase knowledge gained locally to an international platform. Amsterdam Marketing works tirelessly to introduce all relevant stakeholders, emphasising the fact that Amsterdam's approach, with its "I amsterdam" motto, is creative, innovative and has at its heart a spirit of commerce.

The lesser-known face of Amsterdam Marketing

A somewhat less-known side of Amsterdam Marketing is its role as a knowledge centre. For years, Amsterdam Marketing has been investing in research in order to monitor the trends and developments taking place in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area and its competitive environment. For instance, Amsterdam Marketing regularly conducts visitor surveys so as to get a clear picture of the profile of (congress) visitors, their satisfaction level, their expenditure and so on. Amsterdam Marketing also monitors changes affecting the city's infrastructure as a convention destination (meeting facilities, hotel capacities) and the level of activity in the meeting industry (number, location and attendance of meetings, and so on). Moreover, Amsterdam Marketing continuously monitors its own performance by generating and analysing data about leads processed and the experience of business visitors, both on its website (www.iamsterdam.com) and in the various visitor information centres where congress participants may also be found before or after meetings.

This data is extremely valuable since it helps Amsterdam Marketing to work in a smarter way: adopted strategies can be evaluated so as to ensure a better allocation of financial resources. For the team working on the acquisition of congresses, a good knowledge of the market is also essential.



"What an awesome presentation! Finally someone is presenting statistical data in an appealing way. As a researcher I am fine with the standard table, but those infographics I can even show to our sales team without bore them to death. For us as a convention centre the brochure comes in really handy, we can use it as input for our bid procedures and even fine tune our business plans. Hats off!"

Frank Radermacher, Market Research Manager,
Amsterdam Rai

The challenge

For Amsterdam Marketing, the challenge is to make its partners aware of the excellent data at our disposal. Partners of Amsterdam Marketing could benefit enormously from this data, but often they lack either the time, the skills or the curiosity

to read reports about statistical data. No matter how useful they are, statistics are not sexy, and unless they are perceived as absolutely essential for business, they do not rank high on most people's list of priorities.

The origins

In 2010, thanks to the financial support of a group of hotels, Amsterdam Marketing (then known as Amsterdam Tourism & Convention Board) produced its first statistical report focusing exclusively on Amsterdam as a convention destination. The idea was to support the local meeting industry by providing it with valuable data. This was an important milestone – not only in terms of content, but also because of the way the report was presented to the industry. What made this report special was the inclusion of numerous infographics, which engaged the reader. The report was launched in a live presentation during a

meeting to which all meeting partners of Amsterdam Marketing were invited. The feedback provided by the 50-odd attendees was unambiguously positive. We learned two important lessons from this initial report: first, that partners might attend a meeting presenting statistical data; second, that infographics are a good way to engage both readers and live audience. The decision was made to repeat the project on a yearly basis. Incremental changes were made to the document and the way it was presented to the partners, but the core data and the style remained the same.

The breakthrough: Amsterdam as a convention destination, Key Figures 2014

Four years after the publication of the first Key Figures report, Amsterdam Marketing decided that it was time to act upon the lessons learned. This meant placing more importance than ever on data visualisation and providing different ways of interacting with and accessing the data. We made central the idea that nobody likes dry statistics, while everybody likes stories – especially if they are pleasing to both the senses and the intellect. The previous reports provided a good basis in terms of content, but lacked the storytelling element. With this in mind, we set about creating a world of infographics that would make digging into our data a whole new experience without making concessions in terms of accuracy. In order to achieve this we decided to use visual design, and we looked for creative ways to create multiple access points to our world of data.

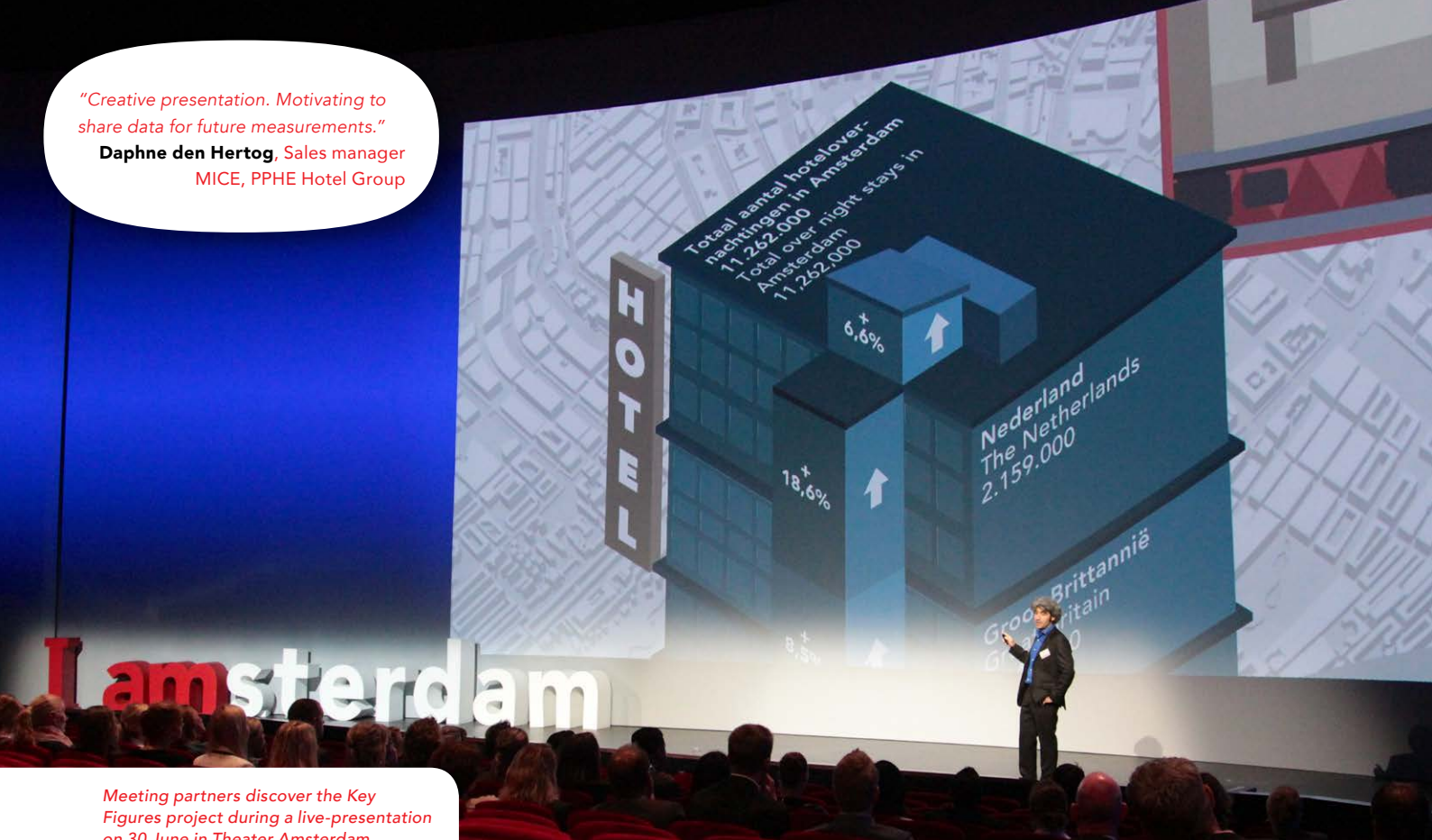
Innovative design

In order to achieve its objective, Amsterdam Marketing hired the services of a talented designer. His mission was to draw an imaginary and yet extremely detailed view of Amsterdam in which infographics could be seamlessly integrated. This world of data would be in a cartoon-like style, colourful and with potential for humour.

Within this framework, the report would be just one of many ways to enter the world of the data. The pages, often designed as double-page spreads, would look like snapshots taken in this imaginary Amsterdam. In order to add a connective storytelling thread to what might otherwise have looked like a compilation of data, a recurring character was created. It is this congress participant and his

"Creative presentation. Motivating to share data for future measurements."

Daphne den Hertog, Sales manager
MICE, PPHE Hotel Group



Meeting partners discover the Key Figures project during a live-presentation on 30 June in Theater Amsterdam.

distinctive red suitcase that the reader can follow through the publication, from the moment he lands in Amsterdam to the moment he takes a train from Central Station to Amsterdam Airport Schiphol to return home. In between, he will have checked in at his hotel, attended a conference and a trade show, engaged in post-conference activities, and so on. The congress visitor character not only adds a storytelling element to the report, it also playfully engages the reader in a way that's reminiscent of the Where's Wally? children's books created by British illustrator Martin Handford.

"This report assist my organisation and many others to prepare our business plan and gives us a better understanding how Amsterdam is growing in the Meeting & Convention industry".

Piet Boogert, General Manager Lloyd Hotel & Cultural Embassy

Even though this new design made the data a lot more attractive than in former reports, the design was never considered solely for its cosmetic value. The style of the drawing facilitated a large number of infographics using the isometric perspective, a technique giving a three-dimensional impression without distortion. In other words, far from being at the expense of the accuracy of the data, the cartoon-like approach opened new doors, bringing meeting professionals to a higher level of understanding of the information available to them.

Multiple access points to the world of data

Once the world of data had been created, our next challenge was to provide meeting professionals with various ways of accessing it. Given our limited budget, developing a new technology was out of the question so we needed to find a suitable solution within existing possibilities. In deference to the positive response to previous editions of the Key Figures report, we decided to print 1,000 hard copies of the new edition, which would be distributed free of charge to the partners of Amsterdam Marketing and congress organisers. An e-book was also produced and uploaded on the corporate website of Amsterdam Marketing. Additionally, Prezi, a web-based presentation application, provided a perfect platform for our world of data. Enabling the creation of non-linear presentations on one large whiteboard-like workspace, utilising Prezi meant that we could upload our whole world of data and later build various itineraries, zooming in and out and guiding our audience through Amsterdam as a conference destination. These Prezi presentations could be used during live presentations – for example, during the yearly networking event organised by Amsterdam Marketing for its partners. In order to reach a wider audience than the limited number of attendees at these meetings, we also made a Prezi presentation available to anybody online and added audio comments, an essential element of storytelling. All of a sudden, anybody within or outside the meeting sector could, from a computer, tablet or smartphone, access high-level statistical information concerning meetings in Amsterdam, 24/7.

The results

On 30 June 2014, the Key Figures 2014 report was presented to the meeting partners of Amsterdam Marketing during the organisation's annual networking event. Hard copies of the report were distributed after a live presentation that unveiled the world of data we had created. The e-book, as well as the online Prezi presentation with audio comments, went live at the same time, and both were made accessible via the corporate website of Amsterdam Marketing. Those unable to attend the meeting were later informed of these resources via Amsterdam Marketing's corporate newsletter and the LinkedIn accounts of various organisation staff. In essence, all access points to the world of data went live at approximately the same time, and they were all free of charge.

A wider audience for statistical data

The main point of the Key Figures project was to increase awareness of the statistical data available and, judging by the results after just two and a half months, this objective has already been reached. While Amsterdam Marketing has around 100 meeting partners, the online Prezi presentation has already been viewed more than 1,300 times, an excellent figure considering the limited appeal of the topic and the fact that these views occurred during the notoriously slow summer months. Clearly, the online Prezi presentation reached beyond the traditional scope of Amsterdam Marketing: not only did it grasp the attention of more businesses than usual, but it also went deeper within each of those businesses since people who did not attend the live presentation could access the same level of information as those who did. This was the case even within Amsterdam Marketing itself: some of our colleagues working in the visitor information centres spontaneously watched the online Prezi

presentation and deemed it both fun and informative. As for the live presentation, it was decided to hold a second session on 16 September to enable new people to attend and more discussion to take place. While around 50 participants attended the June session, more than 80 attended in September. As for the e-book, it has already been viewed more than 800 times.

A fresh look at the data and a spark of excitement

The innovative approach taken by the Key Figures 2014 report received a very warm welcome from all meeting partners and beyond. Following the live presentation on 30 June, Amsterdam Marketing received enthusiastic feedback and decided to collect this in a more systematic way during the 16 September repeat presentation. On that day, all participants found a card on their seat with a friendly request to share their thoughts about the whole project.

Their comments were overwhelmingly positive. One point repeatedly made was that because the data had become so entertaining, people looked at it differently and got excited by some of the findings. Additionally, the live presentations turned out to be excellent networking opportunities that were greatly appreciated by partners.

A stronger position and better data for Amsterdam Marketing

Research-related projects such as the Key Figures 2014 report clearly contribute to reinforcing the position of Amsterdam Marketing by strengthening its credibility. The more people are aware of the wealth of data available, the more likely they are to realise that Amsterdam Marketing's strategic decisions are based on hard data. Successes and failures can be monitored in a transparent way, thus enabling constructive discussions about the best approach to move forward.



"Thank you for the online presentation, it is fun and very useful. The interactive presentation helps understanding and makes the figures more appealing."

Judith van der Graaf, Manager Information Centre (Schiphol Airport), Amsterdam Marketing





The audience is engaged during the 16 September presentation in de Balie.

"The completeness and relevance of information collected by Amsterdam Marketing in its annual 'Amsterdam as a Convention Destination' brochure is perfectly enriched by a nice visual presentation. This excellent work is an inspiration for us as, it is for many convention bureaus."

Frédéric Cornet, Manager Research & Development, VisitBrussels

Additionally, meeting partners highly value the efforts made by Amsterdam Marketing to give them something valuable in exchange for the time they took and the trust they showed by providing information about the meetings in which they were involved as PCOs, conference centres, hotels and so on. This has played a significant role in partners' willingness to share their data over the years.

At the other end of the spectrum, associations and corporate planners appreciate having access to hard data backing up the unique selling points of Amsterdam as a convention destination. Ultimately, what the Key Figures 2014 report does is help people do better business. It is hardly surprising that some competing destinations, such as Brussels, have already shown interest in the idea and are currently investigating ways to apply it to their own location.

"I regularly talk to congress organisers who would like know more about the position of Amsterdam on the meeting market. The Key Figures report is then very nice to show how professionally we work in our destination. In any case, we put the report in the dropbox so that everybody can read it on their Ipad."

Michiel Lindenberg, Sales Manager, Beurs van Berlage C.V.

A common knowledge for Amsterdam meeting industry professionals

Whether in printed or digital format, the Key Figures 2014 report contributes to building a common knowledge base about the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area among professionals within the meeting industry. Interestingly, Some meeting venues have included the Key Figures 2014 report in the welcome pack for their new team members so as to kick-start their knowledge of the market. The Key Figures 2014 report also appears to be extensively used for making business plans and "request for proposal" bids. Put another way, a growing share of the Amsterdam meeting industry now uses the same language to sell the destination.



Budget

The breakdown of the costs involved for the whole Key Figures 2014 project is as follow:

- Project management, data collection, data processing and analysis, live and online presentations: 600 hours of a senior researcher
- Design of the "world of data": € 2,420
- Design of the report (36 pages): € 3,146
- Printing of the report (1,000 copies): € 1,889
- E-book version of the report: no extra costs as part of an existing annual membership with ISSUU
- Prezi Pro subscription: € 123
- Organising two live presentations with meeting partners, including networking reception € 3,000

Total
(excluding senior researcher's wages): € 10,578

Takeaways for ICCA members

Collect good data

Having good data is the basis for a project like the Key Figures 2014 report. If your data is of poor quality or incomplete, you definitely need to allocate some resources (mainly time) to improve the situation. From the get-go, Amsterdam Marketing decided to have a global overview of the industry by focusing on all international corporate and non-corporate meetings; thus, not only those meetings that fit the ICCA criteria. The underlying idea was that it would be more representative of the reality of the market as experienced by our meeting partners.

Be patient

If you start from scratch in terms of data collection, you may have to wait before you have useable data. In Amsterdam, we started collecting data systematically in 2009 (about the years 2008 and 2009) but waited until 2010 to produce our first report. In the meantime, we tested the figures for the first two years with a selection of partners in order to assess their validity.

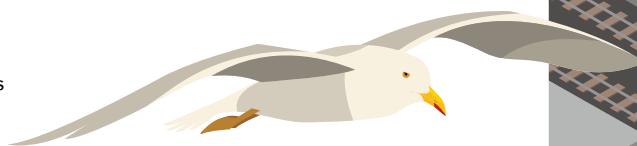
Be transparent and generous with your data

In a project like the Key Figures 2014 report it is important to be clear with your partners about

the way you will deal with their data and to be transparent about your own data (such as the leads you handle). The key to success will be your ability to transform the data you receive into information that your partners can use for their own benefit. If you provide them with something useful in return for their cooperation, it will be in partners' interest to keep supporting your research activities. Therefore, you should be generous and find creative ways of sharing the information you have amassed.

Do not underestimate the power of aesthetics

Good-looking reports are more likely to attract attention than a compilation of tables and standard charts. If you want to spread knowledge within your destination, aesthetic appeal should not be underestimated. But, even more importantly, compared to a more traditional approach, beautifully designed infographics enable you to say more about your data, and to say it better.



Experience the Key Figures

by clicking on one of the buttons below

The Key Figures 2014 in ebook

The audio-prezi of the Key Figures

or our website (www.iamsterdam.com/corporate)
Please look for:
Services > Research > Reports and publications

Contact

Marc Horsmans, Manager Business Marketing,
Amsterdam Marketing.
m.horsmans@iamsterdam.com
Telephone: +31 (0)20 702 6202

Olivier Ponti, Manager Research,
Amsterdam Marketing.
o.ponti@iamsterdam.com
Telephone: +31 (0)20 702 6112

amsterdam marketing
www.iamsterdam.com/corporate

