

THE CASE STUDY

Beyond tourism

Business Events Africa, in collaboration with the South Africa National Convention Bureau, continues to delve into 'beyond tourism' and its far-reaching impact, as we seek to measure not just the immediate tourism benefits of business events, but the longer lasting social legacies as well.



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NATIONAL CONVENTION BUREAU

The SASTM case study

In this supplement we take a closer look at the South African Society of Travel Medicine biennial congresses, and Dr Garth Brink* shares his insights.





SASTM

*Guiding the Profession
Protecting the Public*

FOCUS ON REALITY

**Pan African
Travel Medicine Conference**
12-15 September 2018
Cape Town, South Africa
www.sastm.org.za







**What is
SASTM and
when did it start?**

The South African Society of Travel Medicine (SASTM) was formed in 2000 and is a non-profit organisation. Its main focus is to provide ongoing education and knowledge exchange for its members thereby ensuring that travellers and expatriates are provided with the correct information relating to reducing the risk of illness whilst away and on return.

The 2016 SASTM conference

The last conference was held in Port Elizabeth in September 2016. SASTM was fortunate to be able to host, with this conference, the regional conference of the International Society of Travel Medicine.

It attracted 200 delegates (and an additional 30 members of the pharmaceutical industry), the majority of delegates being from South Africa.

There were international delegates from the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia and from Africa – totalling 40 delegates.

The SASTM Congress

SASTM Congresses were held from 2006, initially on an annual basis. From 2008 the Congresses were then moved to every second year.

As health care providers involved in advising travellers, it is essential that we have knowledge of different travel destinations, but seldom do we have the opportunity of visiting these destinations so first-hand experience is limited. In 2007, it was decided to hold the first rotational conference in Zanzibar, which was an experience that is unlikely to be forgotten by those who attended.

The benefits of holding a congress outside South Africa include an experience of a difference for the delegates as well as attracting more delegates from Africa itself. Interaction and networking with such delegates provides excellent exchange of information that can only benefit the traveller to minimise the health risks whilst travelling and at the destination. The further aim is to have the conference be more affordable for delegates from Africa.

The congress in 2020 will be held outside South Africa, with Rwanda a strong contender for the hosting of this event.



*** Dr Garth Brink** is a graduate of the University of Pretoria. He has been a family physician in private general practice in Durban from 1972 and also runs a Travel Medicine Clinic within the practice. He is a past-president of SASTM and the current project manager.



WHAT WERE THE CONGRESSES OUTCOMES?



Knowledge exchange

Local delegates were exposed to key researchers in the field of travel medicine, an opportunity that they would not have had unless they can afford attending a congress overseas.

This knowledge exchange though works both ways, as it provides a similar opportunity for the international delegates to be exposed to South African expertise and knowledge which likewise they would not have gleaned at an international congress elsewhere.



Local upliftment

It provides an opportunity for involving the local community (we involved the Ray Mhlaba Centre) and exposing all delegates to their work – a crucial aspect of responsible tourism and support of local community.



Research development

The forging of new relationships leads to unrivalled opportunity for research and development of common interests which has an impact worldwide.



SANCB's involvement



The History

SASTM wanted to secure the 2014 ISTM Regional Conference in Cape Town, so it presented a bid to the ISTM Board in 2009. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful and lost the bid to Singapore.

SASTM realised that the Regional Congresses were not allocated according to a bid process but more on what the then President decided. It was felt that there would be no point in submitting further bids to the ISTM.

I have a long-standing relationship with the Durban ICC and KwaZulu-Natal Tourism, as I was the convenor of the World Organisation of Family Doctors First World Rural Medical Congress in 1997 and the main World Congress in 2001.

SASTM planned to host the 2014 Conference in Durban and wanted to attract the international delegate to Durban. Merryl Fairfoot (now with the SANCB), at that stage working for KwaZulu-Natal Tourism, found out about the Congress came to see me.

During our discussion the history of the failed bid was presented and mention was made that we were wanting to attract delegates to the Durban Congress. We wanted to promote the Congress at the ISTM regional Singapore Congress and she offered assistance. Accordingly, SASTM was able to secure a booth at the Congress.

This presence created even greater awareness about SASTM and the then president of the ISTM approached SASTM with the request that the 2016 Regional Congress is held in South Africa in conjunction with the SASTM Congress.



Delegate boosting

This assisted us enormously for, as a small society, we do not have available funds to embark upon delegate boosting. We were able to secure a booth at the International Congress of the ISTM in Quebec in 2015 and the Regional Congress in Kathmandu in 2016 neither of which would have been possible without the grant from the SANCB.



Funding for the congress

A certain amount was secured by the SANCB for the opening ceremony of the SASTM Congress.



Funding for future congresses

Our relationship with the SANCB continues and we have been provided with grants for the 2018 Congress and we are looking at obtaining further grants for meetings to be held in 2019. This raises the profile, not only of SASTM, but of South Africa as well.



Meetings Africa

The other benefit of interaction with the SANCB has been the introduction to Meetings Africa, where we are able access numerous service providers in the hospitality and conferencing industry. This affords us an unrivalled opportunity to interact with those that can provide that which SASTM requires for its conferences and other activities – not only in South Africa but in Africa as well.





The first African Society of Association Executives (AfSAE) meeting that SASTM had a presence was in 2017, and it was an unforgettable experience.

AfSAE is an incredible forum for an association. It provides opportunity to identify with other associations and to learn from others and the presenters that which is required to keep the association relevant and move with the times.

SASTM has benefited tremendously from its involvement with AfSAE. Direction is given as to issues relating to associations, the running thereof, and generally creating greater enthusiasm to ensure that the association is keeping up with the rapidly changing micro and macro environment so as to remain at the leading edge for its members.

The second benefit, and equally important, is meeting with other Associations. SASTM has been exploring hosting a Congress in Rwanda, and through AfSAE we were put in contact with the ICASA 2019 organiser – this Congress will be held in Rwanda. As a result of this, there is the distinct possibility that the SASTM Congress will run conjointly with the ICASA meeting – thereby reducing our operational costs – which will no doubt allow us the luxury of hosting a Congress in Rwanda. This would not have occurred had we not been part of AfSAE.

THE 'BEYOND TOURISM' IMPACT FROM THE SASTM CONGRESS

- 1 The exchange of knowledge.
- 2 Sharing of information and developing new projects, research activities.
- 3 The launch of the Pan African Travel Medicine Group which will see the start of the initiative to provide expertise to others in Africa who are involved in travel medicine and allied disciplines.
- 4 Exposure of African and local delegates to opinion leaders.
- 5 Networking with the pharmaceutical and allied industry.
- 6 It will showcase the expertise that exists within South Africa, creating greater exposure for both South Africa and SASTM.
- 7 It sets standards for conferencing.

Message from Jeffers Miruka, president of AfSAE

In Africa, we now fully acknowledge that there is more to events, relative to beyond tourism benefits.

- ✓ Congresses promote destinations. They build the host country's reputation by building awareness and presenting a favourable image to the visitors, against what appears mostly in the media.
- ✓ Conferences spur trade and investment

by creating partnerships and research collaborations through academic works.

- ✓ Meetings help participants to establish networks when they meet face-to-face.
- ✓ Conferences disseminate knowledge transfer as practitioners apply newly gained insights to enhance their professional practice, growth, and many more benefits.

"Africa has the potential to be the ideal backdrop and the next frontier for congresses and meetings, thanks to its growing business events infrastructure, ease of connectivity, a developing healthcare cluster, rich history and natural beauty. Many from around the world have started to realise this significant development in the continent; hence many business events are now heading to Africa. The case of South Africa amplifies this when you look at the ICCA statistics." – Jeffers Miruka, president of AfSAE



For this to help, African countries are investing in Convention Bureaus, modernising the existing convention centres and

building new ones, increasing the number of bed capacity, dealing with existential threats and improving their infrastructure. This is geared towards making Africa a destination of choice for future congresses.

"This conference will strengthen and encourage those involved in travel medicine to critically examine that which is being done, provide a forum on travel medicine education in Africa, work closely with pharmacists in addressing malaria prevention in travellers, as well as the incredible opportunity for networking."
– Dr Garth Brink