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Kenyatta International Conference Center: A Proposed Marketing Plan

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KENYATTA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER: A PROPOSED
MARKETING PLAN

Rose M. Kwena, B.A.

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Lindenwood University in partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

This study will focus on analyzing the marketing capabilities of the America's Center and the St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission (CVC) in the conventions and exhibitions industry, with the aim of preparing a marketing plan to be implemented by Kenyatta International Conference Center (KICC) in Kenya based on the success of St. Louis CVC. The information gathered from researching published data and personal interviews will be used to develop strategies and recommendations.

Kenyatta International Conference Center was not purposely built to host events of large magnitude as exhibitions and conventions. The center was built with public funds by the government as the headquarters of the ruling political party in Kenya. At that time, Kenya was a One-Party state and there was no clear distinction between the government and the party. However, in 1973, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) decided to meet in Kenya, and at that time, the center had just been opened and it was the natural venue for the IMF meeting. This was the turning point for the center. It was immediately converted into an international meeting venue and has been ever since.

KICC has had a turbulent existence since 1989 when its management was transferred from the Department of Tourism to Arid and Semi-Arid Areas. The new management, having had no prior experience in convention business opened up the center to the general public for events like parties, wedding receptions, church services and festivals. The facility was in turn vandalized by the new clientele. Marketing was put on hold and the center started deteriorating. At the same time, tourism in Kenya was slipping, mainly due to competition from South Africa and Zimbabwe.

KICC management has changed hands four times since that time and is now managed by the ruling party. No major international conferences are held at the center anymore. The roof of the Amphitheater is leaking and the meeting rooms are not user-friendly. There are only two working elevators in the entire complex, which is 32 stories high. Plenary Hall, which seats up to 5,000 people, is not partitionable and there is not enough room for breakout sessions. Some of the rooms have out dated plastic chairs, which are uncomfortable.

The center management is not qualified to run such a facility. The present Director was appointed by the party as a token of appreciation to his tribe for

Voting for the party. He spends his time talking to his tribesmen on the phone or entertaining them in his office.

The purpose of this study is to recommend a plan of action that will rejuvenate KICC in the conventions business. Although the plan will be based on the success of the America's Center, there are also some self-acknowledged deficiencies at both America's Center and the St. Louis CVC that KICC can improve upon.

Specific needs have been identified by conducting various analyses throughout this project. These needs include the establishment a Kenya Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) that can market and sell KICC as convention venue and Kenya as a tourist destination. KICC needs to be expanded and remodeled to make it more appealing and user-friendly. However, no matter how good a product is, marketing is the key to success in a highly competitive environment like the hospitality industry.

Political limitations, which perpetrate nepotism and favoritism, are a major negative in the economic development of Kenya. The system must have the will to overhaul the entire thinking of Kenyans where loyalty is valued and preferred to qualification. In order for the proposed Plan of action to succeed, KICC must be supported and left to function without government interference. The government must also appreciate the importance of KICC as a foreign exchange earner and support the efforts of the proposed CVB.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The goal of this thesis is to analyze the performance pattern of the America's Center in St. Louis under the management of St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission, and make recommendations for a marketing plan that will be applied to Kenyatta International Conference Center (KICC), in Nairobi, Kenya.

Before we look at the specific problems, it is imperative to understand the general trends of the tourism industry under which conventions and exhibitions fall. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) provided estimates for 1995 to show that tourism is the world's largest industry. Their report indicated that in 1995, domestic and international tourism together stimulated over 200 million jobs worldwide. Output measured in US dollars reached \$3.4 trillion. The industry's contribution to the world's gross domestic product reached 11.4% in 1995. According to Somerset, "capital investment made by travel and tourism companies in buildings and equipment was estimated at \$705 billion for 1995" (Somerset 9).

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) headquartered in Madrid, is the most up-to-date source of information on world tourism trends. For the year 1995, preliminary figures show an increase of 3.8% in global international arrivals to a total of 567 million, while international tourism revenues increased 7.2% to \$372 billion.

East Asia and the Pacific in 1994 were the fastest growing international tourism destinations, with arrivals up by 7.2% to 74.6 million and receipts up 14.4% to \$59.0 billion.

In 1994, Europe's international arrivals increased by 3.9% to 320.1 million, with receipts showing a 10.3% increase to \$268.9 billion. The Americas reported arrivals in 1994 up 2.2% to 106.5 million, with receipts up 5.7% to \$95.5 billion. There was a strong increase in arrivals from Europe to the Americas.

In the Middle East, arrivals in 1994 declined by 5% to 8.2 million, and receipts were down by 12% to \$3.7 billion. This region lost tourists because of terrorist activities by Muslim militants. South Asia's Arrivals in 1994 increased by 6.6% to 3.7 million and receipts were up by 11.2% to \$2.4 billion. African arrivals were down by 0.5% to 18.3 million, and receipts increased by 7% to \$6.3 billion. Most growth was in North Africa.

A record number of Americans traveled in 1994, up 7% over 1993, according to the US Travel Data Center. The Lodging industry consultant Coopers & Lybrand state that "the hotel industry enjoyed the best year ever in 1995, profits were about 3.7 times higher (after adjusting for inflation) than in 1979, the previous record year" (11)

The popularity of new casinos in Las Vegas brought in an unprecedented 9% increase in visitor arrivals to a total of 28.2 million in 1994 according to Somerset. After two slow years, Atlantic City in 1994 reported gaming profits up by more than 4%. In the first quarter of 1995, overall revenue in Atlantic City was

up by 16.2%. In both cities, foreign visitors helped swell the gaming earnings. “Foreign visitors increased by 7% in Atlantic City. Branson, the Ozark town featuring country music theatres, had a record year in 1994 with more than 5.8 million visitors” (11). Figure 1-1 shows the countries that earned the top dollars from the tourism industry in the world in 1994.

FIGURE 1-1

World's Top Tourism Earners—1994
International Tourism Receipts
(Excluding international transport)

Rank	Country	Millions of Current <u>US Dollars</u>	%Change <u>94/93</u>	Share (%) of <u>World Total</u>
1.	United States	\$60,001	4.13	17.87
2.	France	25,000	6.79	7.45
3.	Italy	23,927	16.60	7.13
4.	Spain	21,410	10.22	6.38
5.	United Kingdom	13,983	3.96	4.16
6.	Austria	13,160	-2.99	3.96
7.	Germany	10,650	1.34	3.17
8.	Hong Kong	8,987	18.84	2.68
9.	Switzerland	7,793	11.31	2.32
10.	China	7,000	49.48	2.08
11.	Thailand	6,592	31.47	1.96
12.	Mexico	6,557	6.32	1.95
13.	Singapore	6,459	11.50	1.92
14.	Canada	6,290	6.66	1.87
15.	Poland	6,150	36.67	1.83
	<u>Total World</u>	<u>\$335,780</u>		<u>100%</u>

Source: World Tourism Organization 1996

The decade of the 80s was one of economic progress for Missouri. Population increased 4.5% during these ten years. Tourism has been an important element in Missouri's progress, and is now the state's second largest industry. According to a new study compiled by Certec Inc. for Missouri's Division of Tourism, travelers spent \$9.1 billion in direct spending. When the "multiplier effect" is included and all the indirect beneficiaries are taken into account, the tourism/travel industry contributed over \$14.1 billion to Missouri's economy (40).

Kenya (and its capital city of Nairobi) is East Africa's leading center of international business and tourism. Until political unrest and violence spread across the nation in July 1990, Kenya had been considered an oasis of stability and well being when measured against a regional yardstick. Tourism in Kenya, based on its game parks and wildlife, its safari trade, and the beautiful seaside resorts near Mombasa, has been a major source of foreign exchange.

In 1992, visitors to Kenya declined to about 700,000 from 805,000 the previous year. Arrivals in 1993, however, were up by 12% to 783,000. Tourist revenue was estimated to have reached \$450 million. Arrivals from the UK in 1993 were up by 0.8% to 118,000. German visitors increased 3.6% to 114,000. US arrivals were down by 2% to 45,000, while French arrivals increased 2.9% to 35,000 (132). Kenya's earnings from tourism has continued to increase over the last ten years despite the decrease in the volume of visitors as shown in figure 1-2. This is because Kenya's visitors are mainly from Europe and not from countries bordering Kenya.

Figure 1-2Kenya Tourism Earnings 1985-95

<u>Year</u>	<u>Ksh. (Million)</u>	<u>US \$ (Million)</u>
1985	3933	241
1986	4959	310
1987	5841	354
1988	6986	376
1989	8640	420
1990	10660	466
1991	11880	432
1992	14260	442
1993	24440	413
1994	28100	508
1995	25000	447

Source: Kenya Ministry of Tourism, 1996

At the moment, Kenya's tourism industry is not only threatened by political insecurity in the country, but also by other competitive tourist destinations in the region, particularly Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Tanzania. Until 1992, Kenya was the main tourist destination in the sub-region with 782,000 arrivals, followed by Zimbabwe with 738,000 arrivals. In the last ten years the situation has been reversed with more than 1.3 million arrivals in Zimbabwe in 1995 compared to 902,000 in Kenya. However, tourism in Kenya is much more profitable in terms of receipts with a total of US \$ 447 million in 1995 compared to US \$165 million for Zimbabwe. This difference reflects the predominance of European tourism in Kenya, which brings in more foreign currency than traffic towards Zimbabwe from bordering countries. Zimbabwe is developing its hotels

and resorts to attract more international tourists. The country also has a modern airport with a developed infrastructure (WTO, 1995).

South Africa is now the leading tourist destination in the region since the political transformations that took place in 1994. It has a developed infrastructure, a sophisticated banking system, modern telecommunications facilities, extensive minerals and other natural resources, and a spectacular collection of tourism attractions. According to the WTO 1996 statistics, the country has a gross domestic product of \$120 billion, a little bigger than Norway's and a little smaller than Thailand's' (WTO 1996 Report).

The launch of the international campaign "Explore South Africa 1995" has permitted the re-launch of the country's international tourist activities. The government's policy concerning tourism is based on close cooperation and coordination between the public and private sectors, as well as improved targeting of market segments. In addition, measures have been taken to encourage national investors in tourism. Important work has also been undertaken to improve the still insufficient transport network (WTO 1996 Report).

Several factors have shaped tourism development in South Africa in 1995. The first one is tourist product development. There has been increased cooperation, coordination and consultation between public tourism agencies and the private industry. This has led to the implementation of a clear marketing plan focusing on specific target markets. It is imperative for marketers to continually plan their analysis, implementation, and control activities. As Kotler points out in

his book “ a detailed marketing plan is needed for each business, product or brand” (Kotler 49).

South Africa is going in the right direction in the tourism industry. INDABA travel show has also been expanded leading to excellent market growth: 52% overseas market, 12.4% Africa. This is a 22.3% total growth (excluding contract and other workers). Transport developments have increased investment opportunities for domestic investors, and availability of funds from international capital markets. This has in turn led to an upsurge in domestic economy. Marketing and promotion activities have led to the liberation of the aviation policies leading to more airlines flying to South Africa. Three international airports have expanded.

However, there are a few challenges that still face South Africa. According to the WTO source, the perceptions of personal safety in South Africa have worsened, and there is still some hesitancy from outside investors. The country levies high import tariffs on luxury coaches, and the taxi system is relatively underdeveloped. There is also lack of 3,4, and 5 star hotel accommodations in certain centers (WTO 1996).

In Tanzania, a switch from a strict socialist economy to a more market oriented economy is already showing healthy signs. In the past years, staying in a hotel in Tanzania had been described as “an adventure in roughing it indoor” (WTO 1996). No effort was made to attract tourists because under the socialist government, it was argued that a flood of foreign tourists would corrupt morals

and spread capitalist ideology of consumerism. The infrastructure was in pathetic state. Hotels lacked such basic essentials like toilet paper. Tourists had to bring in everything they needed for their entire stay. Now, tourism has been designated a priority industry needed to inject desperately needed foreign exchange into the economy. Figure 1-3 shows the true picture of the leading tourist destinations in Africa.

Figure 1-3

Top African Destinations

Rank	Country	Arrivals (000)	% Change	% Total
			<u>1995/94</u>	<u>1995</u>
1	South Africa	4,488	22.3	24.0
2	Tunisia	4,120	6.8	22.0
3.	Morocco	2,590	-25.3	13.8
4.	Zimbabwe	1,336	21.6	7.1
5.	Kenya	902	4.5	4.8
6.	Botswana	678	6.4	3.6
7.	Algeria	520	-35.4	2.8
8.	Mauritius	422	5.2	2.3
9.	Swaziland	317	6.4	1.7
10.	Reunion	304	15.6	1.6
11.	Tanzania	294	12.2	1.6
12.	Ghana	286	5.5	1.5
13.	Senegal	280	16.7	1.5
14.	Cote D'Ivoire	188	19.7	1.0
15.	Nigeria	185	-4.1	1.0
16.	Zambia	159	3.9	0.8
17.	Malawi	155	0.6	0.8
18	Burkina Faso	151	13.5	0.8
19.	Benin	138	24.3	0.7
20.	Seychelles	121	10.0	0.6

20.	Uganda	121	1.7	0.6
Total	1-20	17,755	2.9	94.9
Total	Africa	18,707	2.4	100.0

Source: World Tourism Organization June 1996.

In order to appreciate the importance of conventions and exhibitions to tourism, we have to understand all the elements of tourism. St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission (CVC) has divided tourism into two major segments; Meetings and Conventions; and Leisure tourism. The first segment covers Trade Shows, Conventions, and other organized events like Concerts, Religious Meetings, and Sporting events. Leisure Tourism consists of Family tours, Group Tours, Family Reunions, and Incentive travel (St. Louis CVC6).

Tourism had been Kenya's second foreign exchange earner up to 1987 as depicted in figure 1-4, when it dislodged coffee to become the leading industry—a position it has maintained up to this moment. Kenya's main tourist attraction is its abundant wildlife resource. Kenya was also considered a transit point in Africa. It has a modern harbor and international airport that serves 32 international airlines, and a developed hotel industry in the cities as well as in the game reserves. At the time when South Africa was facing a world economic blockade, Kenya was the only country in East, Central and Southern Africa that had a developed infrastructure to host important international meetings and exhibitions.

Despite the negative publicity on Kenya, tourism is still the country's leading industry. This is mainly due to Kenya's nice weather and attractive tourist resources. Barbara Scofidio, in her January 1997 article "Annual Incentive Trends Survey" mentions Kenya as one of the more exotic locations in the world among Egypt and Fiji (Corporate Meetings & Incentive 28).

Figure 1-4

Comparison of Earnings (Coffee, Tea and Tourism)—K Pound Million

Year	Coffee	%	Tea	%	Tourism	%	Total
1985	230.7	17.6	191.41	14.6	196.7	15.0	1311.8
1986	388.5	25.1	172.8	11.2	248.0	16.0	1546.7
1987	194.6	12.8	163.4	11.4	292.1	20.4	1430.4
1988	244.8	10.2	185.4	9.7	349.3	18.3	1682.7
1989	203.8	8.6	272.9	13.7	432.1	21.7	1990.0
1990	221.0	7.2	314.5	12.3	533.0	20.8	2558.8
1991	218.5	7.2	381.5	12.6	594.6	19.6	3034.4
1992	230.1	6.6	485.0	14.0	713.0	20.6	3464.4
1993	571.8	15.8	971.0	26.9	1222.0	33.9	3607.0
1994	652.9	14.6	844.0	19.7	1405.0	32.8	4282.1
1995	722.2	14.8	899.5	18.5	1250.0	25.7	4867.0

Source: Kenya Bureau of Statistics 1995

Kenyatta International Conference Center (KICC) was built in the early 1970's and hosted its first international conference in 1973 when the World Bank decided to meet in Kenya. Since that time, the center has hosted numerous international conferences and exhibitions. One major strength of KICC was that it was the first and only facility of its kind in the region with the capacity to host

large meetings of up to 5,000 people. Nairobi was also favored as a destination for its world famous wildlife safaris just 20 minutes from the city center.

To fully appreciate the performance of Kenyatta International Conference Center, it is imperative to review the circumstances under which the facility was built. In the early 1970's, the ruling political party (Kenya African National Union), with public funding, decided to build its party headquarters in Nairobi. At that time, Kenya was still a one-party state and there was no clear distinction between the party and the government.

When the World Bank decided to meet in Nairobi, the construction of the facility had just been completed, and so the center was the natural choice for the venue of the meeting. This was the turning point for the facility. The ruling party realized that the center could be put to good use to earn the badly needed foreign exchange for the country. So, the ruling party abandoned its initial plan to move into the building and turned it into a convention center.

The center was placed under the management of the Department of Tourism, which markets the country's tourist attractions both locally and internationally. When KICC started its operation, it was not marketing oriented. Convention business happened by chance. It was not planned. The center management did not have a marketing objective. Most emphasis was on meeting management. The center had very little competition in the region. However, in the late 1980's Zimbabwe put up a purpose-built convention center in Harare. Although this facility was slightly smaller than KICC in size, it was more modern

and user-friendly. This posed a challenge to Kenya as the natural meeting venue in the region.

In an attempt to meet the converging competition, KICC set up a Marketing division and quickly began intensifying its marketing approaches. Three Marketing Officers were assigned to Europe, North America, and Asia, and an aggressive marketing campaign initiated. The officers were trained in Europe and the US in the marketing aspects of international conventions. KICC management learned that international travelers that preferred to meet in user-friendly facilities did not come to the center. Only those who were interested in pre- and post-conference wildlife safaris chose Nairobi. Delegates complained that the meeting rooms were not user friendly.

The plenary hall seating 5,000 people is too large and cannot be partitioned for smaller breakout sessions. The Amphitheater, which is still one of the most beautifully designed theaters in Africa had a leaking roof. KICC did not have a conference hotel. Neither did it have enough hotel beds within 5 minutes walking distance, as most convention centers should.

As early as 1986, KICC started forging for the formation of a convention bureau that would coordinate the marketing activities of all suppliers and meeting planners in the country. This however, was never to be because the center's management was transferred from the Department of Tourism and placed under a new Department of Arid and Semi-Arid Areas that was created in 1988. The new

management did not understand the conventions and exhibitions business, and did not bother to learn.

The new management disregarded the fact that the center's importance lay in its position as a foreign exchange earner for the country. The management was only interested in seeing full utilization of the facility on a daily basis regardless of the target market. They decided to focus on events like local banquets, weddings and pre-wedding parties, church services and crusades, festivals, and local exhibitions.

No market planning was done. They did not target any market in particular. Space rental prices were advertised in the local daily newspapers. The center was turned into some sort of "bazaar" (a market place). The new clientele in turn started to vandalize the facility. Anybody could walk in and out of the building without any security check. Plans to renovate the facility were shelved, and the ruling party moved into some of the offices that had been leased to international organizations.

Even under government management, KICC always achieved tremendous success in securing and servicing international meetings and events. This was largely due to the high performance management style practiced by the management at the time. This is a data-oriented approach to managing people at work that relies on positive reinforcement as a major way to maximize performance. Positive reinforcement and feedback were the key factors in KICC management. It was not possible to give tangible reinforcement to staff at that

time, so they received social reinforcement on a daily basis. This in turn boosted the morale of the staff and encouraged hard work and commitment. As Daniels states in his book Performance Management, "positive reinforcement creates a positive climate for accountability" (Daniels 54).

KICC has faced a turbulent existence since 1988. Its management has changed hands four times in less than ten years and the facility has continued to deteriorate. At the moment, a Board of Directors manages the center for the ruling party. A managing Director oversees the day-to-day running of the center with the help of one Conference Officer who manages events at the center. There is very little activity going on. The management has stopped hosting any international meetings because they realize that the facility is obsolete.

KICC is positioned as an exhibition facility open to anybody willing to rent space and exhibit any type of merchandise. There is no clear business objective for KICC since there are no measurable operating results. A marketing objective, which is the result of manipulating Product, Price, Place and Promotion, is lacking. KICC management has not addressed the question of how marketing will specifically help move the business closer to the business objective. There has been no increase in the market share since 1989. The center operates on public funds and so it does not matter to the management whether it makes a profit or not.

Some of the challenges facing KICC are total lack of professionalism, and unqualified management. The present Director and his Conference Officer have

no understanding of the convention and exhibitions business. The Director was given the job as a sign of appreciation to his tribe for supporting the ruling party. He spends most of his time either on the phone talking to his tribesmen or entertaining them in his office. In the late 70's and early 80's, all the professional staff at KICC attended international seminars on professional conference management and also toured other centers in different countries to compare and learn new management styles. The present staff has never had a chance to either attend an international seminar or tour other convention centers. According to the center's two-year calendar of events for 1995/97, only 33 events have been booked at the center.

The facility is not user-friendly. Two working elevators serve the 32-story building—one for the public and one for VIPs. The other two elevators have been out of service for several years. Kenya has an abundance of labor. During the early 70's up to the late 80's, the center utilized this labor resource by hiring over one hundred employees in the housekeeping department. Cleaning was a continuous process. The grounds were well kept and the facility was spotlessly clean. Today, the facility is filthy and in dire need of a face-lift. The grounds are in a pathetic state. People walk on the grass instead of using the sidewalks. Although the physical architectural beauty of the center is still evident, the facility has lost its prestige as the most modern convention center in the region.

KICC does not have a single computer. The staff usually hand write or type all paperwork. It is an obvious fact that any business must look to the future

and constantly change, or else it loses. KICC is not doing this. Communication is mostly by telephone. The staff does not have two-way radio communication system that is necessary in a convention center. The facility's furniture is obsolete. The old plastic chairs that came with the building are still used in some meeting rooms.

There is a legal tussle in court over the ownership of KICC at this very moment. The country is now a multi-party state and the opposition parties claim that KICC is indeed public property since public funds were used for its construction. The political instability experienced in Kenya since 1991 has also affected the general perception of Kenya as a convention venue. International delegates do not want to go to a country that is politically unstable even if it has out-standing tourist attractions.

Lack of a convention bureau or a Tourist Board in Kenya has not helped the conventions industry at all. KICC would not have undergone these numerous management changes if a convention bureau had managed it. Furthermore, it is also expensive and time consuming to market one facility like KICC worldwide. As Karen Talaid reiterates in her article Above & Beyond, "the extraordinary thing that CVBs do is quite simple—they take a lot of things off a meeting planner's plate" (Successful Meetings 63).

In the 80's, the center management had contracted a consultant in Geneva, Switzerland to market the center in Europe and follow up on sales leads made by Conference Marketing Officers at the facility. The center also used the services of

the Departments of Tourism and Foreign Affairs in foreign embassies to promote and market the facility in their respective countries. With KICC management now directly under the ruling party since 1992, the center does not enjoy the same privileges it had under the Department of Tourism.

The government needs to invest in the facility and remodel it to required standards in order to make KICC more competitive again. The question of a convention bureau must be addressed immediately. Kenya needs to set up an independent body that will market all the tourist facilities and attractions both locally and internationally. When meeting planners choose a destination, they want to experience everything about that destination. Only a convention and visitors bureau (CVB) has the expertise and ability to meet such needs quickly.

In the early 1970's with room taxes booming and more cities assuming responsibility for tourism development and visitor services, CVBs in the US began a departure from the European model in which conventions and tourism were kept as distinct entities. With conventions undergoing great change—namely, with the increase in family and spousal travel and trips that meshed business with leisure, the membership eventually agreed in 1974 to add “visitor” to the name ‘International Association of Convention Bureaus’ to reflect the transition. If anything, the “V” factor applies even more today, as people routinely use conventions as venues for family or personal vacations (Association Management 70). Children are a focus of the family once again, and a number of

key attitude measures suggest that Americans are finding significantly more satisfaction in family and home life.

Some of the benefits for conventions and exhibitors using a CVB are that they will find all the hotel rooms that an event needs at very special rates. The CVBs are also familiar with the tourist attractions in their own destination, and they save the meeting planner plenty of time with pre- and post-conference tours.

Although convention bureaus have been in use in the United States for quite some time now, many meeting managers still do not know how to work with them. According to a report by Amy Keen on "How to work with CVBs", the International Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus (IACVB) will soon launch a major marketing campaign on how to work with CVBs. One of the major reasons why the campaign is needed is that many corporations still rely on either a full-time meeting planner who also does many other unrelated jobs within the company and is unfamiliar with the meeting industry. There is also confusion about what the Chamber of Commerce does and what the CVB does. The difference is that the chamber wants your business to stay; a CVB wants your business to visit. According to one industry expert "CVBs are now making more of an effort to come to the client instead of letting the client seek them out" (Meeting Manager 44).

Since this study is using America's Center in St. Louis as a model for KICC, it is important to analyze the marketing efforts initiated by St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission (CVC). This is the Sales and marketing

organization that sells St. Louis City, and County as a convention and meeting site and as leisure travel destination through targeted and proactive efforts.

The Commission also operates and manages the America's Center, St Louis Convention Complex, which includes 502,000 square feet of prime space in six contiguous halls, the 70,000-seat Trans World Dome, a 1,411 seat lecture hall, the St. Louis Executive Conference Center, a 28,000 square-foot ballroom, and 84 flexible meeting rooms.

The St. Louis CVC is a quasi-government agency, chartered as a Commission by the state of Missouri. According to the CVC records, the organization is supported by 11/15 of the 3.75% tax paid on hotel sleeping rooms in St. Louis City and St. Louis County. The remaining 4/15 of the hotel tax is provided to the Regional Arts Commission, an organization that supplies grants to arts organizations in the St. Louis area (St. Louis CVC Annual Report 4). The CVC operations are divided into four main divisions

1. Tourism Sales & Marketing
2. Facilities
3. Convention Sales & Marketing
4. Public Relations

It is estimated that in 1993, some 84.5 million Americans traveled to attend conventions or meetings and spent \$40 billion in the host cities. According to the International Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus, each delegate stayed on average four days and spent an average of \$838 in the host

City. The association in charge of the convention spent on average \$124,217 to stage the meeting during a five-day stay. Each exhibitor added an average of \$3,752 during a three-day stay (Somerset 9).

Analysis of year-to-year comparisons by the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) validated some key benchmark numbers. Income from conventions, exhibitions, and meetings, which accounted for 32.1 percent of the total association revenue in 1995, climbed fractionally to 32.3 percent in the latest survey. And the number of associations planning future meetings outside the United States inched up from 49.7 percent to 50.5 percent (Convence 41).

In St. Louis, the hospitality industry is the second largest employer after health care with 46,248 workers. The St. Louis metropolitan area, with 6,392 square miles, has a population of 2,551,300. It is the sixth largest metro area in the number of headquarters of Fortune 100 companies. Tourism is therefore a very important factor in the city's economic development as shown in figure 1-5.

Figure 1-5
Economic Impact of
St. Louis Hospitality Industry

Estimated Visitor Expenditure:	\$1,849,550,000
Total jobs created	46,248
Total resident income (wages, Salaries And proprietary income generated)	\$1,052,407,000
Total government revenue generated	
State:	163,853,000
Local:	112,740,000

Source: St. Louis CVC Annual Report, 1996.

Associations don't exist to hold meetings, but meetings are a core line of business for most, and meetings mean travel, hotels, convention bureaus and centers, airlines, car rental companies, and for that matter, restaurants and retailers. The destinies of associations in virtually every field are inexplicably woven with trends in the hospitality industry. In 1996 fiscal year, St. Louis CVC's total budget was \$8,820,348. Of this amount, \$3,811,336 was spent on convention sales and services, \$2,736,042 on tourism sales and services, \$671,743 on administration, and \$258,373 on membership services. The advertising budget was \$2,061,800 (CVC Annual Report 4).

1996 was a wonderful year for the hospitality industry in general. Revenues and profits were up for hotels and airlines; investment showed signs of coming back; and a set of unprecedented, customer-friendly efficiencies has been put in place that promises continuing progress in years ahead. Expansion among convention centers has been remarkable. A conservative estimate of convention center space available or now under construction adds more than 10.5 million gross square feet of space. As one industry expert states, "the new and renewed centers are full of light, innovation, and are customer-friendly" (Association Management 73).

The America's Center in St. Louis is one such facility. According to the St. Louis CVC 1996/1997 marketing plan for convention sales, 1996 was forecasted to be the best year that local area hotels have experienced in the 90's with forecasted occupancy up 1% to 69%. This can be attributed to a pattern of

significant meetings and conventions growth that began in 1993 due to the addition of the America's Center's South expansion. The net effect was an additional 110,253 room nights, or 55% increase, generated in 1993 business. In 1994, total room nights increased by 23% to 378,234. Projections for 1996 indicated an 18.5% increase in group room nights to 446,480. As we look beyond 1997 as a result of the Trans World Dome and the America's Center expansion, the overall room nights generated from meetings and conventions are forecasted to grow annually from 1997 to 2001 (St. Louis CVC Marketing Plan 1).

At the St. Louis CVC, the Convention Sales and Marketing division is responsible for booking meetings, conventions, trade shows, sporting events, entertainment and special events into St. Louis and at the America's Center Convention complex. The department's sales staff works proactively with accounts that are assigned based on the geography and target market segments.

In addition to its St. Louis staff, the department operates satellite offices in two most productive feeder markets for St. Louis meeting and convention business—Washington, DC and Chicago. The department also assists meeting planners throughout every phase of planning and execution of their St. Louis conventions. Housing and registration assistance, a community-wide welcome program for convention groups, and the planning and implementation of customer site visits and familiarization trips are all part of the services provided by the department charged with keeping CVC customers informed and ready to re-book their groups into St. Louis.

The St. Louis CVC's Mission Statement which is "to maximize the economic impact of the visitor dollars to the community through effectively marketing the St. Louis area as a desirable convention and tourism destination while setting a standard of service excellence for the hospitality industry" (Annual Report 4), summarily describes the goal of the Commission.

Several Sales and Marketing activities were planned for the 1997 fiscal year. These included:

- 80 trips to primary and secondary markets;
- 984 outside calls planned by Washington, DC and Chicago staff;
- exhibitions at 29 tradeshows and follow-up leads;
- 110 individualized, one-on-one tours customized to client's needs;
- Send out a series of one-page letters to 500 level One convention prospects with supporting editorial articles on St. Louis;
- Target 6,500 key clients with the quarterly newsletters;
- Develop official St. Louis CVC Web Site on the internet to communicate St. Louis' meeting and convention amenities, and services to customers and meeting attendees;
- Development of a new destination promotion video;
- Address concerns of meeting planners through placement of stories in trade publications;
- Coordination of a community image campaign in cooperation with the St. Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association.

In the 1997 fiscal year, St. Louis CVC will spend \$2,061,800 or more than 20 percent of the year's annual budget to advertise the city's qualities as a convention and meeting site, and as a leisure travel destination to audiences in target markets. To complement the CVC's advertising efforts, a dedicated public relations program is at work supporting the positioning of St. Louis's amenities through an extensive agenda of press trips, news releases, and proactive solicitation of editorial placements about St. Louis in targeted domestic and international markets. Figure 1-6 shows the projected goals for 1997.

Figure 1-6

Fiscal year 1997 goals

Leads	900
Group Bookings	1,925
Definite Room Nights	95,600
Visitor Inquiries	350,000

Source: 1996/1997 St. Louis CVC Annual Report.

Following are the Primary Target Market Segments for America's Center and St. Louis;

Trade Shows: These are exhibitions for professionals from specific industries or technologies. The purpose of trade shows is to display current products, processes, or services for the given industry. Trade shows are sponsored

and produced by trade or technical associations, or by professional trade show management organizations. Conventions, meetings and seminars frequently accompany them. The industry is represented by International Association of Exposition Managers, whose members produce the overwhelming majority of all major trade shows in the United States.

Conventions: These events generally consist of privately held meetings of professional groups and associations for action on matters of common concern. Association members and/or affiliations wishing to share ideas attend these meetings. A convention can consist of a single meeting or a number of concurrent meetings throughout the event period. National conventions typically have a large number of out-of-state delegates. The convention industry is a major industry in the United States and constitutes a major source of income for destination cities, airline carriers, hotels and other related industries. Figure 1-7 shows future business projections for meetings and conventions in St. Louis.

Conventions and trade shows have become more homogeneous over the past several years. In the past, conventions used very little exhibit space in conjunction with their meetings, while trade shows used very few meeting rooms during the course of the event. Now, however, many association planners have included displays and exhibits of products and processes as part of their conventions, while many trade show producers are using meeting rooms to hold in-depth demonstrations and seminars in conjunction with their events.

Public Shows: Public shows are special interest events, which are designed to attract the general public and typically charge admission. Depending upon the size, location and type of merchandise being sold, attendance at public (consumer) shows is usually drawn from the local area. The expenditure made by these attendees therefore reflects a redistribution of existing dollars. Examples of public shows are boat shows, car shows, home and garden shows.

Meetings: Meetings are gatherings of individuals for the purpose of formulating and enhancing common goals and are generally smaller and more specific in their purpose than a convention. These could be corporate or association meetings. The St. Louis Executive Conference Center at America's Center is the venue for the meetings market. Typical users of the conference center are Medical, Pharmaceutical, Financial, and Insurance industries.

Other Events: These events may include graduations, lectures, religious, and other large assemblies, concerts, sporting events, motor sports, family shows and other such events.

Figure 1-7

Meetings/Conventions

Future Business Projections

<u>Year</u>	<u>Groups</u> <u>2000+</u>	<u>Room</u> <u>Nights</u>	<u>Groups</u> <u>1000-</u> <u>1999</u>	<u>Room</u> <u>Nights</u>	<u>Groups</u> <u>500-</u> <u>1000</u>	<u>Room</u> <u>Nights</u>	<u>Groups</u> <u>0-499</u>	<u>Room</u> <u>Nights</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>Group</u> <u>Rooms</u>
1996	12	206,465	17	87,165	20	43,300	330	110,550	446,480
1997	12	186,000	18	90,000	20	46,000	350	117,000	439,000
1998	13	208,000	18	90,000	20	46,000	360	120,600	464,600
1999	13	208,000	18	90,000	20	45,000	370	123,950	466,950
2000	14	224,000	19	95,000	21	48,300	380	127,300	494,600
2001	15	240,000	19	95,000	21	48,300	380	127,300	510,600
2002	15	240,000	19	95,000	21	48,300	380	127,300	510,600
2003	15	240,000	19	95,000	21	48,300	380	127,300	510,600

Source: St. Louis CVC 1996/1997 Marketing Plan

The Midwest region is one of the strongest in the country in both convention and tradeshow markets, primarily due to the area's concentrations in manufacturing, distribution, and population centers and its central location. This provides St. Louis with a ready Target Market within the region. Figure 1-8, however, shows a decrease in the occupancy at America's Center after expansion of the facility.

Figure 1-8

America's Center Utilization Past & Future

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Conv/Trade Shows #	16	17	23	29	30	37
Utilization Days	258	378	589	782	712	623
Estimated Occupancy	37%	30%	32%	43%	34%	28%
Consumer/Local #	32	47	52	41	41	66
Utilization Days	300	492	529	470	479	656
Estimated Occupancy	43%	38%	29%	26%	25%	30%
Total Events	48	64	75	70	71	103
Total Utilization	80%	68%	61%	69%	59%	58%

Source: St. Louis CVC 1996/1997 Marketing Plan.

The above Utilization/Occupancy percentage is based on 365 days X # of halls less construction days: 1992 Halls 3,4, and 5 = 400 total days; 1993 Halls 1,2, and 3 = 111 total days; 1994 Hall 5 = 43 total days; 1995 Hall 6 = 342 total days.

Figure 1-8 actually shows that America's Center, despite the expansion program it undertook to increase space availability, is under-utilized.

A competitive analysis review by the Sales and Marketing team at the CVC determined that 13 cities are St. Louis' primary competitors in the convention and tradeshow market. St. Louis is in the center of a regional market bordered by Minneapolis to the north, Denver to the west, San Antonio to the south, and Atlanta to the east. The majority of St. Louis' 13 primary competitive cities is planning, or has completed expansion of their convention facilities.

The St. Louis area currently maintains 3.5% of the supply space in the region and will increase their share to 4.4% after expansions occur. America's Center currently accounts for 4.1% of the supply and will account for 4.4% after planned expansions occur. "America's Center currently ranks 13th nationally with 2.7 million square feet (502,000 g.s.f. contiguous)" (10).

With the provisions of a new headquarters hotel, planned shopping and entertainment improvement (Laclede's Landing, St. Louis Center and Cupples Station), airport expansion (Southwest Terminal 2/98) and Lambert (2000), and light rail access to downtown, St. Louis is becoming more attractive faster than its central competition. Riverboat gaming has also fueled visitor counts in St. Louis as Graham confirms in his article, "Site File—Midwest." (Corporate Meetings & Incentives 77). Therefore St. Louis is positioned to substantially improve its competitive position within the meetings market from now until the year 2000.

In early 1993, St. Louis CVC began shifting its marketing focus from one hotel group meetings and promotional advertising towards a more balanced effort emphasizing America's Center and its larger high impact capabilities. This change in marketing direction and improving attributes of the St. Louis area are becoming factors influencing event making site selections previously reserved for cities like New Orleans, Atlanta, Dallas and Chicago (i.e. Cotter and Company, Primerica, Sherwin Williams, and 'Big 12').

The convention sales and marketing strategy at St. Louis CVC is divided into three main areas:

Eleven Sales staff market St. Louis as a convention and meeting site to corporations, associations, and social organizations and military, ethnic, reunion and fraternal (SMERF) groups using more than 300 hotel rooms.

Three Sales staff are deployed to market to corporations, associations, and SMERF groups using 50-1500 rooms with a primary emphasis on groups using 50-300 rooms per night. They use direct sales to backfill St. Louis hotels with short term meeting opportunities from 18-months in with an emphasis on 1997 business needs.

Two staff work to sell America's Center's Lecture Hall and Conference Center. Two others sell the center to tradeshow and convention groups, while two more staff sell to sports and special event groups and producers.

The Sales staff use direct sales, advertising, sales promotion and public relations to convey and support sales positioning. The target market for the

America's Center is associations and corporations for conventions and tradeshow from 1500 rooms to 5500 rooms per night with exhibit square footage needs up to 500,000 square feet.

Despite being modern and user friendly, America's Center faces some challenges in the convention business. During 1995/1996, St. Louis CVC, in conjunction with American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), and Research USA conducted two destination perception studies, surveying Association Executives in order to understand their perception of St. Louis and its 13 major competitors in the central corridor. The surveys were broken into 1st tier and 2nd tier competitive sets. The methodology used was similar in both sets. Five hundred-sixty surveys were returned. The results are within a range of 95% confidence. The factors considered to be most important by respondents (from a list of 11) when selecting a destination for a meeting are:

1. Meeting facilities
2. Hotel facilities
3. Overall affordability
4. Sales ability to Membership

Figures 1-9 to 1-11 show the highest and lowest rated destinations in the study. The first tier cities are the top five ranking cities in all categories. Even though St. Louis fits into the scheme as an 'upper level 2nd tier city', efforts are being made to improve its position and break into the first tier as indicated in the discussion and figures 1-9 and 1-10.

Figure 1-9

1st Tier Competition

(Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, New Orleans, San Antonio, and Denver)

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Highest Rated</u>	<u>Lowest Rated</u>
Air Transport	Chicago	San Antonio
City Image/Appeal	New Orleans	St. Louis
Climate	San Antonio	Chicago
Dining	New Orleans	St. Louis
Exhibit Facilities	Atlanta – tie Chicago – tie	St. Louis
Hotel Facilities	Chicago	St. Louis
Meeting Facilities	Chicago	St. Louis
Night Life	New Orleans	St. Louis
Overall Affordability	San Antonio – tie St. Louis – tie	Chicago
Salability to Membership	New Orleans	St. Louis
Tourism Appeal	New Orleans	St. Louis

Source: 1996 Research USA.

St. Louis was rated 10th against nine most favored destinations in the US in the first tier, but in the 2nd tier, St. Louis secured second position. Respondents rated the cities on how well suited each was for various types of meetings. Chicago and Atlanta received high ratings in all areas. New Orleans also received high ratings for annual meetings/conventions and for tradeshow. Of the seven destination cities studied, only Chicago had been a meeting site for over half of the associations surveyed. More than 40% had held meetings in Atlanta, New Orleans and Dallas. The cities in which the largest percentage plan to hold future

meetings within the 1st tier are Chicago (36.0%), Atlanta (29.5%), and New Orleans (26.7%).

Figure 1-10

2nd Tier Competition

(Louisville, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Kansas City, Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis, and Cincinnati)

Factor	Highest Rated	Lowest Rated
Air Transportation	St. Louis	Columbus
City Image/Appeal	Minneapolis	Cleveland – tie Columbus – tie
Climate	Louisville	Columbus – tie Cleveland – tie
Dining	Minneapolis	Columbus
Exhibit Facilities	Minneapolis	Columbus
Hotel Facilities	Minneapolis	Columbus
Meeting Facilities	Minneapolis	Columbus
Nightlife	Minneapolis	Columbus
Overall Affordability	Kansas City – tie Louisville – tie	Milwaukee
Salability to Membership	Minneapolis	Cleveland – tie Columbus – tie
Tourism Appeal	Minneapolis – tie St. Louis – tie	Columbus

Source: 1996 Research USA.

The cities (in the 2nd tier) in which the largest percentage of Convention and Exhibition facility users plan to hold meetings in the future are Minneapolis (38.0%), Kansas City (35.2%), and St. Louis (33.8%). According to the study, “respondents often mention St. Louis Arch, its mid-America location, and the

Mississippi River when they described the city” (CVC Marketing Plan 27). It is considered an easy city to reach with good facilities, but many consider the city boring, or uninteresting, with few activities. Others felt it had bad weather and crime problems” (CVC Marketing Plan 27). Figure 1-11 shows the overall perception rating of St. Louis against both its 1st and 2nd competition.

Figure 1-11

Average Rating for Overall Perception of
Each Destination

	<u>1st Tier</u>	<u>Rank</u>
New Orleans	8.2	1
Atlanta	8.0	2
Chicago	8.0	3
Dallas	7.6	4
Denver	7.6	5
San Antonio	7.3	6
St. Louis	6.4	7
	<u>2nd Tier</u>	
Minneapolis	6.8	1
St. Louis	6.7	2
Kansas City	6.5	3
Indianapolis	5.9	4
Cincinnati	5.8	5
Milwaukee	5.4	6
Cleveland	5.3	7
Columbus	5.1	8

Scale 1-10 (1=Poor; 10=Excellent).

Source: 1996 Research USA.

According to this competitive analysis research, there is need for the St. Louis CVC to develop a marketing strategy to target CEOs in the region since

they deem themselves the final decision maker in the choice of a destination. The city also needs to close perceptual gaps prioritized by importance as measured in the study. Major hotels in St. Louis must position themselves effectively within the national meetings markets. The marketing division of the CVC is already working towards achieving this goal.

In Peter Shures' article 'Second-Tier Cities Tout First Class Facilities', the convention center building boom of the past decade has turned a number of so-called 'second-tier' cities into serious challengers for major national conventions. "With rates soaring, availability tight, and room blocks being squeezed, the second-tier is emerging as the first choice for many conventions" (Convene 45).

St. Louis has the advantage of a modern multi-purpose meeting facility. With the Convention Center, a state-of-the-art domed stadium facility, and the St. Louis Executive Conference Center, America's Center is three meeting facilities in one. The center has 502,000 Sq. ft. of contiguous exhibit space, which can be partitioned into six separate Exhibition halls, including the 162,000-sq. ft. domed stadium/exhibit hall. The 70,000-seat Trans World Dome complex is tremendously flexible, and can be divided in half through a floor-to-ceiling, acoustically soundproof curtain. The stadium is also the ideal environment for sports and special events, with user-friendly features like retractable lighting and all weather docks.

America's Center comes equipped with 84 flexible meeting rooms, including 13 adjacent to the domed stadium /exhibition hall. It also features a

three level 1,411-fixed seat lecture hall with a permanent stage. The center also has a 28,000sq.ft. Grand Ballroom with luxury appointments. Special lighting and audio-visual features are available to ensure a fabulous banquet or party.

St. Louis Executive Conference Center at America's Center is the first of its kind inside a convention center. This unique addition has three individual meeting suites, each including a private lounge and general session room with adjacent break out space. This is the perfect venue for focused staff training and strategic planning sessions. In addition, there are four individual conference rooms plus an executive boardroom, which are ideal for high-level board meetings.

A Convention Center Manager manages America's Center. There is also a Manager for the Trans World Dome who is assisted by the Director of Entertainment & Sports Services. A Director with the help of three Event Managers and an Administrative Assistant manages the convention and tradeshow services. The Director of Building Operations oversees the overall maintenance of the entire facility, while a supervisor, with the help of three assistants and three part-time utility workers undertake housekeeping. Whenever there is an event at the center, teamsters from the St. Louis Labor Union are contracted to undertake housekeeping. The center also has its own security personnel but it occasionally contracts the local police in some special cases. A Director, two Convention Service Coordinators, and an Administrative Assistant manage the Executive Conference Center.

St. Louis Convention Center has received high ratings from most clients. Facility users rate the Event Management department as excellent and the facility is user-friendly. However, during move-in, many show organizers have complained of confusion in the docking area due to congestion whenever there are concurrent events at the center. Some show organizers are unhappy with St. Louis being a unionized city. This means that teamsters from the union must work the show. Teamsters must be contracted for a minimum of three hours. Green highlights some of the problems posed by contracted union labor in his article "Convention Centers". These include horrendous work rules; triple overtime charges; minimum staff levels; and excessive numbers of sub-foremen and stewards. If the job at hand requires less time, the labor becomes very expensive on the part of the show organizer who has to pay for the extra time. However, some associations that have held previous meetings/events in more expensive first-tier cities like Chicago are pleased with the labor union in St. Louis because it is cheaper, fast and efficient.

Although all the staff at America's Center are equipped with a two-way radio for easy communication, the flow of information is still a challenge because the facility does not have a main-frame computer onto which all departments can be hooked for easy access to information. Staff at the center rely on hard copy, which is sometimes out-dated or lacking. The housekeeping department is most often affected by this shortcoming since it is caught up in frequent changes in room setting, often without prior knowledge.

In conclusion, St. Louis America's Center performance is on the rise according to the 1996/1997 Marketing Plan. The next few years will be an indicator of how well the center can compete in the convention and exhibition business-marketing environment. Expansion to the facility has greatly increased the number of visitors to St. Louis. The Trans World Dome at America's Center, which is the home of the St. Louis Rams, has contributed greatly to the economic importance of the facility and the city in general. America's Center welcomed the addition of the 70,000 seat dome which is connected to the rest of the center, bringing it into the forefront of convention centers in the world by setting the standard for space, flexibility and service.

However, there are still areas to be cautious about, like the challenge of St. Louis' perception as a destination. Some destination managers feel that St. Louis is a boring city without enough free attractions that make up an exciting destination. They also disqualify the city on the basis of poor weather—severe winters, with hot and humid summers.

The St. Louis CVC has the expertise and facilities needed to improve the city's position in the convention industry. St. Louis can stay ahead of its competitors by adopting the right strategic and tactical marketing approaches. A mainframe computer at America's Center is necessary to improve the communications problem at the facility.

The advertising budget of \$2,061,800 allocated by CVC is inadequate. The city needs at least \$3 million in order to effectively reach its

target market. The St. Louis CVC is working tirelessly to increase its membership and provide more exciting activities to its visitors. This should increase the city's revenue and budget.

One major target market that the city should exploit is the multicultural minority business. At the moment, the CVC is targeting this market and even publishes a St. Louis Multicultural Guide specifically for this market. However, this is a very sensitive market that must be approached cautiously. Minorities, for historical reasons, want to go to the cities that appreciate them more, and are always looking for cities that have minorities in senior positions. The St. Louis CVC needs to do more than publish the multicultural guide to convince this target market that the city and the convention center are diversity friendly. There is also a need for more diversity within the CVC management. There are only two African Americans in senior management positions at the CVC and two more at America's Center.

Most hospitality officials are finally understanding that the multicultural travel and tourism of African Americans, Hispanics and Asian Americans, specifically, is big business. In the article 'Minority Meetings Playing the Market', a study by the Travel Industry Association of America (a Washington, DC based company) estimated this business to generate \$50 billion annually. At least \$12.6 billion of that annual figure goes to business travel, of which \$1 billion is spent on meetings and conventions (Meetings & Conventions 53). This is a market that the St. Louis CVC can tap if the proper groundwork is done.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism is the world's largest industry today. Somerset, in his book 'The Big Picture' discusses the good news for the world's travel industry, which is closely tied to world peace. He believes that the world is enormously more peaceful today than it was 15 years ago.

From long experience, the travel industry knows that the two conditions, which sharply reduce international travel, are war and economic recession. When a region's economy grows both domestic and international travel grow with it. When the threat of war or terrorism recedes, tourism begins to prosper (Somerset 6).

It is no wonder then that in 1995 alone, domestic and international tourism together stimulated over 200 million jobs worldwide and contributed 11.4% of the world's gross domestic product. "In the US, some 85.4 million Americans traveled to attend convention/meetings and spent \$40 billion in the host cities" (14). The two statements by Somerset emphasize the importance of tourism in general and convention/meetings business to the world economy.

Peter Shure concurs with these statements in his article 'An Irresistible Force Meets an Immovable Object'. He states that income from conventions, exhibitions, and meetings, which accounted for 32.1 percent of total association revenue in 1995, climbed fractionally to 32.3 percent in the 1996 survey. If that

sounds like a forecast for US economic growth, it is because association expositions have historically been a reliable economic indicator. Association members of Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) confirm Shure's observation. "The growth trend in this industry will continue into 1997, albeit at a somewhat slower pace" (Convener 41).

Meetings are a core line of business for most economies. Meetings mean travel—hotels, convention bureaus and centers, airlines, car rental companies, restaurants and retailers. The growth of the industry is on the rise. As Elissa Matulis in her February 1997 article "The Hospitality is Thriving" observes, "Revenues and profits are up for the hotels and airlines; investment is coming back; and a set of unprecedented, customer-friendly efficiencies has been put in place that promise continuing progress in years ahead" (Association Management 73).

Even though Somerset cites negative publicity as one of the major factors that have affected the tourism industry in Kenya, an annual incentive trends survey of 1996 by Fitchburg, an independent firm in Massachusetts mentions Kenya as one of the more exotic locations in the world along with Fiji and Egypt (Corporate Meetings & Incentive 28). This means that Kenya has a chance to reposition itself and capture its place in international tourism.

The World Tourism Organization's 1996 annual report on tourism market trends indicate a drop in the number of visitors to Kenya from 1992 to 1995 but shows an increase in earnings for Kenya as compared to Zimbabwe. "This reflects

the predominance of European tourism in Kenya, which brings in more foreign currency than traffic towards Zimbabwe from bordering countries” (WTO 1996).

The report also reveals some of the challenges Kenya faces from some of its competitors in the region—namely, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Tanzania. South Africa is also facing its own challenges of crime and violence. Warren Strugatch, in his article ‘International Venues—South Africa’ quotes Nick Seewer, the Managing Director of Orient Express Hotel’s African properties on the issue. “The nations’ ‘window of opportunity’ may narrow unless the government bears down on crime and violence” (EXPO 47). He also cites foreign exchange rules and regulations, and labor unions as negatives to the economic growth of South Africa.

The convention business is a very competitive industry. Convention and Visitors Bureaus have a much greater role to play now than they did in the past. As Amy Keen, an industry expert points out, “meeting planners are relying more and more on the services of CVBs” (Meeting Manager 42). The convention Service Managers can help a corporate meeting planner by lining up temporary staff members to work the meeting so that key personnel can remain at the home office and keep it running during the meeting. Tasks like doing nametags and manning the registration desk are better left to the local people. The corporate meeting manager is therefore looking for destinations that offer as many services as possible. This makes his work easier and leaves him enough time to concentrate on the technical planning of the meeting. Talaid concurs with this

statement in her article: Above & Beyond. “The extraordinary thing that CVBs do is quite simple—they take a lot of things off a meeting planner’s plate” (Successful Meetings 63).

CVBs are now offering more services than ever before. Katherine Lee, Director of Research contracts for Cotton praises the Greater Greenville Convention and Visitors Bureau, North Carolina for their exceptional service. “We had someone get ill during a conference, and that contact with the CVB was instrumental in getting us medical facilities”, Lee says (40). This is clearly a service that would normally be offered by a hotel but CVBs are undergoing tremendous transformation and are able to do more.

In some places, especially in the US, CVBs are becoming increasingly involved in governmental activities related to funding sources. Some cities have eroded the tax base while others are cutting back city budgets leaving city and state governments salivating over money generated from hotel room taxes. This has forced most CVBs to become lobbyists for budgets, and for their own being. Marion Szurek, a CEO in the industry for 17 years articulates her opinion over this would-be raid on hotel tax revenue. “Politicians are shooting themselves in the foot when they think about reducing or cutting off use of industry taxes to promote the state” (Association Management 71).

Bureau chiefs now have new responsibilities of determining the future health of their city’s economies and working for their local meeting and hospitality industry in ways they couldn’t imagine just a few years ago. Local

governments have finally recognized the meetings and hospitality industry as a significant contributor to cities' economies. This discovery has created major changes in how bureaus operate—interaction with political entities has become absolutely necessary.

Patrick Moscaritolo, President of Greater Boston CVB sums up the roles played by bureau chiefs everywhere in the 1990s:

I am the chief marketer of the city; chief educator and lobbyist for the industry before city councils, state legislators, even federal agencies and officials; chief negotiator between parties with different views on how this city's hospitality industry should evolve; and chief cheerleader to remind this industry just how powerful it is in this town (Successful Meetings 102).

In St. Louis, the CVC not only operates the convention center, but the adjacent Trans World Dome as well. Bob Bedell, St. Louis CVC chief Executive Officer sees himself not only as a facility manager, but the facility operator of a football team's stadium as well. Furthermore, the hospitality industry in St. Louis is second only to Health Care, and the public and private sectors know it, observes Bedell. "So now they have greatly increased expectations for us to produce results for the community" (101).

Kenyatta International Conference Center (KICC) is in a very difficult position as far as its future in international Convention business is concerned. With CVBs performing most tasks that independent suppliers used to perform, the

center cannot be effective in servicing visitor needs. KICC previously has not been too concerned with factors such as competition, economic conditions, negative publicity, or marketing ramifications. The need for a Convention and Visitors Bureau was always there before but it was not urgent. A time has come when KICC must address all the above concerns in order to stay competitive in the industry. Wildlife resources alone will not bring major conventions to the center.

In an effort to study marketing skills that prevail at KICC, primary research was conducted via interviews with the management and personal observation by the researcher. Literature on the facility is limited, and in most cases, the management doesn't want to give out any information. This is mainly due to the management's suspicion about the civil suit instigated by the opposition parties in Kenya regarding KICC ownership. A booking list was used to determine the utilization pattern, while data from Kenya Bureau of Statistics, a government body that compiles data on all public and private projects in the country was used to determine the general tourism trends in Kenya.

In St. Louis, the CVC produces an annual report and updates its marketing plan every year. The annual report gives a general idea of the operations of the CVC, the budget, and elaborates on the major concerted efforts different divisions within the CVC are making to achieve the Commissions' business goal. As the CVC chief puts it in the executive summary, "we will communicate the local

hospitality industry's expansion projects and we look forward to continued growth in the future" (CVC Annual Report 3).

A Tourism and Convention Sales department of the CVC undertakes the sales and marketing of the city's facilities. The tourism sales target market is within a radius of 100-300 miles of St. Louis. Convention Sales target market on the other hand is countrywide. The convention sales team is divided into three groups—Destination Sales for meetings and conventions; Convention Center Sales for conventions and tradeshow; Sports and Entertainment Sales (responsible for attracting special events to the Trans World Dome and Lecture Hall) and Advertising (which consists of targeting advertising programs for convention and tradeshow markets as well as special events in the Dome).

Tour operators are now interested in packaging St. Louis as a destination since riverboat gaming arrived in Illinois in 1993 and at the St. Louis riverfront in 1994. "Riverboat gambling has fueled visitor count in St. Louis, Kansas City, and other Midwest River towns." (Graham 77). Additionally, Branson's popularity has caused a number of major tour operators to include St. Louis in their tours. However, according to the CVC Marketing Analysis, Branson's growth seems to have reached a plateau, as new destinations like Myrtle Beach are coming on strongly (CVC Marketing Plan 2).

The CVC's Public Relations in 1995, came up with a publicity program promoting the America's Music Corridor (AMC) concept (a 700-mile long tract of land along the Mississippi between St. Louis and New Orleans) which has

generated considerable interest for 1996 and beyond. This program promotes St. Louis for its Blues heritage, Memphis for Ragtime and Rock 'n' Roll, and New Orleans for its famous Jazz. Tourists start in St. Louis where they spend a few days, then move on to Memphis, and end in New Orleans.

The department also initiated a new campaign targeting family reunions in 1995 with the primary target being African Americans. As a result, the 1995 effort produced 144 family reunions and 14,519 booked room nights—an increase of 78% over 1994. “In 1994, the direct economic impact generated by multi-day groups in St. Louis was \$28,973,662. These groups produced 107,182 booked room nights for St. Louis hotels/motels” (2).

The multicultural market is a big business that St. Louis can tap into successfully. The CVC however needs to concentrate its efforts on how to win this market because of the nature of its sensitivity.

Historically, minority-meeting groups have been hard-pressed to find places that would make them feel welcome and their business valued. Mark Smith, a Convention Manager for Detroit based Gospel Music Workshop of America is quoted as saying that when choosing a destination, he observes multicultural representation on a site inspection. “I’d like to feel that there is some minority representation in the decision making positions” (Meetings & Conventions 54).

The situation in the hospitality industry isn’t much different than the rest of corporate America. The St. Louis CVC has only two African Americans in top

management and two more in management positions at America's Center while whites overwhelmingly hold all other positions. The CVC could court planners for minority groups by educating local hospitality officials about minority business; helping to establish a network between the local minority community and national minority associations; visibly representing various cultures at all hospitality levels; and supporting minority professional associations.

The hospitality industry (particularly convention/meetings) in Kenya faces different challenges. Lack of qualified management is one major challenge. This does not mean that the country lacks qualified people. Nepotism, tribalism, and favoritism are major obstacles here. Loyalty is valued and people are hired according to their tribal links instead of merit. Without a convention bureau to manage the facility, market the destination and provide all the required services, KICC cannot compete in today's market.

The entire facility is in dire need of renovation. KICC was built at a time when user-friendliness was not a major issue in construction. That has changed over the years. Conference facility users are looking for more than external beauty. They want a facility that has a workable docking area for easy loading and unloading of equipment; easily partitioned rooms that are completely sound-proof for break out sessions; escalators to facilitate faster movement to other levels; wheel-chair accessibility; bright and cheerful rooms; and the convenience of a modern communication system.

Marketing KICC is a major challenge for management. Many businesses mistakenly think of marketing only as selling and promotion. As Philip Kotler states in his book 'Principles of Marketing', "marketing must be understood not in the old sense of making a sale—'selling'—but in the new sense of satisfying customer needs" (Kotler 6).

Many convention facilities in the USA are trying to identify the needs of their customers in order to satisfy them effectively. In the article "Arenas—Ask the Customer", Bill Chiesa points out that customer surveys if properly done can pay big dividends for your facility (Facility Manager 41).

KICC management needs to create a recognition of the center as a purposeful, future-directed, and profit oriented facility. Customer satisfaction must become a number one obsession of the center management. Kenya has a lot of advantages over her competitors as a destination in Africa. Some political practices that are detrimental to the country's economic growth like nepotism must be discarded in order to progress.

Regional competition from South Africa can be countered since that country is also facing some serious challenges of its own. Some of the negatives cited by Nick Seewer for South Africa are crime and violence; foreign exchange rules and regulations; inflation; and labor unions. In June 1996 there were nearly 2 million serious crimes reported in South Africa, about half of them unsolved (EXPO 47). This makes Kenya's security problem pale in comparison.

In closing this literature review, KICC will use only the applicable aspects of marketing strategies from Americas Center and the CVC since the market scenario for the two centers is not entirely the same. The direction of future marketing strategies can be designed after scrutinizing former events in each convention center.

CHAPTER III

SELECTIVE REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH

Presentation of Findings

This project was undertaken for the purpose of analyzing the performance pattern of the America's Center in St. Louis and using its success to come up with useful and practical recommendations for Kenyatta International Conference Center in Kenya.

Primary Research

Feedback was elicited via personal interviews with department heads at St. Louis CVC; the America's Center and the Director of KICC.

Secondary Research

Publications including St. Louis CVC Marketing Plan and Annual Report, books, trade magazines, and industry reports will complement primary research.

Interview Purpose

1. To ascertain KICC and America's Center utilization patterns.
2. To determine marketing strategies used by the two centers to attract events.
3. To serve as a vehicle for both management and employees to express impressions and suggestions for their facility.
4. To determine the positioning strategies of St. Louis and Kenya as tourist and convention destinations.

5. To determine the management credentials, talent, and capacity, knowledge and skills to run a convention center competitively and profitably.

6. To formulate a workable Marketing Strategy for KICC based on America's Center's success.

Literature on St. Louis CVC and the Americas Center were reviewed and personal interviews carried out with all the department heads at St. Louis CVC and the America's Center. The Managing Director of Kenyatta International Conference Center was also interviewed. The intent was to provide a summary of strengths and weaknesses at both facilities, with the outcome resulting in suggestions for the most practical, cost-effective plan of action for KICC's future survival program. This research will rely on two interviews of the heads of departments of Convention Sales and Marketing, and Tourism Sales and Marketing at the CVC, as well as literature from the St. Louis CVC 1996/97 Marketing Plan.

The St. Louis CVC 1996/97 Marketing Plan outlines the Commission's objectives, target markets, and strategies used by each department to achieve their objectives.

Following are St. Louis CVC's five major target markets for Convention Sales and Marketing department (1996/97):

1. Small meetings
2. Conventions/Tradeshows

3. Public/Consumer Shows
4. Sports & Entertainment Events
5. Membership

Personal Interviews

The Director of Convention and Tradeshow Services at America's Center, Sue Nickrent was also interviewed. Sue has been at the center for over six years and manages a staff of three Event Managers and one Administrative Assistant. The Convention and Tradeshow Services Department is charged with the day-to-day management of all the events that take place at the convention center.

Sue and her Event Managers have to ensure that the client's needs are met at all times. Once an event is booked at the center, Sue assigns it to one of the Event Managers who are to contact the client to get all the requirements. This could be 24 months out. The Event Manager then prepares a contract listing all the required services and facilities together with the charges for the same. From that time until the event is staged, the Event Manager is the direct link between the client and America's Center. He / She arranges for an appreciation pre-conference reception between the client and America's Center to thank the client for selecting the center. The Event Manager then meets with all the relevant departments (Catering, Decorator, Housekeeping, Security, Maintenance, Audio-Visual, Electric, and Telephone Services) to brief them on the clients' requirements.

The Event Manager is also responsible for preparing an Event Specifications form listing all the rooms that will be used for the event and the required services for each room with the specific times. This list is distributed to all the departments ahead of time so that proper arrangements can be made for the event.

The department also conducts a post-event meeting with the client to review the success of the event. During this meeting (which is attended by all the relevant departments), the client is asked to rate all the services provided by America's Center against other facilities in which he/she has held previous events. The client is also asked for suggestions for future improvement and whether he/she would return to the center in the near future.

Carole Moody, the Director of Tourism at St. Louis CVC is responsible for sales and marketing plan development and implementation, cooperative marketing partnerships and product development. Carole has a wealth of experience in the tourism industry. She heads a department with seven full-time staff. Carole's department also cooperates with Missouri Division of Tourism to market St. Louis both nationally and internationally.

Now that the requirement for conducting this research has been established, the feedback will be analyzed and marketing proposals and recommendations formulated for Kenyatta International Conference Center.

Information gained from the two major interviews with selected heads of departments at the St. Louis CVC as well as literature from the 1996/97 CVC Marketing Plan is discussed below:

Convention Sales and Marketing Division

The Sales and Service department has a staff of 24 managers selling meetings and conventions. Of these, 12 deal with destination sales with two in the regional offices of Chicago and Washington, D.C. Eight of these managers target groups that use 1000 plus hotel rooms while 4 managers target groups using 500 rooms or fewer. Five managers handle America's Center Sales and service the needs of all meetings. They assist in convention sales effort; selling public shows as well sports and entertainment events. The remaining two managers for Membership Sales sell benefits of CVC/Hospitality industry to St. Louis companies.

Positioning Statement

St. Louis offers more than most of its 13 competitors. The city's opportunities are:

St. Louis' abundance of restaurants, nightlife, arts, history, diversity and attractions offer uniqueness to meeting attendees.

St. Louis' America's Center is the best of its competition in terms of space, user-friendliness, uniqueness of the Executive Convention Center, and accessibility to the Dome.

St. Louis' central location (Air, Road, mass Transit) help to build meeting attendance.

A billion dollars of development is turning St. Louis into a First Tier convention city.

In the small meetings target market, groups that use under 500 rooms per night (can be contained into one hotel) with a lead time of 18 months or less are identified and targeted. The primary markets are Regional/Midwest; corporate, association, military, religious, and social meetings.

Another target market is Conventions/Tradeshows. This includes groups using more than 1000 rooms per night, using the convention center, and have a lead-time of 18 months or more. The primary markets in this category are: National, Corporate, Association and Religious meetings.

Public/ consumer shows normally utilize America's Center. This category is characterized by minimal hotel use, public ticketed events, with a lead-time of 14 months or less. The primary market is St. Louis, Regional; Trade Associations; and Independent producers.

Sports and entertainment events utilize the Trans World Dome and the Lecture Hall at America's Center. They normally require a lead time of 12 months or less. The primary markets for these categories are Regional; Amateur and Professional sports organizations; Independent producers of concerts and family entertainment.

Membership market consists of hospitality-related businesses and allied businesses. The primary markets are Corporate St. Louis, City and County.

Business Objective

The objective of the convention sales staff is to develop leads obtained through prospecting, tradeshow attendance, site trips, telemarketing, direct sales and advertising. According to the CVC Marketing Plan 1996/97, increased professionalism in the area of sales qualification, presentation skills, and closing will be emphasized (CVC 31).

This team also intends to increase usage of the entire complex at America's Center for conventions and trade shows by attracting full building users, or booking overlapping conventions which will help to stabilize the occupancy levels in St. Louis hotels.

Marketing Strategies

1. The team has developed cost proposals which, coupled with the hotel package and service program, attracts clients to St. Louis. They also maintain and rebook all annual public ticketed consumer shows which represent nearly 50% of the America's Center annual budget, and solicit smaller public events to fill the center 14 months out.

2. The department plans to improve the awareness that Meeting Planners have of St. Louis and the enhanced convention package now being offered by the city. It also intends to determine truly viable business for St. Louis on the East Coast.

3. In the West, they will utilize personal calls, phone solicitation, tradeshow, mailings, special events and other types of client contact to communicate the message that St. Louis is an upcoming, first-tier city.

4. Use the "funnel approach" to move clients through the sales process as follows:

Prospects to

Hot Prospects to

Tentatives to

Definates-those that decide to come to St. Louis.

5. Cultivate contacts within the local community to help support the sales team efforts.

6. Build and maintain client relationship through monthly direct mailing of collateral pieces, birthday cards, Christmas cards, press releases, etc.

7. The department has planned 30 sales trips to both primary and secondary markets in the West, 480 outside sales calls in the Mid-Atlantic, and a sales trip on the East Coast every 6 to 8 weeks during this fiscal year. Each trip is expected to yield between six and seven appointment calls to targeted focus accounts per day. These calls will follow-up on bid proposals and move the client towards closing on business for America's Center. In addition, five personal calls will be made weekly in the local market to new prospects in order to increase visibility of the St. Louis Executive Center.

8. Sports and Entertainment Sales will develop relations with existing local key concert promoters (Contemporary Productions, Fox Concerts) and sports promoters (Del Wilbur) to drive events to the Dome and Lecture Hall. Relationships with other market promoters in Chicago and Detroit will also be explored. The team intends to create and maintain a "focus event target list" to pursue new and repeat business in conjunction with the St. Louis Sports Commission.

Telemarketing

The role of Telemarketing is crucial to the sales efforts at the CVC. The Telemarketing team will handle groups that require over 150 rooms this fiscal year. They will also determine the initial level of interest for all targeted business and determine next step activity. Through the efforts of the Telemarketing team, approximately 2,965 accounts will be contacted in the Mid-Atlantic region. Prospecting calls will focus on convention clients who have expressed interest in St. Louis and America's Center, as well as producers of consumer shows.

Tradeshows

Attending tradeshows is the most cost-effective approach to reaching a large volume of meeting and convention planners. In 1996/97, the sales team will attend 28 tradeshows—10 on the East Coast, 7 in Mid-Atlantic and 14 in the Western region. Eleven of these tradeshows are primarily geared towards the convention market and one at sports and entertainment (CVC Marketing Plan 36).

Familiarization Tours/Site Visits

The Convention Sales Department will host a number of site visits by Meeting Planners and convention decision-makers throughout 1996/97. One familiarization trip will be hosted for planners from all market segments. America's Center Sales staff will participate with Destination Sales in bringing two to five clients to St. Louis during the scheduled familiarization tour trip.

These will include:

- a) Group Tours—Clients will have one meal at the Center in an effort to showcase the America's Center food product. An overview tour of the Center will also be conducted.
- b) Individual Sites—America's Center will be a key component for client(s) visiting St. Louis. An overview on the city, hotel package, convention center and tours of the building will focus on client needs (CVC Marketing Plan 37).

Tourism Sales and Marketing Division

The department targets six major markets:

- a) Consumer Marketing (Families)

These include heads of household aged 25-54 with an annual income of \$35,000+ within a 100-300 mile radius of St. Louis.

Primary markets include Kansas City, Memphis, Paducah/Cape

Girardeau, Evansville, Terre Haute, Quad Cities, Indianapolis, Chicago, Des Moines, Tulsa, Louisville, Nashville and Little Rock.

Positioning Statement

The department plans to continue positioning St. Louis as a perfect family destination and a place where all ages are guaranteed fun for less money year-round. St. Louis' high appeal for children will be emphasized.

Goals

The department expects to achieve an 18% call connection rate to hotels via IVR "Direct Connect" System; 350,000 visitor inquiries (including couples) from July 1, 1996-June 30, 1997; 110,000 inquiries from July 1-Dec. 31, 1997.

b) Consumer Marketing (Couples)

This target market includes adults aged 25-54 with household income of \$35,000+ within 100-300 mile radius.

Positioning Statement

St. Louis will be positioned to adults and couples as a place with character, history and diversity. It is exciting with sophistication, great shopping, culture, fine dining, nightlife and riverboat gaming—great for weekend getaways, as well as for special occasions.

Goals

Eighteen percent call connection rate to hotels via the IVR "Direct Connect" System; 350,000 visitor inquiries (including families) from July 1, 1996-June 30, 1997; 110,000 inquiries from July 1-Dec. 31, 1997.

c) Group Tours (Group Tour Leaders)

The target market includes group leaders representing churches, banks, retired employees groups and others within 100-500 mile radius (one day's drive).

Positioning Statement

St. Louis will be positioned as the best city to package with Branson and the only city (packaging with Branson) that has enough appeal to stand on its own.

Goals

In this target market, the department hopes to achieve 7,700 booked room nights from July 1-Dec. 31, 1996; 10,500 booked room nights from Jan. 1-June 30, 1997; and 8,500 booked room nights from July 1-Dec. 31, 1997.

d) Group Tours (Tour Operators and Travel Agents)

The target market is tour operator members of National Tour Association, American Bus Association, Ontario Motor coach Association, National Motor coach Network and travel agent

members of the American Society of Travel Agents who plan leisure group travel. In conjunction with Mississippi River Country and America's heartland, Japan, Canada and Europe will be targeted.

Goals

Twenty nine thousand and one hundred booked room nights from July 1-Dec. 31, 1996; 29,500 booked room nights from Jan. 1-June 30, 1997; and 31,100 booked room nights from July 1-Dec. 31, 1997.

e) Family Reunions

This segment targets African-American families with household incomes of \$35,000+ within 100-300 mile radius of St. Louis.

Major markets will include Chicago, Kansas City, Memphis and Indianapolis.

Positioning Statement

St. Louis will be positioned in this market as a city with a rich African-American heritage. St. Louis CVC will also be positioned as an organization that is very interested in saving the planner time and effort and helping to make their reunion a success.

Goals

Five thousand nine hundred and twenty booked room nights from Jul. 1-Dec. 31, 1996; 9,650 booked room nights from Jan. 1-June 30, 1997; 6,350 booked room nights from July 1-Dec. 31, 1997.

f) Incentive planners

Target market includes Incentive planner members of the society of Incentive Travel Executives (U.S. and international); Midwest corporations and users of non-resort incentive travel identified in "Premium, Incentive Travel Buyers Directory".

Positioning Statement

St. Louis will be positioned as a destination with everything expected of a major city, except major prices, including cultural opportunities, fine dining, nightlife and unique venues for theme parties.

Goals

The department hopes to book 1,550 room nights from July 1-Dec. 31, 1996; 1,650 room nights from Jan. 1-June 30, 1997; 1,660 room nights from July 1- Dec. 31, 1997.

The two personal interviews and the St. Louis CVC 1996/97 Marketing Plan confirm that St. Louis CVC is succeeding in improving the perception of the city as a destination in the tourism and meetings industry.

In 1994, the direct economic impact generated by multi-day group tours in St. Louis was \$28,973,662. These tours produced 107,182 booked room nights for St. Louis. According to Carole Moody, tour operators are now interested in packaging St. Louis as a destination since riverboat gaming arrived in Illinois in 1993 and St. Louis' riverfront in 1994. The Tourism Department initiated a new campaign in 1995 targeting family reunions. The primary target segment is African-American travelers. This first year effort produced 144 family reunions and 14,519 booked room nights for St. Louis hotels/motels.

St. Louis CVC needs to develop more new and unique products like the American Music Corridor (AMC) in order to counter the stiff competition from its competitors. The commission has qualified human resources and an ultra-modern facility.

Table 4-1 shows the accomplishments of St. Louis CVC Convention Sales and Marketing Division in 1996.

Figure 4-1

Accomplishments

	1995 Calendar Year	1996 Calendar Year
Business Leads Generated:	742	401 (To June 30)
Future Confirmed Bookings:	404	193 (To June 30)
Future Room Nights Booked:	530,762	263,617 (To June 30)
Major Conventions Hosted America's Center Future	44	49 (Projected for 1996)
Revenue Booked (projected)	\$3,975,807	\$7,660,152 (To June 30)
Hosted Conventions & Meetings	383	350 (Projected for 1996)
Total Hotel Rooms Occupied	376,535	446,500 (Projected 1996)

Meeting Groups Using Between 10-499 Hotel Room Nights	339	298 (Projected 1996)
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Source: 1996/97 CVC Annual Report and Plan of Work.

Other Accomplishments

The CVC exhibited at 38 Tradeshows in 1995/96 fiscal year and added one additional manager to each Regional Sales office. In the Membership Sales department, 204 new memberships were realized and \$450,077 generated in member revenue; 21 hotels were entered into the (IVR) Direct Connect Reservation program.

In Convention Services, 165 Convention Planning Visits were hosted and 2,256 Meetings Group Service Assistance provided; a new restaurant Reservation Booth and program was developed; and 2,294 reservations for 10,501 people at area restaurants were booked.

Opportunities for St. Louis

1). Tourism Market

a). St. Louis hosts special events with family tourism potential such as First Night, the Gateway Classic Football game, St. Louis Blues Heritage Festival and Fair St. Louis; multicultural events; additional themed itineraries, cultural tours, church/religious tours, historic homes.

b). Improved market research and tracking methods; ability to target lifestyle clusters with specific packages.

- c). Easy accessibility by car, air, rail and riverboat.
 - d). Missouri travel industry's interest in international marketing.
 - e). Expansion of the 800 IVR hotel direct connect system.
 - f). Cooperative advertising opportunities with the Missouri Division of Tourism and Six Flags. Successful consumer advertising campaigns which increases awareness of St. Louis.
 - g). The expansion of gaming developments; New American Queen riverboat and regular cruises on the Delta Queen and Mississippi Queen from the Port of St.Louis.
 - h). St. Louis' proximity to Branson.
 - i). Efforts of regional marketing cooperatives (America's Heartland and Mississippi River Country) to promote the Midwest to Canadian, European, and Japanese travel agents and tour operators.
 - j). St. Louis is one of the few destination-marketing organizations targeting family reunions.
- 2). Meetings and Conventions market
- a). America's Center is one of the most modern, user-friendly facilities in the region with 502,000 sq. ft net space for meetings and exhibitions.
 - b). St. Louis is easily accessible by air, car, or riverboat.
 - c). St. Louis CVC has a developed Interactive Technology (World Wide Web).

d). The management and staff at the CVC as well as America's Center are well qualified in their field.

St. Louis is being promoted as a value destination with many free and quality attractions. The CVC staff use proactive and reactive public relations and publicity methods targeted toward travel trades, consumer publications and newspapers to gain increased knowledge of the city as a leisure destination. The city's location is also being exploited to promote its marketability as a destination or stopover.

The Public Relations department is using news releases, newsletters, and other forms of written, audio, and video communications tools to report news of St. Louis' positive appeal as an individual and leisure destination. The city's cultural diversity is also promoted through design and content of key publications.

The CVC is continuing its leadership role in the Missouri travel industry international marketing committee to maximize St. Louis' exposure in international markets. The commission also intends to capitalize on the marketing efforts of the America's Heartland and Mississippi River Country to promote the Midwestern states.

Limitations

1). Meetings and Conventions

The overall perception of St. Louis as a destination by Association Executives against its 13 competitors is a negative that has to be corrected in order for the city to stay competitive in the hospitality industry.

Even though the Midwest is generally viewed as less expensive than other areas, particularly places that are considered as good vacation destinations, the geographical location of St Louis does not make it attractive for national and international meetings that prefer to meet either on the East or West Coast. St. Louis is too much in the interior of the country to interest these markets. As Tesar puts it in her article 'Facilities on the Make,' "many cities in the Midwest have excellent facilities and plenty to do, but they're just not viewed as destinations" (Expo 1997). Choosing these cities can mean much more work for the exhibit manager who has to convince people to go there.

There are other problems that the CVC's plan has identified as areas that must be improved upon.

Communication breakdown due to lack of a main frame computer at America's Center is of major concern. Documentation is limited. Each Event Manager wants to do things differently. Sometimes changes are made and not communicated to all the other relevant departments, e.g. not sending event specifications to a certain department, so they do not know when to move out; or switching meeting rooms and not informing other departments.

Docks are limited and there is confusion whenever there are more than one event moving in or out at the same time. This is an oversight that should not be tolerated since the expansion program to the facility is a very recent one.

Lack of membership by the Convention Service staff to professional organizations is another challenge. None of the Event Managers belongs to any professional organization. Their boss belongs to a few organizations and does not always attend association meetings or conferences due to lack of funds. Organization membership is crucial for all managers in the meetings industry since a lot of networking and continued education is the key to success in the industry.

In-house training is also lacking. Most of the Event Managers have learned the job by observation. However, their clients rate the managers highly. They strive to offer exceptional service and would do better if they were exposed to training and organization membership in the meeting industry.

America's Center does not have a permanent business office. Delegates have to go out of the building to mail a package or photocopy a document because the temporary business office at the center closes at certain hours and does not offer some essential services.

The Convention Sales and Marketing department have difficulties reaching Planners, who for the most part are very difficult to identify.

2). Tourism

The Tourism Sales and Marketing division finds it difficult to raise the destination's image as an exciting, and variety filled leisure travel destination for adults and couples as well as family visitors. This is largely due to a limited variety of free fun activities in the city.

Overcoming continuing national and international concern with urban crime and safety issues is also a major challenge for St. Louis. Although the crime rate in St. Louis was reported to have decreased by eighteen percent in 1995, the city is still considered unsafe by destination planners.

The CVC is yet to develop a program to provide a cohesive St. Louis visitor information network, as well as prompt, accurate and friendly fulfillment service to callers and walk-ins at the St. Louis CVC and the Visitors Center at America's Center. In most cases, callers are transferred from one office to another when they make simple inquiries about St. Louis attractions.

Competition

St. Louis' stiff competition comes from New Orleans, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, San Antonio, Denver and Indianapolis. Since most of these competitors are either planning or have completed expansion to their convention facilities, St. Louis finds itself in a tight spot and has to come up with new products that will attract events to the city.

Therefore, the key to marketing St. Louis is positioning and development of new free and attractive programs. St. Louis needs to be perceived as an exciting

and economical destination by event planners in order to attract more clients and visitors. Although the Public Relations department is already trying to promote St. Louis' products in the hospitality industry, there is need to increase the advertising budget so as to reach a bigger target market.

Through personal interviews and reviewing of articles and books, it can be stated that St. Louis has many strengths and some areas that require improvement. The goal of this thesis was to analyze the performance of St. Louis CVC and the America's Center and make recommendations for KICC plan of action. In conclusion, KICC will benefit from some of the marketing strategies used by St. Louis CVC and improve on the self-acknowledged shortcomings of the America's Center.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The study has shown that proper management, modern facility and sound marketing skills are prerequisites to success in the meetings industry. In the Kenya scenario, the product (in this case KICC) must be remodeled to suit the needs of the customer. The facility must be modified so that it becomes user-friendly: it has to be wheel-chair accessible with airy, sound proof and cheerful meeting rooms, ample space for break-out sessions and exhibitions, enough elevators and escalators for easy maneuverability, and user-friendly docks for loading and unloading of materials. It's only after the facility has been remodeled that the marketing plan can be initiated.

At the present, the Tourism Department sells and markets all the tourist attractions in Kenya with the exception of KICC. The Tourism Department has limitations in its endeavor to sell Kenya as a destination due to the red tape and beauracracy involved in government funding and the decision making process. KICC management does not attend any international tradeshows or convention meeting forums to share ideas with other people in the industry.

A Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) is essential in the survival of any convention center and the tourism industry in general. Kenya, being a small country with only one international conference center needs to establish a Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) that will market the country as a

destination as well as manage KICC. The CVB should consist of experts in the hospitality industry who can revitalize KICC through proactive distribution of information about Kenya's desirability as a convention, meeting, tradeshow, group travel and individual leisure travel destination.

The proposed CVB that will manage KICC must be willing to offer a wide range of services comparable to what other bureaus around the world are offering. Gone are the times when meeting and event planners used to excuse Kenya for being a third world country. Stiff competition from South Africa speaks for itself—planners want to be left with time to deal with the technical and scientific aspects of their events and do not want to be burdened with simple tasks like booking hotel rooms, identifying and dealing with tour operators to arrange for pre- and post-conference tours.

The proposed Kenya CVB will have the following divisions:

Human Resources Division:

This division will deal with the hiring and training of personnel; developing job descriptions and automated on-line inventory of job descriptions implemented at KICC; implement a safety program for KICC, develop a safety committee and in-house safety inspections; coordinate health benefits survey and implement a long term disability insurance program for KICC employees; coordinate and implement employee recognition system for KICC.

Tourism Sales and Marketing Division:

This division will be responsible for marketing Kenya to individual leisure travelers; tour operators and incentive travel groups nationally and internationally. Group accounts will be assigned to the division's sales staff by key markets and geographic areas.

Convention Sales and Marketing Division:

The division will be responsible for marketing and selling KICC to meeting and exhibition organizers and booking meetings and events to KICC. The department's staff will work with accounts, which will be assigned based on geography and target market segments. The department should also have international satellite offices in Europe, North America and Asia. It will be logical to have an office in every city in which Kenya has an embassy.

Convention Services Department:

This department will assist meeting planners with actual planning and execution of meetings, housing and registration, a city-wide welcome program for convention groups, and planning and implementation of customer site visits and familiarization trips to KICC and Kenya.

Facilities Division – KICC:

This division will deal with the general maintenance of the facility including the adjacent grounds and contract for preventive maintenance of equipment at the center.

Advertising, Public Relations, Publications and Creative Services:

This division will advertise Kenya and KICC qualities as a convention and leisure travel destination in the audience target markets in trade publications, trade shows, television and radio. The Public Relations program will support the advertising efforts of the department through an extensive agenda of issuing news releases, organizing press trips and proactive solicitation of placements of Kenyan and KICC editorials in target markets. The key media markets that will be targeted are; meeting trade and association publications, consumer media (including regional and national newspapers, magazines and broadcast outlets), local media and international media (in selected target markets).

Management of meetings and events will be specialized. In the past KICC has relied on lazy civil servants to take care of house-keeping, decorating, electrical and audio-visuals. Whereas this arrangement once worked for KICC, supervising hundreds of workers in a modern facility will not be practical. Since Kenya has an abundance of labor, professional cleaners should be contracted during events to undertake house-keeping while independent contractors can handle audio-visuals, electrical and decorating. Independent telecommunication companies should also be contracted to offer telephone and fax services to customers at KICC because the local Telephone Company is inefficient and corrupt.

Following the research conducted in this survey, a Marketing Plan has been recommended for Kenyatta International Conference Center (KICC) in Kenya.

The proposed Kenya CVB must have a mission statement for itself (to maximize the economic impact of visitor dollars to the country through effectively marketing Kenya as a desirable convention and tourism destination while setting a standard of service excellence for the hospitality industry) and KICC (becoming Africa's best center); a business and marketing objective; and clear strategic planning in order to succeed in this very competitive industry. As Kotler puts it, "in the 1990's and beyond, the key to success will be a strong focus on the market place and a total marketing commitment to providing value to customers" (Kotler 22).

KICC management must identify customer needs that it intends to satisfy before it starts pursuing meetings and events. The survey results from conducting this research proved that the industry needs are constantly changing and KICC must be ready to change with the times or fail.

Positioning Statement

KICC will be positioned as an ultra-modern, airy, and cheerful user-friendly facility with a national and international appeal that is really customer oriented. Kenya will also be positioned as a unique destination with an abundance of wildlife, history, cultural diversity, restaurants and nightlife.

Primary Market Segments

a). Conventions

These events will consist of national, regional and international meetings by professional groups, corporate meetings as well as associations for action on matters of common concern.

b). Trade shows

KICC will target exhibitions for professionals from specific industries and technologies; professional trade shows management organizations and technical associations.

c). Other Events

This segment includes events like concerts, large assemblies, religious events, lectures, family shows and other such events.

Marketing Strategies

It is important to remember that any business exists to satisfy customer's perceived needs and the profit is just the reward for successful marketing.

Marketing strategy should therefore be based on determining the needs and wants of various target market segments and satisfying these needs with appropriate goods and services. The proposed CVB will carry out intensive research on the business and clients in the meetings industry before launching the actual marketing campaign. In the research, the CVB will consider the strengths of KICC that will help attract target customer groups to Kenya and emphasize those strengths.

The Convention Sales and Marketing division will build a database of all focus accounts with a goal of obtaining a future bid for Kenya. A focus account will be defined as a meeting, convention, or trade show using between 150 rooms to 5500 rooms peak night and no greater than 500,000 square feet of exhibit space. They will also concentrate on local professional associations that have international affiliations and attempt to convince those associations to bid for their international conventions to come to Kenya. This will not be difficult to do because most of the local associations have either tried to bid for these conventions in the past, or have been approached with the proposal to place bids.

Corporate meetings of smaller groups and Government meetings that will need less than 699 room nights will also be solicited. This target market will use the smaller meeting rooms at KICC.

The team will improve the awareness that meeting planners have for Kenya and the enhanced convention package they will be offering. All accounts will be reviewed with considerations given to seasonality, number of rooms used, and expected financial impacts to the economy. The major components of these efforts will include:

1. Personal sales calls with multi-media sales aid.
2. Telemarketing.
3. Trade shows participation.
4. Site visits.

5. Accompanying professional associations to their international forums for lobbying and actual bidding.
6. The team will also utilize personal sales calls, phone solicitation, trade shows, mailings, and special events to communicate the message that Kenya is a unique and desirable destination.
7. Cultivate contacts with the local community to help support the sales efforts.
8. Build and maintain client relationships through monthly direct mailings of collateral pieces, birthday cards, Christmas cards, press releases, etc.

The Convention Sales and Marketing division's efforts will be complemented by those of the Tourism Sales and Marketing division which will sell Kenya to individuals, families, incentive travel groups, leisure groups, and incentive travel planners.

The Advertising Division will focus its efforts towards communicating the qualities and uniqueness of Kenya as a tourist and convention destination in trade publications which are read by meeting planners and association executives who have the potential to direct meeting and convention business to KICC as well as incentive and tour planners. The division must ensure that it has an adequate budget to successfully reach these target markets.

The Public Relations division will work to support the positioning and sales efforts of both Convention Sales & Marketing and Tourism Sales & Marketing divisions through Media Relations, Community Relations, Publications, Creative Services and Research. This will include:

- a). Creating presentation materials for use at Annual meetings and other events such as trade shows and association meetings during bid presentations.
- b). Creating Annual Reports on the proposed CVB activities.
- c). Maintaining contact, communication effectiveness, and personal relationships with local media, legislators, corporate and civil colleagues, writing and distributing news releases, creating initiatives to increase local and international publicity for KICC, the CVB, and Kenya's hospitality industry.
- d). Developing advertisements and coordinating placement of community relations advertising.
- e) Developing a crisis intervention plan complete with policy and procedures.

Opportunities

KICC has a unique economical and geographic location in that Nairobi, the capital city, is a premier aviation hub in Africa. With a modern international airport that serves 32 international airlines, Nairobi has an edge over its competitors in the region. Johannesburg, in South Africa is not an aviation hub and therefore not easily accessible like Nairobi.

Kenya and Nairobi are also blessed with an abundance of wildlife resources, which is a major tourist attraction. KICC is only 20 minutes away from

the nearest game reserve. This means that delegates can actually enjoy a drive through the park right after a meeting session.

Kenyans are very hospitable and they love foreigners. Since tourism is the major foreign exchange earner in the country, every sector in the industry appreciates the importance of tourists to the country's economy and they try to make visitors feel welcome.

The researcher feels that this marketing plan, largely based on the success of America's Center and St. Louis' CVC (with some modifications) will revive the meetings industry at KICC and tourism in general in Kenya.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results of this study. A summary of the results of the most valid studies will be presented along with a discussion of limitations of this study. Also, suggestions for further research will be presented.

Summary

The results obtained from conducting this project have proved that KICC could use the success elements in the marketing strategies of America's Center by the St. Louis CVC in its new plan of action.

First and foremost, KICC needs to be remodeled. This does not necessarily mean that so much space must be added for expansion, but a purpose built exhibition hall is necessary with enough docking space. The meeting rooms need to be made user-friendly with enough space for breakout sessions. The large halls should be partitionable so that after the general assembly, they can be easily broken down to small session meeting rooms. All rooms should be equipped with advanced audio-visual equipment. The question of easy accessibility in a facility as large as KICC needs to be addressed. There should be several entrances to the building equipped with an advanced security check system. There is also need for more elevators and escalators in the building. The parking space needs to be expanded as well.

Kenya cannot put off the issue of a Convention and Visitor Bureau any longer. In this age, the convention industry cannot survive without CVBs. As Talaid puts it in her article "Above and Beyond",

The extraordinary thing that CVBs do is quite simple—they take a lot of things off a meeting planner's plate. They're able to arrange site visits, solicit information from service providers, and return bids quickly. Most bureaus also offer registration and housing services, publicity, media help, and "an array of things meeting planners need—and might have to pay much more for than they would with the bureau (Successful Meetings 63).

The management set-up at St. Louis CVC and America's Center will benefit KICC and the proposed CVB if adopted because it calls for more specialization. Each division will work to complement the efforts of all other divisions to sell and market the destination as well as the conference center.

Communications will be improved and a World Wide Web site developed to communicate the facilities and activities that are available in Kenya that make it a unique destination. KICC staff will also be equipped with two-way radios that will ease the flow of information between the meeting rooms, exhibition halls and all the related divisions.

The proposed CVB will also have to develop new products that will enhance the desirability of Kenya as a destination beyond its appeal as a renowned wildlife refuge. The diverse cultural differences in Kenya can be

exploited so that tours can be organized to experience different cultural ceremonies and practices for pre- and post-conference tours.

KICC's marketing strategy will mainly target regional meetings within the African continent, national events and the European market. At the moment, most of Kenya's foreign visitors are from Europe. This is due to the proximity and the historical ties Africa has with Europe. Although KICC will also target international meeting from other continents like North America and Asia, it is important to note that most Americans don't travel outside their continent as much as Europeans do. The researcher therefore believes that America's Center cannot be prototypical of KICC without relevant modifications because the two facilities have different target markets and marketing scenarios.

One other upcoming target market that should be pursued by the proposed Kenya CVB is African American tourism. This target group is very interested in re-discovering its roots in Africa. Wildlife would not particularly appeal to this market. However, African cultural diversity and general way of life would definitely appeal to this target market that is thirsting for information on African heritage.

Limitations

Whereas KICC will focus on international meetings in order to earn Kenya the much needed foreign exchange, America's Center focuses on regional and national meetings because most international meeting planners just don't view St. Louis as a destination.

Despite all the Sales and Marketing efforts undertaken by the St. Louis CVC, America's Center is under-utilized since the expansion program was completed. This under-utilization is shown in figure 1-8 of this research. That means that St. Louis CVC Sales and Marketing division still needs to come up with a better strategic and tactical marketing plan for both St. Louis and the America's Center.

This research has proven that in-house training of personnel and membership to professional organizations is lacking at America's Center. Management cites lack of funds as a major factor, but the researcher feels that training and networking is paramount to the success of any convention center in the world. Even the top management at the center learns more about the industry by reading industry magazines.

It is recommended that KICC take the training of its staff very seriously if it wants to stay competitive in business. The hospitality industry is constantly changing and staff needs to change with the times since the industry's survival revolves around service.

In conclusion, this project has attempted to identify some important marketing efforts undertaken by St. Louis CVC that can be applied to KICC, thus improving KICC's performance. This writer has also taken into account St. Louis CVC's acknowledged weaknesses as areas that can be learned from and improved upon in developing a KICC model.

However, more research is recommended in an attempt to complement this project. The researcher considers this project as just a start. Changes in the hospitality industry occur so fast that KICC needs more help in order to compete in the industry.

Furthermore, the present political situation in Kenya is an obstacle to the implementation of this marketing plan. The issue of KICC ownership needs to be addressed and resolved. Only after it is established that KICC is indeed public property will the center be managed without direct interference from the ruling political party.

The proposed CVB must be left to work independently without government interference. Otherwise the CVB and KICC will end up in the same old situation where unqualified and inefficient personnel are appointed for political reasons without regard to the damage they cause to the office they should be serving. The Kenya government needs to appreciate the role of KICC as a foreign exchange earner for the country and put aside its personal greed in and support KICC and the proposed CVB's success in the hospitality business.

Specific needs have been identified by conducting various analyses throughout this project. These needs include establishment of a CVB, expansion and remodeling of KICC, improvement of communication, and training. All these needs will require specific attention. However, the researcher feels that no matter how good one's product is, marketing, cooperation and communication between

the CVB, the convention center, hotels, and all other suppliers is the key to success in a highly competitive environment.

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