



INCENTIVE TRAVEL: THE PARTICIPANT'S VIEWPOINT PART II: MOTIVATIONAL VALUE OF INCENTIVE TRAVEL

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Motivational travel has long been recognized as a powerful business tool for helping organizations achieve key business objectives. However, most incentive industry research is limiting as historical efforts have only provided insights from the corporate user and provider viewpoints. Consequently, the results are frequently skewed to their point of view—what they perceive as their own needs, wants and preferences.

This study examined the participant's viewpoint of incentive travel programs. It questioned *both qualifiers and non-qualifiers*—those for whom these programs are designed for in order to help achieve business performance objectives. In particular, this study focused on what makes incentive travel experiences more *meaningful*, *motivational* and *memorable* from the participant's viewpoint.

While the first installment of this four-part Incentive Travel Participant Viewpoint study focused on what program participants find more *meaningful*, this installment relates to what they find more *motivating*. For the purposes of our study, *motivational* represents a set of value factors that both appeal and contribute to a participant's level of active engagement throughout the lifecycle of the program—before, during and after the incentive travel experience.

Motivational value factors can range from trip duration, destination choices, guest policy and other program design-based attributes. Motivational Travel industry events over the past few years have and continue to place increased political, economic and social pressures on program design decisions. A better understanding of what participants would describe as, “what I would work harder for in order to earn” provides essential insights that help better inform, support and design stronger, more motivationally valued opportunities. In turn, motivational travel sponsors are better positioned to achieve business performance outcomes while managing budgets through more cost effective means—thereby further stretching their available investment dollars.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

■ When asked about the opportunity to *interact with higher level executives*, 60.2% (nearly 2 out of every 3) respondents agreed that it was seen as a motivational value. Seventy-two percent of

respondents also felt that incentive travel rewards allowed them to build relationships with peers away from work.

■ Similarly, the opportunity for participants to experience something unique—something they could not do on their own—has long been viewed as a purpose of motivational travel. That was confirmed by 70.7% of respondents who said they valued that benefit.

■ Reward does go hand-in-hand with recognition, with 86.3% of our survey respondents stating that *earning motivational travel makes me feel recognized by my company and peers*. That recognition generates the desire to continue to excel and earn similar rewards in subsequent programs.

■ Eighty-five percent of respondents said that increased trip duration was rated anywhere from a *little more motivating to very much more motivating*. Obviously, trip duration is an aspect of program design that deserves more consideration.

■ Being permitted to bring more guests of their choosing was said to be *no more to a little more motivating* by 48.6% of study respondents. This suggests a good level of satisfaction with current program rules defining accepted invited guests.

■ More than 70% of respondents found fewer mandatory company functions more motivating. The inclusion of meetings during group-based incentive travel programs has been and continues to be a staple item, but it is important to avoid going too far and diluting the motivational value from the participant's viewpoint.

■ Having more choice of destinations is important to attendees. Seventy percent reported that it makes a program more motivating to them, placing this consideration as the second strongest driver of motivational interest.



■ In questioning the advantage of varying destinations over the years, 55% *agreed or strongly agreed* that there was adequate change over time. Only 15% *disagreed or strongly disagreed* with that statement. Clearly, there is a preference for changing trip destinations as opposed to repeating the same location each year.

■ Confirming what most planners already believed, 74.5% of respondents said that having more leisure or unscheduled time would make the program more motivating. In a time where budget cuts are sought, giving free time back to incentive travel earners does not have to cost anything.

■ All-inclusive resorts ranked as a moderate motivational driver, with 32.9% of respondents stating it was *much more or very much more* motivating.

■ A surprising 48.9% of study respondents said that company payment of personal taxes made a program either *no more motivating* or only *a little more motivating*. This is unexpected. All respondents were from the United States where the cost of motivational travel is taxed as income. It was assumed that having the tax paid for them would be a great motivator.

■ Almost 61% of respondents felt that competing in a motivational travel program that provides different award levels was a motivating factor. It can be assumed that a program with tiered awards is

more motivating because it creates more opportunities to qualify at different levels of performance; not to mention it can also help maintain top performer engagement further into the program.

■ When specifically asked if they would prefer a scaled or tiered award program—one where higher performers receive better accommodations, better meals, better or more on-site events, etc.—earners and non-earners differed. More non-earners (27%) than earners (22%) said they did not prefer tiered programs. This may indicate that those who earned the trip want the highest possible reward.

Conversely, 55% of earners said they would prefer a tiered program—one that would recognize levels of achievement in different ways. (This was similarly reflected in the prior question dealing with motivational travel programs that provide different award levels.) Forty-three percent of non-earners shared that opinion, perhaps indicating that they would be satisfied to simply qualify regardless of the level.

■ An interesting result is that more earners (52%) than non-earners (41%) believed that people who came within 90% of achieving the goal to earn the reward should have the opportunity to “buy in.”

■ Are sponsors doing a good job of marketing their programs?

PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING MOTIVATIONAL ELEMENTS OF INCENTIVE TRAVEL REWARDS

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion
Earning incentive travel allows me to interact with higher level executives of the company offering the award	4.9%	8.4%	22.9%	46.4%	13.8%	3.6%
Earning incentive travel allows me to build relationships with peers away from work	3.6%	6.5%	15.8%	48.7%	23.4%	2.0%
Earning incentive travel allows me to experience something unique that I could not do on my own	2.4%	8.1%	17.8%	42.0%	28.7%	1.0%
Earning incentive travel makes me feel recognized by the company and my peers	0.9%	2.7%	8.8%	47.8%	38.5%	1.3%

PLEASE CONSIDER EACH OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS THAT COULD BE TAKEN TO CHANGE THE INCENTIVE TRAVEL AWARD AND HOW MUCH MORE MEANINGFUL, MOTIVATIONAL AND MEMORABLE THE AWARD WOULD BE IF THAT ITEM WERE IMPLEMENTED

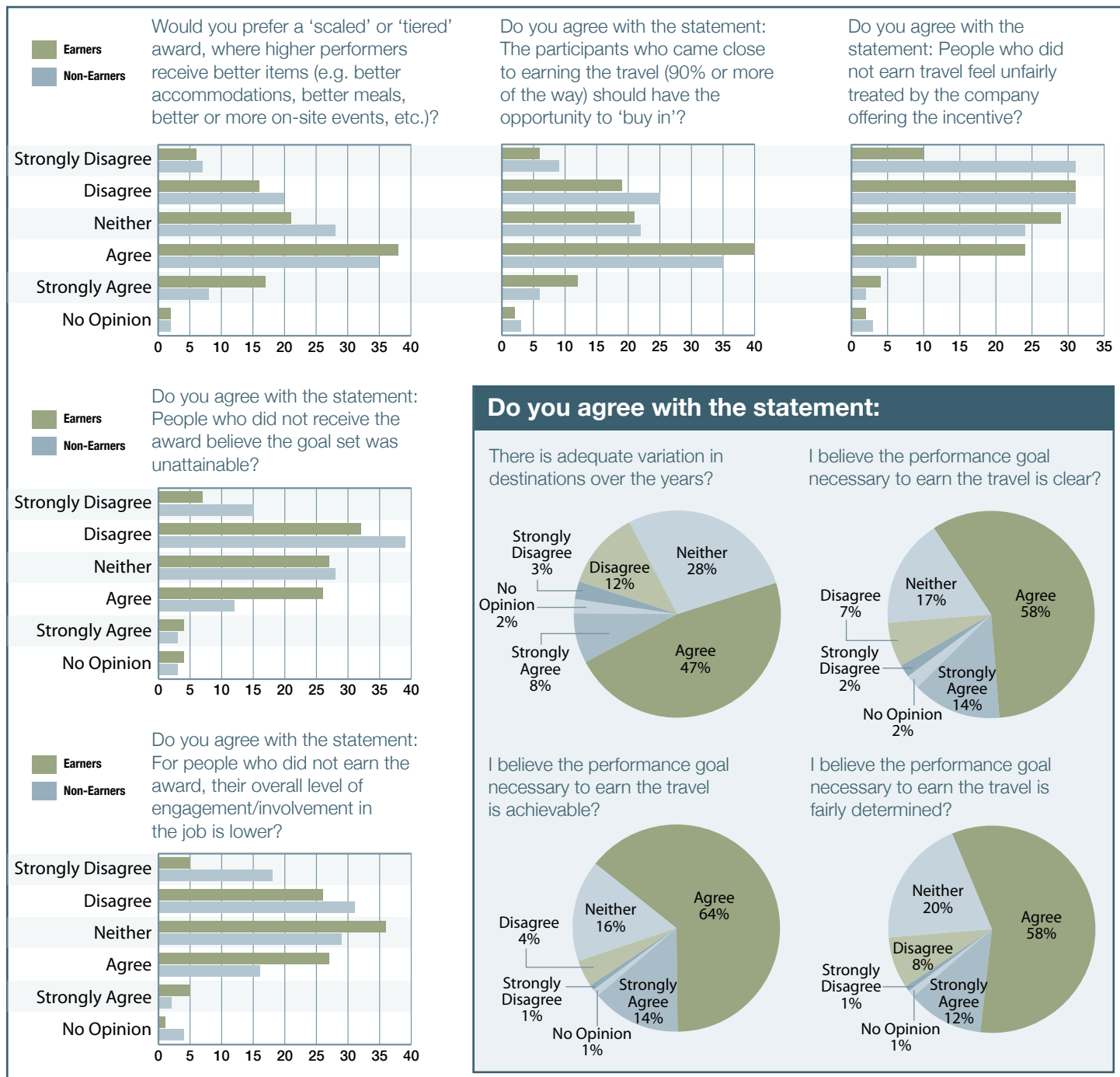
	No More Motivating	A Little More Motivating	More Motivating	Much More Motivating	Very Much More Motivating
Increased trip duration	15.1%	28.1%	29.4%	16.1%	11.3%
More guests of my choosing	26.7%	21.9%	21.0%	17.8%	12.6%
Fewer mandatory company functions	29.9%	24.2%	22.3%	14.8%	8.8%
More choice of destinations	11.1%	18.6%	25.7%	27.4%	17.2%
More leisure/unscheduled time	10.2%	15.3%	29.6%	26.9%	18.0%
Going to all-inclusive resorts	22.2%	20.0%	24.8%	19.0%	13.9%
Payment of any personal tax	31.0%	17.9%	19.9%	13.8%	17.4%
More information about the destination	24.3%	29.3%	29.7%	11.2%	5.5%
Different award levels	17.3%	22.1%	31.4%	17.5%	11.7%
More frequent promotion of the award	17.3%	20.8%	29.3%	16.9%	15.7%

When asked if *more frequent promotion of the award impacts their motivation*, 61.9% said it would have more than just marginal impact. So, do not keep your incentive travel program a secret. In addition, address the activities, sites, events and other experiences that are available as well. With 53.6% of respondents yearning for more information about the destination, a communications strategy needs to promote, educate and advocate the experiential opportunities.

When asked if the performance goal to earn the reward was clear, 72% thought that it was. An even greater number, 78%, felt that the goal was also achievable. And, 70% felt that the goal was

fairly determined. More kudos to program designers who have occasionally heard that objectives for earning motivational travel rewards may be demotivating.

A fascinating result of this survey is that earners tend to misjudge the feelings of non-earners. Twenty-eight percent of earners believed that non-earners felt unfairly treated in the competition but only 11% of non-earners shared that feeling. Similarly, 30% of earners felt that those who did not earn the reward would say the goal was unattainable while only 15% of them did so. Finally, 32% of earners felt that non-earners are discouraged by not qualifying but only 18% of non-earners agreed.





SUMMARY

Audiences for motivation programs have significantly changed over the years, and so have incentive travel participants. A one-size-fits-all approach simply is not realistic in today's diverse and ever-changing market. Neither is it plausible from a fiscal standpoint for an organization to offer everything that is perceived as a motivational value to everyone. Understanding your participants' social drivers, values and perceptions can greatly help. These insights offer a predictive approach toward incentive program design.

When we contrast the list of involved stakeholders today versus ten years ago, we quickly realize it has significantly changed. We benefit now from the insights of a cross-functional team involving sales, marketing, finance, procurement and so on. We are afforded stronger opportunities to brainstorm, discuss and make decisions on program design. Unfortunately, we are still missing something. Without a better understanding of what inspires and motivates participants, we are taking unnecessary gambles through guesswork.

There is a balance between business economics and participant value. Whether you are motivating sales or non-sales employees or even channel partners, they too need to be considered as stakeholders. Often enough, we ask incentive travel earners about the onsite experience after the program, but we do not ask the broader participant base about what they find more motivationally

important and valued beforehand, ahead of program design decision making. Without participant engagement and advocacy, business performance can suffer. Creating worthwhile, win/win and highly motivationally-valued experiential opportunities can make the difference between good, better and best program performance outcomes.

The findings of the U.S. based national study involved over 1,000 survey participants. The insights shared are directional and can vary from one organization to another. The spirited intention of the Participant's Viewpoint series is to provide challenging and constructive insights that will help Motivational Travel sponsors discover and apply approaches that lead toward more effective outcomes for both their organization and program participants.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCHERS

This survey was designed with assistance from practicing incentive managers and other incentive industry professionals. The survey was then assembled by the marketing research firm, **ResearchNow**. There were 1,003 valid responses from individuals who had been eligible to receive incentive travel. Their demographics can be found in the first installment of this report, **Incentive Travel: The Participant's Viewpoint, Part I: Incentive Travel as a Meaningful Motivator**.

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THE SITE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

The Site International Foundation has provided research and educational programs that assist business executives, practitioners, and professionals since 2006. The Foundation is the research arm of Site, a membership community that represents 90 countries and professionals who deliver best-in-class solutions and insights to maximize the business impact of motivational experiences regardless of industry, region or culture.

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THE INCENTIVE TRAVEL COUNCIL

The Incentive Travel Council, a strategic industry group within the Incentive Marketing Association (IMA) is dedicated to exploring, promoting and educating about how incentive travel strategies can best be designed and leveraged to help organizations achieve better business performance.

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