

Expert panel: „What has football got to do with the congress-, incentive, and event industry?“

October 2nd, 2007
13:00 – 14.00

The experts on the panel (in alphabetical order):

Dr. Ewald Judt, Managing Director Mastercard

www.europay.at

As of 1st September 2007 Europay Austria becomes PayLife Bank GmbH. Europay Austria is Austria's largest and leading card company and since September also sells VISA products. Mastercard is one of the main sponsors of Euro 2008.

In the run-up to the UEFA EURO 2008™ in Austria and Switzerland Europay Austria has developed the unique Football MasterCard in cooperation with the ÖFB. Each purchase using the Football-MasterCard in Austria subsidises the young players for the Austrian National Team, specifically the "Challenge 08" team.

Klaus-Dieter Koch, founder and Managing Director of brand:trust

www.brand-trust.de

Klaus-Dieter Koch is the founder and Managing Director of the brand strategy and consulting enterprise brand:trust in Nuremberg. For more than 10 years he has been specialising in brand strategy consulting for medium-sized and large companies in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. The focus of his work is on the development and implementation of brand strategies supporting companies in producing profitable turnover growth with the help of their brand, minimising brand management risks, and boosting brand and corporate value.

Michael Müllner, Managing Director Büro Wien

www.buerowien.com

Büro Wien is one of the most renowned and internationally best known event marketing and incentive agencies in Austria. Since 1991 Büro Wien keeps surprising Austria and the world with creative, unusual, and incredible ideas and concepts.

Heinz Palme, Managing Director, Österreich am Ball

<http://www.oesterreich-am-ball.at>

Heinz Palme is the Austrian Federal Government's coordinator-in-chief for UEFA EURO 2008™. "2008 - Österreich am Ball" is an initiative supported by the Austrian Federal Government in cooperation with the ÖFB and the objective of promoting the public awareness for the Football European Championships 2008 and developing adequate measures and projects.

Renate Trachtenberg, General Manager, Kuoni Destination Management Austria

www.kuoni-congress.com

In 2008 Kuoni Destination Management will enjoy an absolute top event: during UEFA EURO 2008™ the company will play an important role and be responsible for organising hotel accommodations for sponsors, journalists, and national teams. In addition Kuoni offers a broad range of event venues and dinner locations on all match days and in all locations also for other clients throughout UEFA EURO 2008™.

Summary

Only roughly 250 days to go until UEFA EURO 2008™ from 7th – 29th June 2008. Huge expectations are harboured everywhere – in tourism as well as in the meetings, incentive, convention and event industry. What opportunities has UEFA EURO 2008™ got to offer for the industry as a whole?

Mastercard, the main sponsor, regards sponsoring as a central element for strengthening the brand. Thanks to the long-term continuity of its sponsoring activities at European and World Championships Mastercard as a brand by now is positioned very well.

Renate Trachtenberg and Heinz Palme are highly optimistic regarding the opportunities for the industry as well as Austria as a whole. The focus shall be on the common sports experience. Michael Müllner at present still misses the long-term vision and perspective and the reply to the question „What is the new perspective post-UEFA EURO 2008™“? Klaus-Dieter Koch points out that there are short-term opportunities – the matches, the functions, the Event as such – and long-term opportunities and especially also long-term effects. These long-term effects keep being analysed, but are hard to evaluate. He states that Austria is mainly associated with skiing and that it will be rather difficult to establish a new perception of Austria as a brand in sports.

Heinz Palme points out that in terms of preparation times Austria certainly cannot be compared with Germany as Germany had been thinking about its strategy five or six years in advance. In Austria everything has happened at very short notice as planning only started in 2006 and specific events were launched only in the spring of 2007.

Renate Trachtenberg states that one key issue will be to focus on Austria's strengths – hospitality, the tradition of hosts, and the beauty of the country – something that is also central for the industry and for tourism – which has not been sufficiently communicated to date. Michael Müllner also agrees that there is a specific communication deficit, especially in the MICE industry. Other than in the partner Switzerland the “spirit” has not yet been overcome and many good ideas are still unused. Nor has a new definition of Vienna – away from the „historic“ city image – been implemented so far. Vienna is also still lacking interesting new locations that can be used for attractive events.

Heinz Palme points out that never before have such low investments been necessary as Austria has excellent infrastructure. As regards hospitality a service campaign is being run together with the Chamber of Commerce. In his response to the worries mentioned Klaus-Dieter Koch is pretty relaxed recommending Austrians not to worry.

Everyone agrees that after the raffle for the tickets for UEFA EURO 2008™ on 2nd December 2007 “all hell will break loose”. Then everyone will know who will have tickets and functions, events and incentives can be planned – which means an absolute holiday ban for all staff. Gerhard Stübe from Kongresshaus Bregenz reports that there have been many requests for the Seebühne even though no matches are scheduled for Bregenz.

In the final round centred on the issue of: How to keep a successful European Championship alive in the long run as an element of brand formation? The experts' replies include: remaining visible, preserving continuity, trusting the strengths of Austria and its population, and building further progress from there.

Note: This summary is based on notes taken during the expert panel. Hence the completeness of the texts cannot be guaranteed.