

India: an obvious choice for international associations

Opportunities abound in the country for global bodies looking to expand their reach



by Monimita Sarkar

As many western associations witness a plateau in membership numbers and a slow-down in congress numbers, they are beginning to grapple with the question of how to increase these figures.

International associations keen to enter into India can explore potential engagement models. However, there is a need to strategically evaluate the ecosystem and the value that it will bring to the association and its members and, where necessary, tweak it to a more 'glocal' model.

A brief glimpse at the country's prevalent consumer base shows the broad scope of opportunity available. India's middle-class today numbers 350 million people. A sizeable number of Indians have personal assets worth more than US\$1 million, and 180 million Indians speak English.

Furthermore, India is likely to be the world's third largest economy by 2028, with an estimated worth of US\$7 trillion and domestic consumption of 550 million people, according to a report by HSBC. The growth is multi-sector, although here we

will highlight the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors, as 60 percent of association congresses are in these fields.

Healthcare is one of India's largest sectors today, both in terms of revenue and employment, and is growing at a brisk pace due to its strengthening coverage and services, plus the increasing expenditure by public as well as private players.

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India has predicted that, with increased digital adoption, the US\$100 billion Indian healthcare market will likely grow at a CAGR of 23 percent to US\$280 billion by 2020.*

The Indian pharmaceuticals market is the world's third largest in terms of volume and 13th largest in terms of value, according to a report by Equity Master. The market is expected to grow to US\$20 billion by 2020, according to the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil).

India is the largest provider of generic drugs globally, with Indian generics accounting for 20 percent of global exports in terms of volume. The country also has a large pool of scientists and engineers who have the potential to steer the industry to an even higher level.

While associations holding their annual international meeting in India is a welcome option, there are other possibilities for an ongoing model of engagement which will have a more lasting impact and help create a membership base.

There are more than 900 active professional associations in India, both regional and national, that meet annually. Indian Associations, in particular, provide a solid foundation of opportunities for membership development and programming. To maximise these opportunities, strategies

could include actively partnering with Indian Associations at their annual meetings by providing speakers, running sessions and providing access to content.

This would provide a yearly platform for continued engagement, while a special membership rate could be offered to new Indian members.

Another potential avenue would be to develop packages for students, or offer them a fee to access the journal and other content available to members. This would ensure a relationship with the student, which could potentially grow into a full membership over a period of time.

Road shows and lectures across major Indian metro cities also provide a great platform for international associations to meet with local members and interact with potential new members.

Since smaller associations with tight budgets may face a challenge, there is the possibility of developing a more collaborative approach – where associations working in connected fields could approach this as a joint endeavour.

This would have the added benefit of creating an interesting platform and may work as a lever to get a very diverse audience along to road shows, while at the same time, building the membership and help in marketing the annual conference.

As professional development increasingly gains more traction in a globalised economy, it is necessary for associations to reach out to untapped markets. International associations looking to build their memberships should be present at national and regional meetings in India, presenting what's available from their continuing professional development platforms. ●

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*Source IBEF

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