

still be involved as the power of personal contact and networking can never be underestimated, but by gathering its sales force at regional sites, Pearson could increase efficiency by saving on both travel expenses and time. Where will these virtual conferencing centers be located? The logical locations are those properties—conference centers, hotels, and resorts—that can afford to build and equip quality virtual conferencing facilities. This may in turn lead to more travel, although it may be for shorter distances and durations.

Even though virtual conferencing may help to control travel expenses, more and more companies will be doing business with firms across the world. Representatives of these organizations may feel the need for face-to-face meetings to build trusting relationships that can come only from sharing time together. North American businesspeople in particular are being forced by economic necessity to work with other businesspeople from Asia, the **Pacific Rim**, Central and South America, and former Soviet Union nations. In all these locations, trust is the primary foundation for business transactions. These relationships can be developed only by spending time together, sharing meals, and getting to know one another. Because this type of relationship building requires time and face-to-face interactions, it is unlikely that technology will override these cultural factors and the need for face-to-face relationship building opportunities.

Our best guess is that travel for business and professional reasons will continue to increase in spite of further advances in communication technology. Doing business in the future will involve more, not less, collaboration with others. Some of this increased need for interaction among businesses will be satisfied with telecommunications. However, as Myra noted in our chapter opener, there is no substitute for the personal contact that requires physical travel and meeting with others face-to-face. Yet, business travelers will increasingly find opportunities to tuck on a little personal rest and relaxation with their business duties.

We predict that the most popular types of conferences in the future will not be business related but instead will focus on personal lifestyles and interests. Growth in number of conferences and attendees will most likely come in the form of meetings on organized religion, self-improvement/education, hobbies, civic topics, alumni reunions, and politics. This trend began in the 1990s when 20% of U.S. citizens traveled to non-business conference events.¹⁴

Emerging Tourism Markets

What tourist activities will be the favored pastimes in the future? We have already mentioned several of the broad tourism trends shaping the face of the industry in previous chapters. Now we will turn our attention to some specific segments that hold promise for future growth. As one travel professional noted, “[r]ather than sit on a beach and sip a mai tai, there is a move among travelers to engage themselves in the people and places they visit” (p. 4L).¹⁵ In a world where many travelers have “been there and done that,” there is a growing desire to do something special or participate in life-changing activities. While there is no question that some specialized niche markets such as slum tourism¹⁶ and dark tourism¹⁷ have evolved, several larger and growing markets should be of interest to all tourism service suppliers.

Slow Tourism

Slow tourism vacations will develop as an important niche segment of the tourism industry to meet the need of travelers looking for a very different experience. To escape the 21st-century “accelerated” life, more and more travelers will opt out of high-activity vacations, instead preferring trips with a slower pace than they experience in everyday life, allowing time and opportunities for immersion. These vacations will involve all the five senses and be designed with the goal of experiencing people and places. Research shows that those involved in slow tourism are seeking revitalization and self enrichment.¹⁸