

A graduation report with a short advice on how to position Friesland as a destination for international multi-day conventions. (Hanne Kemper)

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This short advice plan was written for Friesland Convention Partners, a non-profit foundation situated in Leeuwarden, Friesland. Friesland Convention Partners functions as a matchmaker for partners and congress organisers. Its main goal is to relieve all parties involved and promote Friesland as a convention destination.

The subsidy granted to Friesland Convention Partners from the government of the province of Friesland, is based on the goal to attract business tourism to Friesland. On average, business tourists spend more money than regular tourists. Moreover, chances are that they will return for private matters afterwards. Business tourism can be increased by attracting conventions to the area. After a lot of changes of the situation, where the central question was adjusted several times, the eventual central question was finally developed: "Which is the most suitable way for Friesland Convention Partners to position Friesland as a destination for international multi-day conventions, with an emphasis on WTC and the pillars water, dairy and circularity up to 2024?". With 'WTC' the World Trade Center in Leeuwarden is meant.

This question was answered by conducting desk research as well as field research. There were two very important reports used as a source. These reports are written by Friesland Convention Partners and function as a multi-year application for the subsidy. There is also a business plan that shows valuable data about Friesland, its pillars, business tourism in Friesland and the subsidy. (Gedeputeerde Staten van Fryslân, 2020) (Friesland Convention Partners, 2020).

Regarding the field research, several sources were used. In total, four official interviews have been carried out with employees or directors from companies of the pillars of Friesland. A survey among attendees of business events in Friesland was taken. Furthermore, a survey already conducted for the WTCA GA 2018 was evaluated. WTCA GA is the World Trade Center Association's General Assembly. This is the convention that will be discussed in the report. Lastly, the author has accompanied Herma van Keulen to many meetings, to understand the situation better. Also, a lot of personal communication "interviews" function as a source for this research. The experience gained from attending the IBTM fair in Barcelona was used as a source as well. The IBTM fair is a leading global event for the meetings, incentives, conferences and events industry.

The first sub question addresses the international organisation of Friesland Convention Partners, of which strengths and weaknesses were concluded. The most important strengths are extensive network of Friesland Convention Partners and the knowledge of the pillars and Friesland in general. The most important weaknesses are the small team of Friesland Convention Partners and the fact that they are not actively approaching convention organisers.

Sub questions two up to seven (2-7) brought to light several opportunities and threats. It further elaborates on the conventions in Friesland, on the WTCA 2018, on the pillars of Friesland, on the customers and on the competitors. The most important opportunities concluded from this are that there is the possibility in Friesland to have side activities related to the theme and to attend fairs. The most important threats are the results of COVID19, the unfamiliarity of Friesland to organisers and the service that the competitors offer.

The eighth sub question can be seen as a summary of the previous sub questions, and results in the strategic options for Friesland Convention Partners. In the SWOT the most important strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are stated. Also, information about the positioning and distinctive characteristics of Friesland Convention Partners are given. Namely that Friesland Convention Partners has a lot of knowledge of Friesland and its pillars and can therefore sell it very well. Friesland Convention Partners also has an extensive network with close connections to all the partners, including the provincial government.

The ninth sub question addresses the target group of Friesland Convention Partners by first segmenting the customers and then coming to the most interesting segment to target and to focus the positioning on. In conclusion, the target group is organisers of international multi-day conventions on the themes of the pillars of Friesland, that are organised just once.

The last sub question gives part of an answer to the central question as well, namely what the desired positioning looks like. The suggested positioning statement has been developed: "For organisers of multi-day conventions about water, dairy or circularity, Friesland is the destination that delivers knowledge, relevant and relaxing side activities with multiple facilities and possibilities, all close to each other. Friesland has done it before at the WTCA congress in 2018, and Friesland will do it again. Friesland will be your best destination for multi-day conventions."

Next to this, it is advisable to work closely together with Congresbureau Friesland, and to arrange a stand at a fair outside of NBTC together with Congresbureau Friesland. The message of the positioning statement should be taken in mind when developing promotional marketing material and actions. Additionally, it is advised to carry out follow-up research that addresses the side of the organisers of international conventions more. go more international with this. The research should also be done on a more international scale. This way, the business tourism in Friesland should increase in the future.