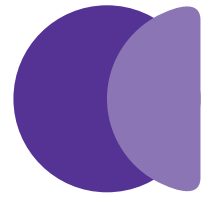




State Tourism Agency
of the Republic of Azerbaijan



azerbaijan
TOURISM BOARD

Azerbaijan

Business Events Strategy Brief 2024-2026

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Introduction

With its modern infrastructure, state-of-the-art meetings facilities, variety of accommodation options, remarkable venues, high-profile heritage sites and authentic cultural experiences, Azerbaijan possesses all essential elements needed to enhance its competitiveness in the global business events industry.

Azerbaijan Tourism Board (ATB) Business Events unit has been established to help bring together public and private entities to promote Azerbaijan as a premium event destination and develop the country's business events industry.

Two key achievements to date include the creation of the Business Events Industry Alliance (BEIA) as a mechanism to attract association and corporate business events to Azerbaijan and entering Azerbaijan to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA).

Role of ATB Business Events unit

The role of the ATB Business Events unit is to:

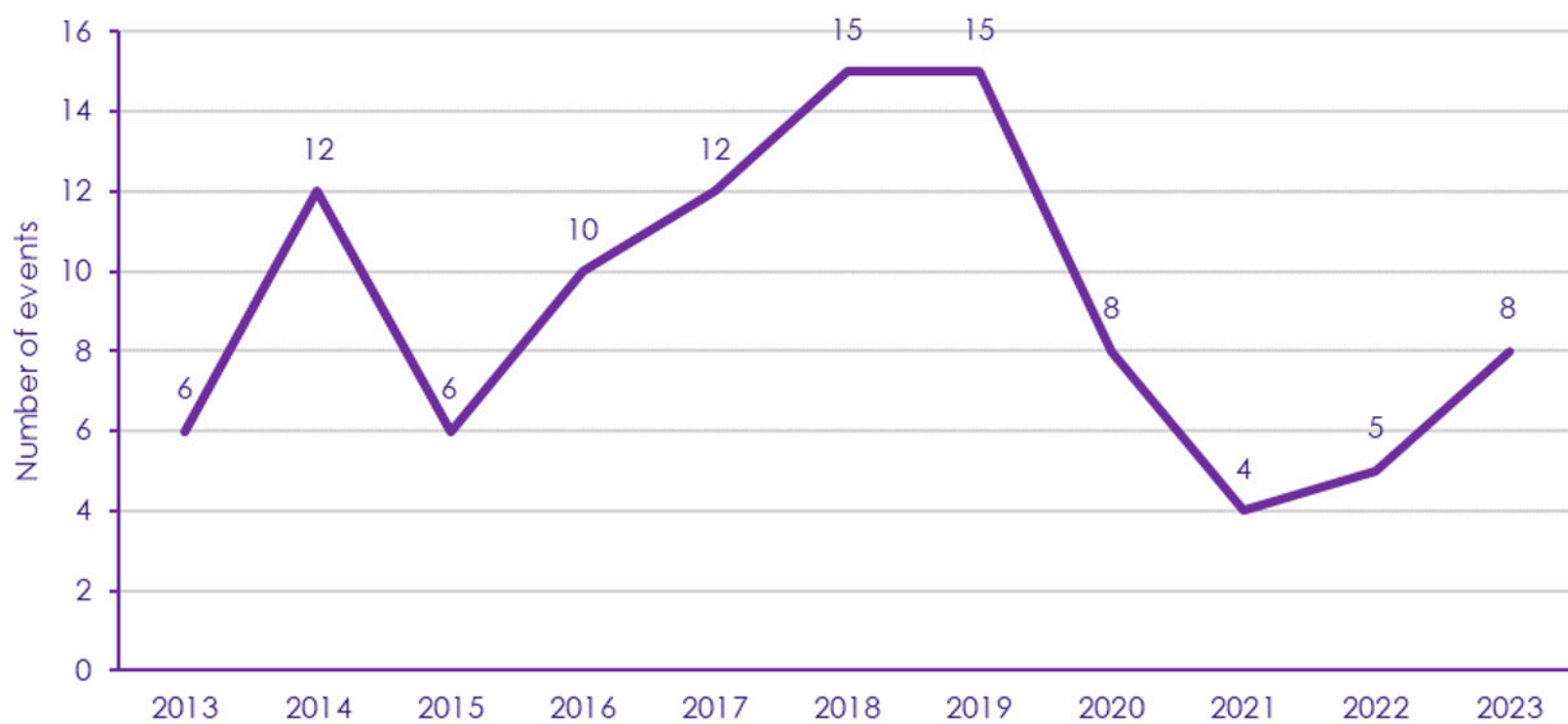
- Promote Azerbaijan as a premium business events destination through B2B exhibitions, workshops, forums, familiarisation (FAM) trips, and site inspections
- Provide leadership in the marketing of Azerbaijan and the generation of business events sales
- Identify potential events to be hosted in Azerbaijan
- Generate leads and connect those leads with industry professionals
- Partner with national and international business events industry professionals
- Serve as the focal point for industry activities
- Enhancing delegate experience quality through targeted services
- Provide specialised services to improve the effectiveness and profitability of the industry
- Coordinate the research, collection and dissemination of relevant information

Business events sector

ATB is a member of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) since 2019. According to the latest ICCA report, Azerbaijan ranks 103rd globally in association event frequency based on the number of association events held annually.

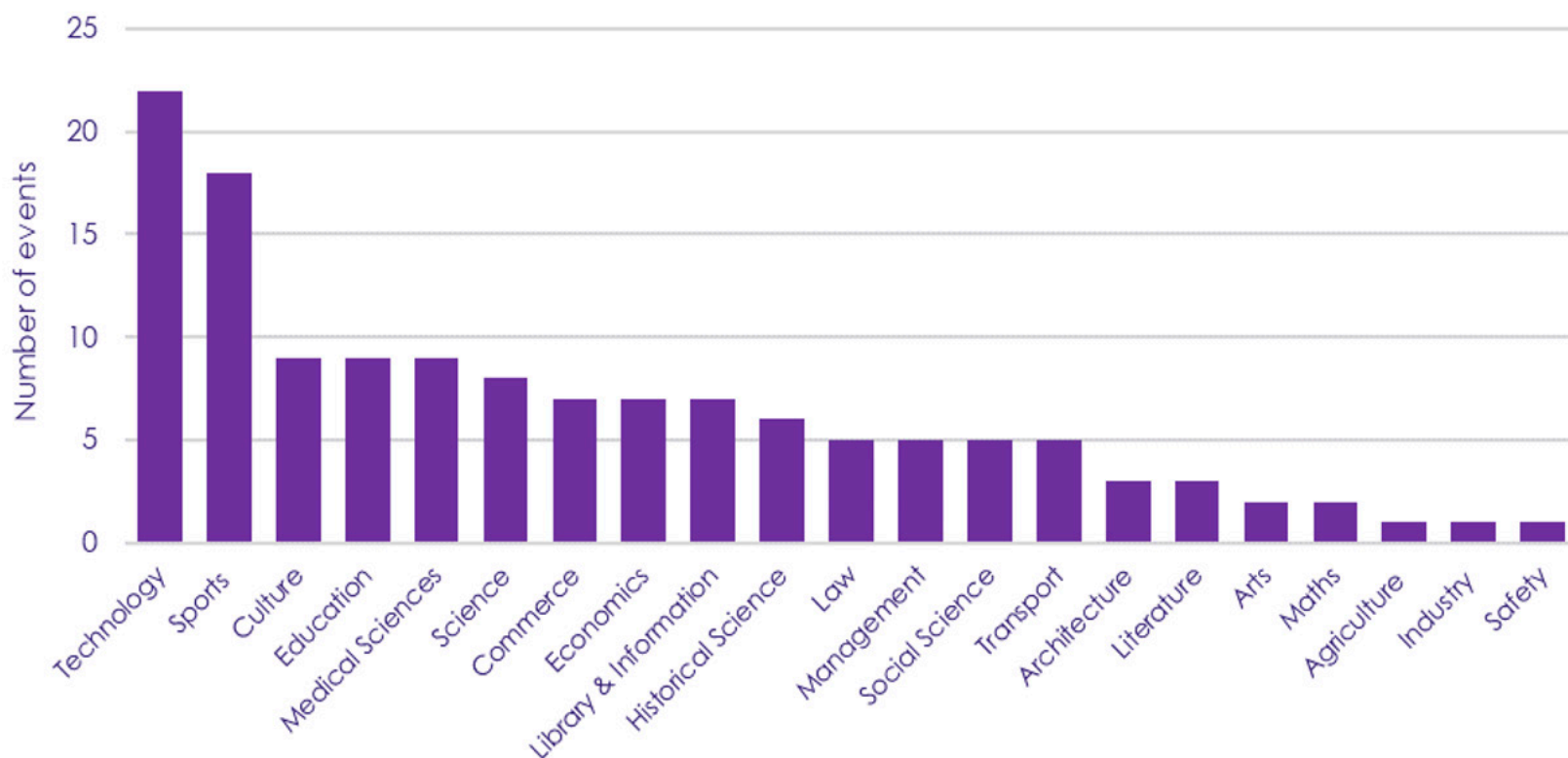
In the past decade, Azerbaijan hosted 135 association events, averaging nine annually, representing an overall average of nine association events per year. In the last two years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Azerbaijan had reached a peak of 15 association events per year, with the pandemic causing a sharp decline in the number of association events held in Azerbaijan. The sector has since been on a good path to recovery, with year-on-year increases and the number of association events in 2023 recorded at being at around 53 percent of the peaks observed in 2018–2019.

Figure 1. International associations' meetings held in Azerbaijan



Between 2013 and 2023, most association events in Azerbaijan were related to the technology sector (22 events, 16.3 percent), followed by the sports sector (18 events, 13.3 percent), culture sector (9 events, 6.7 percent), and then the education sector (9 events, 6.7 percent).

Figure 2. Fields of association meetings in Azerbaijan in 2013–2023



Business events resources

• Enabling organisations

Azerbaijan has most of the necessary organisational infrastructure required for a successful and competitive business events industry, with the existence of national tourism authorities – State Tourism Agency (STA) and ATB, industry associations – Association of Travel Agencies of Azerbaijan (ATAA), Azerbaijan Hotel Association (AHA), and Azerbaijan Tour Guide Association (ATGA).

• Accommodation

Accommodation plays a pivotal role in the success of business events in Azerbaijan, offering

attendees comfort and convenience amidst the country's diverse cultural backdrop. The strategic selection of accommodations is essential for ensuring a seamless experience for participants, reflecting a commitment to high standards of hospitality while showcasing Azerbaijan's unique cultural heritage.

In Baku and Absheron Peninsula, there are a total of 349 accommodation units comprising 14,950 rooms with world-known international hotel brands like Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons, JW Marriott, Fairmont, Hilton, InterContinental, Hyatt Regency, Marriott, Holiday Inn, Courtyard by Marriott, and Radisson.

Among these accommodation options there are plenty of MICE-oriented properties with good meeting facilities, such as meeting and conference rooms including the major ballroom for up to 1,300 seats.

• **Venues**

Venues are a fundamental element in the orchestration of successful business events, providing the essential infrastructure and ambiance necessary for productive engagements. In Azerbaijan, the selection of suitable venues is particularly significant, given the country's rich cultural heritage and rapidly developing infrastructure. The strategic choice of venues not only enhances the logistical aspects of an event but also enriches the overall experience for attendees.

In the past decade, Azerbaijan developed world-class venues, including state-of-the-art locations with capacities to host a range of event sizes, with the biggest in the Caucasus region multifunctional Baku Convention Center, suitable for up to 3,500 guests, and an architectural masterpiece Heydar Aliyev Center with its main auditorium for 1,000 guests.

• **DMCs specialising in MICE**

Destination Management Companies (DMCs) specialising in MICE play an indispensable role in the planning and execution of business events. In Azerbaijan, the expertise of these DMCs is particularly valuable, given the country's growing status as a premier destination for international business gatherings. Currently, Approximately 20 DMCs specialize in MICE services tailored for Azerbaijan's key target markets.

• **Restaurants & catering**

The quality and variety of restaurants and catering services are critical to the success of business events, significantly enhancing the overall guest experience. Azerbaijan's rich culinary heritage and diverse cuisine options, selecting the right food and beverage (F&B) partners is essential. This not only ensures that business events participants enjoy high-quality meals, but also provides an opportunity to showcase the unique flavours of Azerbaijani cuisine. Restaurants and catering companies operating in Azerbaijan provide a wide range of national and international cuisine and dietary preferences and requirements, including Halal, vegan, vegetarian, kosher, and specialty cuisines.

• **Transportation**

Facilitating smooth and timely logistics of delegates between accommodations, venues, and other event locations are one of the crucial factors in organisation of business events. Ensuring reliable, comfortable, and accessible transportation options is essential for enhancing the overall guest experience and optimising event logistics.

• **Business event products**

Business events products and services ensure that events are not only well-organised but also memorable, engaging, and impactful for all participants. By offering tailored solutions that cater to the unique needs and goals of each event, businesses in this sector contribute to enhancing the overall event experience, ensuring successful outcomes and lasting impressions.

Strategic framework

Our strategic goals for corporate and association events in Azerbaijan include:

- Increase the profile of Azerbaijan as an attractive destination for holding business events
- Attracting more international and local business events to Azerbaijan, including its regions
- Foster development of sustainable, high-quality attractions which engage business events to Azerbaijan
- Deliver new incentive and corporate products based on demand of the target markets and local stakeholders
- Connect investors, suppliers, and other institutions related to the industry

Association events

The selection of association events to attract to Azerbaijan is based upon an assessment of key criteria relating to the event, local representatives, and local associations:

Association events

- Local representative in Azerbaijan
- Potential availability of the association on a rotation
- Potential event capacity of 1,000 - 1,500 delegates

Local representatives

- Strong connection with government institutions
- Good standing in association
- Outstanding and forceful personality
- Clear vision of the government's role

Local associations

- Past experience holding relevant events
- Awareness and capacity of bidding process
- The local association should be supported by the relevant institution, evidenced by an official letter.

Of the main fields of associations, ATB has prioritised attracting business events from:

- Medicine & pharmacy
- Oil & gas
- Alternative energy
- Education
- Agriculture, farming, & rural economy
- Information & technology, digital economy
- Space industry

Corporate events

Corporate events include gatherings for employees, partners, clients, and potential clients, spanning conventions, meetings, and corporate celebrations. These events can be for larger audiences such as conventions or smaller events like conferences, meetings, or corporate parties.

The source markets for corporate events that are currently targeted by ATB are:

- Russia & CIS countries
- India
- Türkiye
- Middle East
- Pakistan
- Israel
- Europe

The main development tools used by ATB for the corporate segment are B2B meetings and

workshops, exhibitions, sales missions, and promotional and networking events.

B2B events & workshops

Participation in B2B workshops and meetings enables meetings with key corporate representatives, establish direct contacts and build strategic relationships with key decision-makers, discuss potential cooperation, connect local industry partners with the international corporate sector, and maximise exposure by participating in sponsorship opportunities.

B2B events that ATB has participated in in recent years include MILT India, MALT UAE, KBLT Saudi Arabia, and M&I Forum.

Exhibitions

Participation at the international exhibitions enhances an image of Azerbaijan as a destination for the business events and provides an opportunity to invite local business events industry partners as co-exhibitors. Notable platforms include IMEX Frankfurt and IBTM World Barcelona.

Sales missions

Sales missions involve ATB travelling to our target corporate markets together with local industry partners to meet with key corporate clients.

Roadshows

Organisation of roadshows in Tier 1 target markets covering leisure and MICE tourism segments. Attracting and registration of local industry partners (hotels and DMCs) focused on leisure and MICE services in appropriate markets to such roadshows. With the support of international vendors, representative offices of ATB in particular, an invitation of international partners (70% leisure-related tour operators / travel agencies and 30% MICE and event focused tour operators / agencies) by our international vendor.

Promotional and networking events

Promotional and networking events within exhibitions and trade shows provide an opportunity to strengthen relationships between international and local business event industry partners. Such events are a good platform for destination presentations.

Incentives

Incentive tours are the rewards that companies / organisations offer to their staff, team members, sales teams, partners and even customers in the form of travel. Incentive tours reward stellar performance and loyalty, boosting employee morale, as well as to boost the morale of the employees. Incentive tours can take different forms but basically involve corporate outings like all-inclusive trips meant to encourage team building activities, corporate dinners for celebrations, anniversaries and appreciation, corporate retreats for a unique experience that heals the mind, body, and soul, as well as other recreational activities.