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Conferences On-Cruise: A Perfect Place for Meetings

Anthony FW FOONG

Department of Language Development, Imex Japan Co. Ltd., 3F Imex Japan Bldg, 22 Shimomidori-cho, Shichiku, Kita-ku, Kyoto 603-8425, Japan 78imexfw@gmail.com

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2018 International Meeting and Cruise

- The 2018 International Meeting on Quality of Life was held recently. Proceedings as well as photos and other information from past conferences can be found at <http://as4qol.org/icqol/2018/>

More information at <http://as4qol.org/icqol/2018/>



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Anthony FW FOONG

Department of Language Development, Imex Japan Co. Ltd., 3F Imex Japan Bldg,
22 Shimomidori-cho, Shichiku, Kita-ku, Kyoto 603-8425, Japan
(78imexfw@gmail.com)

Current International conferences/meetings are often held in posh hotels in cities and towns. Discussion and brain-storming over findings in conferences/meetings can be momentary and stressful. An environment outside the conference room therefore should be de-stressing or accommodating the mind in a more restive or relaxing state for participants to enjoy meeting their peers.

We recently held the International Conference on Quality of Life of 2018 (ICQoL-2018) on-cruise (departing from and returning to Singapore), which was a great experience. Participants were situated throughout the journey in a friendly open-sea environment which encouraged them to mingle and discuss controversial findings and new discoveries onboard: it was an atmosphere of study mixed with leisure. In addition, for doing preparatory work by the Conference Organizing Committee (COC) to ensure participants maintained good health while enjoying privacy and an at-home feeling, cruising is just the perfect setting.

In conferences/meetings, due consideration must be given to participants with regard to meals and transport logistics, as they commute to conference venues and back to accommodation facilities, besides the on-site meeting facilities.

At our on-cruise meeting, three meals daily were provided with multiple choices, and tea-breaks were also provided in between breakfast and lunch as well as between lunch and dinner. Therefore, participants were always satisfied with enough good food and beverages while sitting down with their peers to agree, or disagree, about all matters raised in the presentations. The menu consisted of a variety of different national dishes, and every meal was a new experience indeed. Vegetables and fruits were aplenty and all these added up to supporting and enhancing participants' health and wellness. No wonder the discussion in the meeting room was so very interactive and rewarding for many.

As participants (with or without spouse or family member) were each provided with a room for accommodation, where a comfortable feeling that of staying in a hotel room was instilled. The cruise ship as a whole functioned well like a huge hotel indeed. Privacy was well-guarded and there was plenty of family-bonding time for those whose family member(s) came along as accompanying member(s) to the conference.

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The environment varied daily at each port of call. Participants could enjoy many stress relieving moments by disembarking at a port and joining tours to places of interest on land. The cruise company organizes all these on-land activities at a fee, and the participants get to see places without the COC rushing here and there to get transport and immigration procedures sorted out.

Therefore, an on-cruise conference/meeting is quite ideal indeed, and all participants were fully satisfied at the ICQoL-2018 according to a survey conducted after the cruise. All participants (100%) felt the on-cruise conference was comfortable, interactive, and that they were constantly able to communicate and exchange of ideas, as well as benefiting from privacy, proper food, and leisure.

According to the survey, the limiting factors for many scholars to participating in an on-cruise meeting were: i) the length of conference (ICQoL-2018 needed a 6-night/7-day period, and including travel to/back from conference site, a 10-day period was needed for overseas participants from Asia participants); and ii) more-than-usual amount of monetary commitment. An absence from office for 4-5 working days is the accepted norm for many institutions, which would usually obliged to provide logistic and financial support as well. As for the costs, it is never cheap to go on cruise and hold meetings onboard.

Therefore, in resolving limitation i), a shorter meeting period, lasting 3-4 days would be more appropriate and approximate well normal practices and would make it easier to secure financial support from institutions in the countries where participants dwell. As for limitation ii), a shorter cruising period will require a lesser financial commitment, and if a group discount can be secured from the cruise company, it would be somewhat near or similar to expenses used for normal on-land meetings generally held at posh hotels, as food, board, and transportation costs are all included in an on-cruise meeting. So long the conditions for a conference can be adjusted to the appropriate period requiring a rational amount of financial commitment, conferences on-cruise are definitely a more productive and interactive option for scholars to 'make and break' while disseminating the fruits of their hard work.