

Use iconic buildings to promote S'pore

Something like Eiffel Tower may draw tourists in

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WITH Singapore joining the worldwide race to develop new iconic buildings, developers here must ensure they do not forget the interests of one key set of stakeholders – tourists.

If managed properly, iconic structures can serve as a “brand logo” to promote the country and attract even more visitors to the city and the region, said Dr Judy Ann Siguaw in an interview with TODAY.

Dr Siguaw, 51, is the founding dean of the newly-formed Cornell Nanyang Institute of Hospitality Management (CNI) here, a joint-venture between the United States’ Cornell University School of Hotel Administration and the Nanyang Technological University.

Said the scholar in sales and marketing, who flew in from New York to take the helm at the CNI: “Iconic buildings are great. The Seattle Space Needle, the Sydney Opera House, Paris’ Eiffel Tower – all of them are readily recognised.”

But she emphasised the importance of making local iconic buildings attractive to visitors. “Tourists don’t travel to just see a building. It would be good to give them interactive access, so that rather than just looking at the building from the outside, they can climb or ride to the top, like at the Eiffel Tower or New York’s Empire State Building.”

Earlier this month, it was announced that part of Singapore’s \$1.6-billion plan to liven up the main retail belt along Orchard Road would be a towering 40-storey iconic building on top of the Orchard MRT station.

Such a structure, said the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), would add vibrancy and appeal to the cityscape.

The success of such projects would also help the STB achieve its goal of doubling current visitor numbers to 17 million by 2015, and tripling tourism spending to \$30 billion.

Describing the targets as “ambitious but do-able”, Dr Siguaw commented: “Tourism in Asia is second only to Europe. Paris brings in almost 80 million tourists a year, so we should be able to attract 17 million.”

And if Singapore’s plans to build an integrated resort – which could feature a

casino – take off as expected, Dr Siguaw is confident that the CNI could continually produce crops of capable graduates to fill the demand for management-level roles.

In her next four years in Singapore, Dr Siguaw wants to market aggressively the flagship graduate hospitality management course – the first of its kind in Asia – to attract top local and regional talents to groom them for leadership positions in

the rapidly-growing Asian hospitality industry.

Just 50 students will be accepted in each annual intake, with Singaporeans taking up a maximum of five places. To create “a global environment” for students during the 12-month programme, the other students will come from countries such as China, South Korea, India and Japan.

The CNI will take in its pioneer batch of students in May next year.

This is the first time that Cornell, an Ivy League institution based in Ithaca, New York,

has offered its Masters course overseas. To qualify, one must first have an “out-standing” undergraduate grade point average and Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) scores. GMAT is an American-based test that measures one’s verbal, mathematical and analytical writing skills.

Students will spend the first half of the course in Ithaca, and the remaining six months at the NTU. The intensive programme will enable students to venture into different disciplines such as food-and-beverage management, lodging, real estate and revenue management.

Students will be graded mostly on project work. Apart from individual projects, they have to form small groups and work on assignments in the style of the reality television show, *The Apprentice*.

Of the latter, Dr Siguaw explained: “We will give them an assignment on a Friday afternoon. They’ll have the weekend to work on it and then make a presentation to industry experts.”

Project topics can vary greatly, ranging from creating marketing plans for a new casino, to how to execute a formal dinner for 100 guests.

And to cultivate a strong research culture, NTU and Cornell have also each contributed over \$800,000 towards funding research projects for the Asian hospitality industry.



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lion tourists a year, so we should be able to attract 17 million.

Dr Judy Ann Siguaw, dean of the new Cornell Nanyang Institute of Hospitality Management, while proposing that iconic buildings could serve as ‘brand logos’ and help STB achieve its goal of attracting 17 million tourists