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HSMIAI calls for clarity in Asian hospitality



Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIAI) has called for a standardised rating system for the Asian hospitality market to reduce disparity between properties classed with the same level of service.

At a recent conference in Singapore, organised in conjunction with Cornell-Nanyang Institute (CNI) of Hospitality Management, senior executives gathered to discuss key issues in the Asian hospitality industry, namely a lack of independent standards for hotel ratings such as the UK's AA system.

“Who decides what is five star?” asked DB Concepts director, Bernadette Dennis, adding: “Especially in China, the positioning of the hotel, based on its website and brochures, sets expectations, but the property often does not deliver what they say they can.

“The five star rating should be based on a service level set by a body with authority and not just a rating given to a building.”

Hyatt International director of marketing special projects, Henrietta Ho, also stressed the need for an independent body to create equal standards across the region. “We need synergy among the hotels in Asia to have an association to come up with service standards and therefore ratings for Asia to use. No one is taking ownership of the problem,” she said.

To help meet the standards hotels currently set themselves, delegates cited uniform marketing criteria as a key element for development as customer satisfaction indices are often not extensive enough. “Quality service is lip service unless you can measure the service level,” said Hotel Phoenix, Singapore general manager, Noel Hawkes.

“We need feedback and to know that we have the basics right. How else will I know what I need to put in a hotel for the future?” he added.

Other initiatives to improve service include technology to capture information about a guest and their booking, thus offering a more personalised and streamlined service from the moment they make a reservation to check-out.

Increasing the potential employee pool in Asia is also important, according to attendees, with employees needing cross-training in five-star service standards and many looking to recruit staff from the Philippines and other countries outside the region to tap labour.

However, Small Luxury Hotels of the World vice president marketing Asia Pacific, Lynne Ireland, warned: “Don’t lose the soul and culture – having the right attitude and embracing the locale and region remains important.”

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