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Hospitality Leaders Demand Better Marketing Metrics for MICE Business

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Marketers in the hospitality industry in Asia Pacific are not making enough use of marketing metrics for the Meetings, Incentive, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) business to be truly effective proclaimed hospitality leaders at a breakout session at a recent roundtable event held in Singapore and hosted by The Cornell-Nanyang Institute of Hospitality Management (CNI) and the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMIA) Asia Pacific chapter.

The roundtable was sponsored by the Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau. The hoteliers present declared that millions of dollars were invested into analyzing financial data but not into marketing data and that further investment into marketing systems that could provide effective analysis to make decisions was required.

Session participants were interested in applying metrics technology to revenue management analysis beyond rooms to that of retail sales in relation to real estate, food and beverage and ancillary services, such as spa's in order to measure return on investment and the impact of marketing promotions. Technology, such as RFID, that could track consumer spend in hotels, resorts and casinos in the region was required in order to truly answer how much business is gained or lost from guests. The ability to measure ROI could also be used to argue cases for spend on public relations campaigns or promotions to attract group bookings.

In essence, hospitality marketers want to know where MICE guests spend their money in the hotels, to measure levels of satisfaction and to understand profitability as well as revenues. They want to understand what helps to increase shareholder value in bidding for large events and think that the industry lags behind others in that measurement remains at customer satisfaction and loyalty. The hoteliers stated that they can't relate metrics to products and services.

Hospitality marketers want to be able to more closely differentiate between market segments that stay in their hotels, to efficiently analyze sectors that may be growing or contracting over time. They also wanted to know what share of the business they were getting from specific segments.

During the discussion hoteliers spoke about booking trends, had much debate over pricing trends including questioning the wisdom of government pricing, and considered metrics in terms of micro issues of the hotel and at the macro level, from a city perspective. The fragmentation and lack of standardization of measures were identified as major issues.

Research to create an industry standard for defining market segments and terminology, what impacts customer satisfaction and the long term effects of those impacts, and the effect of macro trends such as what a destination does to sustain activity were defined as areas of interest for measurement.

To get answers, the participants at the breakout session called upon government bodies, in this instance the Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau, a group of the Singapore Tourism Board, to collect and collate data over time from the industry, especially PCO's and intermediaries, using basic metric definitions to facilitate the measurement of trends over time.

If the government collected and disseminated such data participants argued, then the result of such research would assist hotels to better understand the booking trends and demands of major events, such as the Rugby Sevens, Cricket Sixes, Olympics and F1 races.

Governments are in a unique position to find and collect such data advocated hoteliers. One participant stated that the industry needs access to historical and real time data at the planning stage of events, to understand the metrics planned for certain events at an early stage.

Aggregating statistics could help determine the type of products suppliers should provide to incentive groups, along with determining what events may or may not be beneficial to the city.

Facilitators of the breakout sessions includes Dr Judy Siguaw, Dean, Cornell Nanyang Institute of Hospitality Management, Christine Toguchi, Managing Director of Macrovision Networks and HSMIA Asia Pacific, and Bernadette Dennis of BD Concepts. Participants in the Roundtable event included:

- Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts, Mr Michael Lee, VP of Marketing

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