

Destination: Macau

A brighter future ahead

Mixed bag of views on 2016 MICE performance but trade players are confident of a great 2017 once new products open in Macau and provide clients with far more options. **Prudence Lui** reports



A-Ma Temple, Macau

Macau experienced a slight decline in the number of business events and delegates in attendance in 1Q2016. The destination welcomed 191 events, of which 187 were meetings, down 14 from the same period per cent to 13,437 people.

Unfazed, a Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) spokes-

man told *TTG Show Daily*: “The long-term prospects are very good because of the growing number and diversity of new hotels, venues and products for the business events market in Macau.”

“Our marketing clout and profile is rising rapidly (and) our recent successes are demonstrating our capacity for mega events.”

The spokesperson pointed out that

with room inventory hitting 50,000 in the coming years, increased focus on MICE by the industry and improved accessibility, “Macau is well positioned to become the mega events city” of Asia.

He added: “The continued investment in luxury hotels and services also positions Macau well for the high-end corporate and incentive market.”

Still, IPIM makes it clear that its challenge now is to broaden the appeal of Macau and move it away from being seen solely as a gaming destination.

“Macau’s climb in international rankings for conventions and exhibitions by ICCA and UFI would suggest that Macau is coming of age as a business events destination. There is more to do, however, to encourage industry collaboration and engagement in the promotion and attraction of non gaming business,” said the spokesperson.

Expressing less optimism over Macau’s MICE prospects this year is Peter Hassall, managing director with MCI Macau, who has witnessed “very slow” business in 1H2016 and is not expecting the remaining half of the year to be “much better”.

Hassall observed a significant drop in corporate meetings and conferences.

He remarked: “The conferences that entered and (wait only) the basics and no bells and whistles. The larger pieces of business we have seen in the past are

also not returning.

“Macau may have lost its shine for the moment. I believe that Macau really needs to step up its transport infrastructure to make it easier (for overseas delegates) to get to here.”

That said, Hassall believes Macau’s MICE sector will see a more positive picture in 2017 when the new integrated resorts open.

“(Having more choices) will absolutely assist tourism,” he quipped.

“It will, however, also mean greater competition (in the marketplace). The new integrated resorts will attract some new business and also take away (existing ones) from others in the city.”

Meanwhile, Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel, Cotai Central and The St Regis Macao, Cotai Central have reported a strong first half of the year.

General manager of sales and marketing, Daniella Tonetto, said: “Macau continues to attract regional and international groups due to the size and flexibility of our meetings spaces, international service standards and ease of travel options.”

“We need to make the most of the short-lead business trend that we are facing and ensure our turnaround is fast. Also, there is continuous strong coming companies, in terms of new emerging markets, both India and South Korea are promising.”

Viewpoints

What will you be doing differently to help your business succeed in the year forward?



Bruno Simoes, CEO, smallWorld Experience

We will be investing more and more in video content to promote

our products, services and experience. As in past years, we are constantly searching for and creating new services. We are also expanding to markets that are not pegged to the US dollar, which at present is over-valued.



Eric Chan, executive director, Air Cruise Travel

Given the business slowdown, I would encourage my staff to advance themselves by taking up

related courses or enjoy a break during this quiet period. I hope, in return, we could come up with some fresh ideas as the existing products have been around for many years.



From left: The St Regis Macao, Cotai Central; Anim/Arte Nam Van



On the shelves

eVent Portfolio and Handy

Starwood Hotels and Resort’s Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel and The St Regis Macao have introduced a new mobile tool which streamlines the event planning process by facilitating communication and organising all correspondence in an easy-to-use web-based application. Named eVent Portfolio, the tool also enables collaboration between events and sales teams.

The two hotels have also implemented Handy phones in guestrooms. These phones allow for free international calls to Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, the US and India.

The Parisian Macao Hotel

Opened in mid-September 2016, The Parisian Macao Hotel houses 3,000

guestrooms, a collection of meeting spaces totalling 5,200m², and other facilities.

The 3,400m² Parisian Ballroom can be divided into three junior ballrooms. There are also five meetings rooms, two boardrooms, a business centre and outdoor function spaces such as the observation decks on levels seven and 37 of its half-size recreation of the Eiffel Tower.

Taipa Village Art Space

A two-storey traditional shophouse in Taipa has reopened as an exhibition centre in September, offering 74m² of space that can support small-scale functions like workshops and seminars with up to 30 pax.

Taipa Village Art Space’s allure is its location in a heritage hub in Macau. It sits opposite of Casa de Tapas and will be attractive to events associated

with architectural preservation, cultural heritage, eco-tourism as well as related sustainability topics.

Anim/Arte Nam Van

Launched in June, this new area at Nam Van Lake combines sports, arts and culture to keep visitors busy. There are creative shops to peruse, a weekend craft market to visit, weekend cultural performances and activities to partake in, and swan-shaped pedal boats to rent for a fun ride. And when a rest is required, head to the café run by the Institute for Tourism Studies.

Ei Gielo

This new outdoor lounge is Pacha Macau’s latest gem. The venue has six cabanas with 120 seats and offers access to Studio City hotel’s pool, making it the perfect party central for holidaymakers as well as event planners.