

INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL TSCHUDY

MICE POLAND: *Global MICE market is changing. We all can see dynamic development of Chinese meetings industry, as well as India and Korea becoming stronger and stronger. Please explain what is the secret of the Asian market developing so rapidly nowadays? What do the Asian countries draw their strength from?*

Indeed, Asia and China in particular are growing very fast, both as a market and also as a competitive MICE-destination. However, the main leisure tourism growth of what's happening in China right now is based on their domestic needs, and *not* on international demand. Initiated over the last 20 years by hundreds-of-thousands mostly former-farmers who 'travel' the country as migrant workers in search for work, now domestic travel accumulates to an incredible 1.61 billion trips last year. That's massive and the basis for a huge hospitality industry with over 300'000 hotels and guests houses and some 12'000 travel agencies handling those domestic trips. Based on this existing market and combined with the economic growth, obviously, outbound travel now shows fantastic increases too: with nearly 56 million outbound travellers in 2010 (source: UNWTO). So, there is no secret – the growth is simply a natural reaction to growing domestic needs. Any country or industry with a growing national market will eventually produce international business. So, outbound leisure travellers are expected to reach the '100 million-mark' before 2020. Leisure travel still represents nearly 90% of the total outbound movements; business travel and MICE are obviously trailing.

The pace of development of European meetings industry slows down at the same time. What is the problem? Should Europe follow the Asian example somehow?

Having said the above, Europe cannot take Asia's MICE needs as parameter for its own industry. The demands are simply too different and Chinese Outbound Incentives, for example, compare more to the kind of US-Incentives of the 80'ies (meaning deluxe group travel) and absolutely not to Central Europe's 'event-like' Incentives in the late 90'ies. Also, the majority of Chinese outbound Incentives go to Macau, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Australia; and not, for a long time to come, to Europe or the US. So, Europe can look at China and be fascinated. But its MICE industries will live or die with the economic success of its own European enterprises and their pro-active positive attitudes towards communication and development (which presently in the 'old' world often is not the case).

Should European MICE players be afraid of Asian expansion? Or maybe those two markets can develop simultaneously?

Well, any globally-active MICE player should be aware, not afraid, of what's happening in the East. And then consider whether to participate or not. Conscious decision-making is never dangerous - ignorance can be. The Asian MICE traffic to Europe is still absolutely minimal, so if for example a hotelier or a DMC somewhere in Europe decides today not to aim at the Chinese market, so be it. No problem. He or she might have to reflect on that question in two, three years again. Because not participating in a certain overseas market is absolutely acceptable – maybe even sensible. Today. Nobody knows what's valid tomorrow.

How does the African meetings industry look against Asia and Europe? Is it closer to rapid development or stagnation?

That's a different topic. Africa is a wonderful tourism continent and they feature sensational resorts and activities; Kenya for example, and of course South Africa too. But it's only South Africa that has a small but active domestic MICE industry, predominantly active to and/or between Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban. Internationally, that market is not significant.

As the industry speaker how do you see global MICE nowadays in general? What direction does it evolve into? What trends in the industry are on the top at present? Which of them will strengthen even more and which are falling into oblivion?

It seems clear, that MICE, like any other business, is breaking up into countless of segments and sub-segments. Every target audience wants to be addressed too, every sector requires special attention, and every single client calls for a personal solution. And given the global environment, it can become quite difficult for an individual supplier to know about which client to attack. There are no global or national solutions anymore: everybody must search, identify and serve his or her specifically-suitable clientele.

What, according to you, is the key to a successful event or meeting? Is there a recipe for a success in meetings industry?

The target audience must be known very well, even *before* starting to plan the event. What does *this* audience need specifically? What is the right program for *this* audience? What is the right communication for *this* audience? And then, lots of flexibility during the actual operations: Adjusting and Fine-tuning is an ongoing process during Event- or Congress-Management.

In your articles you say that communication is one of the most important elements of successful meeting. What does good communication in meetings industry consist in?

Because today's markets and clienteles are so fragmented and are requiring respect to every single mentality and smallest desire, Communication must be adjusted and multi-channelled accordingly. „One message suits all“ is no longer acceptable – communication now is an integrated and inter-active highway between the company/association and its needs and objectives on one side, and the ‚customers‘ (clients, strategic partners, in dusty network, opinion leaders, media, and of course employees) on the other.

Which event or meeting that you attended made the greatest and unforgettable impression on you? Why this one?

For me, personally, a full-service congress which lasts over several days, includes education, networking events, tours, and receives participants from all over the world, is still the most powerful form of a meeting. I simply love to see these people from around the world gathering for both business and pleasure.