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Global Mega-Trends for Japan's MICE-industry

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Even smaller and medium-sized (SME) Japanese event & meetings agencies will eventually have to deal with global trends. Either because global corporate clients involved in Japan will apply more rigidly their own global rules and specifications (CSR, Purchasing, Legal & Financial standards); or because Japanese end-clients begin to adopt global trends and interests. Mega trends such as Individualization, Connectivity or Neo-Ecology will become demanding topics for all players in the Japanese MICE-industry. Maybe, large Convention & Exhibition Centres (such as Pacifico or ICCK) or member-hotels of international groups do have a department involved in the research of the future. Also, PCOs with a strong relation to academic associations might get close to future-reports and benchmark data. Because they all would need to know what customers in ten years will require from the industry. But SME will not have time, money or an academic drive to research and learn about new trends. Yet, some of those topics will have a huge impact in Japan's competitive and short-term-oriented meetings & events business.

Globalisation of Event Industry?

Behaviours and requirements for Japanese end-users will not change that quickly. But Live Communication targets more often international audiences, coming or staying in Japan. And to serve those customers correctly, for example a German automotive incentive group, cannot be satisfied anymore by simply serving the right beer. Event Management now means for an enterprise to create a smooth, warm, interactive and unconditional relation to the invitees. Those corporate giants have long-become global enterprises, using English as their company language and looking at the whole world as one market. It is assumed, that most of the Fortune 500 companies by now have not only a global communication strategy, but also a global event strategy. For smaller 'boutique'-agencies, with maybe 5 or 6 full-time staff, it will therefore become almost impossible to obtain mandates from the large international enterprises. Those smaller players don't have the global awareness, they don't master English, they don't have patience and budgets for intensive bidding-processes, and they don't have the time to build long-lasting relationships in the complex management matrix' of global companies.

Individualisation

In Europe, there are strong tendencies from the Generation Y to be independent and self-employed, to see life and work from a very personal perspective, without specific loyalty or long-term vision. This has a huge impact to the MICE-industries, as for example allows agencies to employ more freelance staff - specifically for individual jobs - without committing to guaranteed employment. Under the label 'New Work', this Generation Y



sees traditional career-planning as a handicap and prefers punctual and time-limited experiences. Staff will change their employment as often as possible and the Japanese inbound industry will have to get used to dealing with an ever-changing group of foreign project managers. People come and go; quickly. One trend of Generation Y is also, that conflict management is not popular. In fact, still, young people do not learn to handle conflicts, or even to have a "healthy" (meaning solution-aiming) fight. But the world needs to learn and master conflicts of interests which, with all due respect, Japan needs to do as well in order to be successful in the competitive global business environment.

Limitless Connectivity

7/24-access to personal IT-devices will be required soon, even at smaller meetings. Open and complimentary Wi-Fi-connection is a standard tool now for every international conference. Better get used to that; better prepare fast. Conference participants will no longer use an Event-App on their smartphones to check the program or view the participant list; that is standard already. Participants will now want to inter-actively exchange their opinions, see immediate Q&A-findings and statistics, and exchange with fellow-delegates on the Conference App. Also, by now, the larger companies do record the entire event in order to multi-use those audio/video-data beyond the actual event period. Japanese meeting planners and venue managers should join forces to obtain the very latest technology for immediate and inter-active communication among delegates.

Globalization, Climate Change and Resource Scarcity will be other hot topics. It's not about green meetings anymore; it is about generating thoughts and ideas to the content of conferences and to the benefits of all involved; inviting institutions, sponsoring partners and the delegates. How can local suppliers generate expertise in these fields in order to support the academic or corporate world, and to initiative meetings and symposiums of all sorts? Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) will no longer be managed by a single department somewhere hidden in the enterprise. CSR will have to be initiated and applied by everybody involved in Live Communication. By-the-way, as part of CSR, unfortunately for Japan, long-haul travel (to international conferences) will be more critically observed. Because 'time is money'; but also from an ecological point of view.

Can smaller Agencies survive?

More trends will eventually influence MICE in Japan, and the question is whether small and medium-sized agencies will be able to stay in business. In Europe, it seems as if 'boutique'-agencies with an annual turnover of less than ¥100 million can survive, if they stay small, flexible and mobile. And agencies with mandates worth over 1 billion Yen a year have enough liquidity, client-relations and inter-active knowhow-transfer to regularly create or adjust products and services. For those agencies in-between, it will be a tough ride ahead. Unless they have a truly exclusive USP (unique selling proposition), which allows them to manoeuvre safely into the future.

In any case, all members of the MICE industries should from time-to-time have a concentrate look at the future and evaluate, whether they are ready at what's coming at them, both from client-side and from competition.