

ONE Travel Conference Recap Tourism Marketing Pros Gather in Orlando

By Carolyn J. Feimster SCMD, President, CJF Marketing International, North Brunswick, NJ

THE SECOND ANNUAL ONE TRAVEL CONFERENCE FOR SHOPPING, DINING & CULTURAL TOURISM, HELD JANUARY 15-17, 2012 IN ORLANDO, FL, WAS PRESENTED BY SHOP AMERICA ALLIANCE, US CULTURAL & HERITAGE TOURISM MARKETING COUNCIL, CULTURAL & HERITAGE TOURISM ALLIANCE, AMERICAN EXPRESS, VISIT ORLANDO AND VISIT FLORIDA. Over 170 delegates participated in presentations, panels, networking events and more, sharing their extensive knowledge with one another. The ONE Conference morphed last year from the Shop America Conference so, in reality, this was the 15th year for this gathering.

I asked the delegates to share one piece of information or idea they were going to take back to their office and implement. Kate Birchler, senior manager of marketing, Macerich, said, "Research is the foundation and reason for everything we do. Presentations such as the US Department of Commerce and the American Express session were full of great insights and supportive of to whom and how we market our shopping centers."

Julie Heizer, acting director, the US Department of Commerce/Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, provided useful insights on travel trends and forecasts. After a few rough years, the US is rebounding. Global arrivals in 2011 are projected to be up 4% to 4.5%, with an annual projected growth rate of 5% to 6% per year through 2020. The top five markets to the US in both

numbers and travel receipts are Canada, Japan, UK, Mexico and Germany. The countries to keep your eyes on are the BRIC countries — Brazil, Russia, India and China.

Beverly Anderson, VP, American Express Business Insights, pointed out that fast-casual restaurants have been thriving, but the biggest winner in the dining category was bars, with a revenue increase of 40%. Also, she reported that Baby Boomers have finally stopped cutting back their spending. After Canada and Mexico, top growth areas in luxury purchases are from the Asia-Pacific, with Australia, South Korea and Japan leading the way, in that order. Then comes Europe and in fourth place, the Middle East.

One of the most popular sessions was by Susan Sweeney, Internet marketing speaker and author. "In these days of tight budgets it is essen-

tial to maintain creativity and operate competitively, while being frugal," said Rose Hapanowich, director of marketing, Carousel Center/Destiny USA. "Sweeney's presentation, 'Great Online Tourism Gadgets,' opened my eyes to a world of free or low-cost resources on the Internet. The money I will save has already paid for the cost of the conference, and then some!"

Some of Sweeney's Recommendations

- **knowem.com.** Search over 550 popular social networks, over 150 domain names and the entire US Patent and Trademark Office Trademark Database to instantly secure your brand on the internet.
- **phonevite.com.** Free phone reminders and alerts. How often do we need to use this for emergencies with our

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- **Fiverr.com.** The place to find people willing to do just about anything for \$5.
- **Onebox.com.** Manages business communications, such as converting voice mail to e-mail.

And there are many more. Log on to susansweeney.com and see all she has to offer with her various webinars.

Importance of Packages

A first-time attendee, Stephen Fine, founder and director of business development for www.crossborder-shopping.ca in Canada said, "The ONE Travel conference ... inspired us to put more focus on offering packages to our visitors that combine shopping, dining, accommodations and transportation." Fine's company works with US companies to help them understand the Canadian market and how to better market to it.

A lot of speakers focused on packaging your product with appropriate partners. Panelists from a session on "Value and New Luxury" discussed the importance of packaging what your retailers have to offer by forming a strong partnership with them. Art Jimenez, senior director of leisure sales for the Las Vegas Convention and

Visitors Authority, talked about the 75 to 100 promotions they do a year to help market their shopping partners. Many of their packages are consumer-direct through the online travel agencies (OTAs).

Partnerships that Prevail

Besides packaging, another important "P" is partnership. The Sarasota CVB came up with an original idea on funding for cultural advertising. They actually asked their own arts patrons to help fund an ad section on culture in US Airways' *Pace* magazine. The patrons ended up contributing half the cost. The local newspaper repackaged the section and overprinted it, enabling distribution to local realtors.

Networking is always important at conferences. Doug Killian, director of tourism for Mall of America, said "The Conference was a valuable opportunity to network with shopping tourism colleagues and share 'best practices.' I especially found the session on



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Member of
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Council of
Shopping
Centers

attracting more international visitors to be helpful. Canada and China are very important markets for us, and the panel on 'New Strategies to Attract More International Customers' gave us insight on the latest marketing opportunities, including nuances we otherwise would not be aware of."

Kathy Anderson, president of Anderson Retail Marketing said, "The conference reinforced our belief in cooperative marketing to promote US shopping and dining to travelers from around the world, as well as working with key marketing partners such as TravMedia to reach international travel journalists."

Future Looks Bright

"This is a very exciting time for the tourism industry, with unprecedented international arrival growth predicted for the next five years, especially from high-spending markets including China and Brazil," said Rosemary McCormick, president, Shop America Alliance.

What was my take-away? Besides all the valuable information, we had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with key receptive tour operators during the Tour Operator Roundtable. Especially on the heels of both Florida Huddle and RSAA, this was a great opportunity to encourage the operators to schedule an appointment with us at the upcoming trade shows. We always send out e-mails making that request, but it is much better to do it in person, while giving them a little teaser on "what's new" with our properties. It is clear that tour opera-

tors are seeking two things from suppliers — "what's new" and what kind of experience you can create for their

New Organization Launched

Women in Travel & Tourism International was launched following the ONE Conference.

The mission is to enhance the success of women in the travel and tourism industry through peer-to-peer networking, mentoring, lead sharing and giving back to the global travel community in meaningful ways. WITTI is about connecting, supporting and promoting women's contributions in travel and tourism. Meetings will be held in conjunction with industry events such as Pow Wow. For more information, log onto: <http://mandalaresearch.com/index.php/witti> or write to Kathy@womenintraveland-tourism.com.

Please submit your programs to me, either via email at Carolyn@CJFMarketingInternational.com, fax (732/545-3138) or mail. If possible, include samples of your graphics. Full credit will be given to the person or team responsible for the program. Visit our new web site: www.cjfmarketinginternational.com. ■

CJF Marketing International offers a range of services for creating and implementing strategic tourism, economic development and marketing programs for shopping centers, urban entertainment projects, downtown retail districts, communities and commercial properties globally. The firm also offers educational programs and seminars for corporate meeting planners, shopping center developers, communities and redevelopment agencies. Feimster can be reached at 732/249-6080.

clients. It is all about experiential travel.

That said, there was a lot of discussion this year about social media and its impact. While it was generally agreed that it is an important component of your brand equity in creating awareness, it should never stand alone. Tourism marketing is all about the face-to-face, the relationship and the partnerships.

We are continuing this series of articles on tourism every other month and would like to focus on some of the more innovative programs.