

## Conference Coverage

# Latin America . . . It's Back!

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

**I**N MY LAST ARTICLE I PROMISED THIS COLUMN WOULD BE ABOUT "HISTORIC SHOPPING & DINING ATTRACTIONS." However, I just returned from La Cumbre, and because the resurgence of the Latin market is so timely, I decided to cover it in this story. My next article will feature the new alliance of Boston's Faneuil Hall Marketplace, South Street Seaport in NYC and Union Station DC.

While the economy is not bouncing back as fast as we would like, travel has begun to show real improvement, particularly in certain market segments and from certain regions. However, travelers' expectations have changed. Most

people around the world consider taking a vacation to experience new places their "right."

What has changed is how they travel. Many are trading down. If they once stayed at a five-star resort, they now book a four-star. They may not eat in as pricey a restaurant as they once did, or they may share an entrée. So while they are still traveling, there is a definite sense of prudence with their expenditures.

### Offers Become More Important

"Traditionally, shopping centers in tourism destinations have provided visitors with a coupon book or special offers. However, redemption was usually low and the program was seen as more as an advertising effort for merchants," explains Kathy Anderson, CMD, president of Anderson Retail Tourism Marketing. "Today, we are seeing increased use of these offers by visitors and

increased participation by retailers and restaurants.



"In the past, luxury retailers didn't participate. They do now. At The Shoppes at The Palazzo in Las Vegas, designers such as Tory Burch, Coach, Ralph Lauren and even Barneys New York offer luxury travelers exclusive amenities and services such as personal shopping, private showings, hotel delivery, etc.

"We work with tour operators and online travel agencies to develop exclusive offers for their clients over and above the traditional visitor offers. Westfield San Francisco Centre is running a promotion with American Sky in the UK. It targets the 1.2 million readers of *The London Times* and entitles clients booking a San Francisco package to receive a tote bag at the center with a variety of complimentary gifts and additional offers from participating retailers and restaurants — including a \$250 gift card from Tourneau."

### The Resurging Latin Traveler

One market of particular interest is the resurging Latin traveler, especially because they love to shop. Some of us remember the 1990s when the Latin Americans were coming to the US with empty suitcases to shop. I remember taking many late night flights out of Miami International Airport heading to South America and being astounded by the number of appliances being checked as luggage.

It's time to take another look at this market. Of course, savvy travel and tourism folks never stopped targeting it, understanding that if you pull out of a market you have been cultivating, it will take much more time and money to get them back. When you stay with a market through good times and bad, the tour operators will remember and thank you for it.

### Updates on the Latin Market

According to the US Office of Travel & Tourism Industries, total arrivals to the US for the first quarter of 2010 were up 15.3%. This is driven not by the European markets, but Latin America. All of South America is up 18.2%, driven by specific markets such as Brazil (up 33.8%), Colombia (up 19.0%) and Mexico (up an impressive 52.8%). Like the Brazilians, they love to shop.

This compares to the UK,

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which is down 3.4% and to all of Western Europe (down 1.5%). There is a wealth of information at <http://tinet.ita.doc.gov/>. Visit it often.



To get figures more appropriate for your shopping center, check with the research departments of your state tourism

office and local destination marketing organization (DMO).

Compare your top in-bound markets with your primary research to determine if

you are getting your snare. For example, if your Mexican market figures fall below what your DMO is telling you is coming to your destination, you have an opportunity. Develop programs targeting this market. If your visitation from Chile, for example, is higher than what your DMO says is coming to your market, continue doing what you are doing, as you are doing something right! Once you have collected and analyzed your data, determine which markets you want to target.

### How to Reach the Latin Market

There are plenty of shows in each country, but they can be

expensive. If you want to be aggressive in-market, but don't have a huge budget, try:

- Work with your DMO to determine your most lucrative inbound countries.
- Find out their Program of Work and your opportunities to partner with them at in-market trade shows.
- Participate with them on in-market sales calls and missions.
- If you can't go, see if they will take your materials. (Some DMOs charge a small fee for this service.)
- Work with your DMOs in-market representation firm.



- Send the PR department press releases about your visitor programs that are applicable to the Latin market.

- See if your DMO will provide you with their database of tour operators and media.

“At NYC & Company, the DMO for NYC, we understand the value of calling on our

members to partner with us and we offer many opportunities to join us in Latin America with trade shows and sales missions,” explains Fred Dixon, senior vice president of tourism & convention development, NYC & Company.

### Work Your Partnerships

“Our role is to sell NYC as a whole, but when our partners travel with us, they are able to have the face-to-face conversation with the tour operator and they can promote their own hotel or attraction, developing that important relationship.”

In addition to your DMO, partner with your hotels. Making sales calls with a hotel you have shopping packages with is a cost-effective way to meet with the tour operators. Steven Klein, director, sales and marketing for the Hollywood Beach Marriott near The Village at Gulfstream Park in Hallandale, FL, explains, “It gives our hotel more value when we are able to talk about all the great shopping, dining and



nightlife at The Village. Our clients look for what is going on in the area, especially when it comes to our group business. To be able to partner and offer off-site evening activities or

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spouse programs sometimes will win us the bid for a particular piece of group business. This type of partnership works well for both of us.”

### La Cumbre

For 21 years, La Cumbre has been the continental marketplace for travel professionals from the Americas. It is the only industry event that includes exhibitors and buyers from throughout the hemisphere and is a structured marketplace incorporating 30 computer-matched appoint-

ments with on-site hand scheduling. This year the show was held September 8-10 in San Diego and included over 200 exhibitors and over 100 buyers.

“Due to our South Florida location, we are especially interested in capitalizing on the Latin market, especially since we know shopping and dining continue to be the top two activities of the international visitor.

“Since La Cumbre targets the Latin American tour operator, we saw it as a good investment,” says Jeannie Roberts, director of marketing for The Village at Gulfstream Park. She joined Jet Blue, two hotels and another shopping venue in the

Greater Ft. Lauderdale CVB booth at the show.

“We encouraged our partners to share their appointments and leads to further sell Ft. Lauderdale as a destination for this market,” added Alfredo Gonzalez, vice president of tourism and international business for the CVB.

### Finding Out First-Hand

“Sharing appointments worked particularly well for us,” said Rosario Ramirez, director of sales for the Hampton Inn Hallandale Beach-Aventura, “especially since we already have a ‘Shop, Dine and Wine’ package with The Village. Not only could we jointly promote the package, we could also find out firsthand what types of packages the Latin American tour operator thinks will work best.”

Shop America Alliance also exhibited at La Cumbre with booth partners Craig Realty Group and Louisiana Tax Free Shopping. “The Latin American market embraces all types of shopping, so it is important and cost effective to participate in La Cumbre, especially in a shared booth, because the tour operators and travel media can cover more territory in one meeting. For example, we discussed Tax Free Shopping, Craig’s 12 outlets and the full range of Shop America Tours packages. We were able to work out a new partnership with AeroMexico due to our multi destination offerings,” says Rosemary McCormick, president, Shop America Alliance.

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Research on the international shopping traveler presented by Shop America Alliance, Taubman and the US Department of Commerce in 2009 showed that Mexican visitors spend \$1310 per person on shopping per visit. A new International Traveler study including Brazilian shoppers, presented by Macy’s and Shop America Alliance, along with other partners, will be released later this year. Contact [ShopAmericaTours@aol.com](mailto:ShopAmericaTours@aol.com) for more information on both studies.

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As noted, Brazil is demonstrating tremendous growth and is the third-largest market for Florida. They spend twice the amount as the Brits do on shopping and dining. Brazil is the eighth-largest economy in the world.

### How Do You Break In?

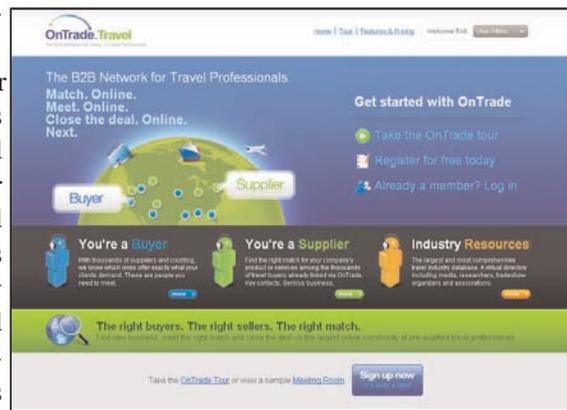
One excellent resource is Panrotas, the major communication channel of tourism in Brazil ([www.panrotas.com.br](http://www.panrotas.com.br)). They publish an excellent annual overview of facts and figures on the Brazilian tourism industry.

Brazil's goal is for 1 million tourists this year to the US, and they are on target. Air service has improved to the US, with flights available from many cities, not just Rio and Sao Paulo. Their number-one destination is Florida (Miami and Orlando), followed by NYC, California, DC, Las Vegas, Chicago, Texas and Colorado. The publication lists the top tour operators you can start developing a relationship with.

### Embrace the Latest Technology

What if you could identify potential buyers throughout the world, initiate live meetings with them, make your pitch and still be home for dinner? That's what a team of B2B marketing experts are about to announce with the OnTrade network ([www.ontrade.com](http://www.ontrade.com)) designed specifically for the travel professional.

OnTrade CEO Rick Still described the site as "a virtual environment where suppliers and buyers find and meet using the same business-match application used in major trade shows. By giving qualified buyers a way to schedule meetings with suppliers, and giving suppliers the opportunity to use simple communications tools like Skype, phone conferencing and screen sharing, your desk and your computer can link anywhere in the world." The OnTrade site also includes an individual networking page for each member and strategic news and learning content.



Asked if this site will eventually replace trade shows, Still replied, "No, because you still need that important face-to-face meeting to build and nurture your relationship. The good shows will get better and the bad ones will go away. You need to inspire the traveler, motivate them and make it easy for them to plan and purchase their travel. That is our goal."

As mentioned earlier, my next article will cover the new alliance of Boston's Faneuil Hall Marketplace, South Street Seaport in NYC and Union Station DC – "Historic Shopping & Dining Attractions".

We are continuing this series of articles on tourism every other month and would like to focus on the more innovative programs. Please submit your programs to me, either via e-mail at [Carolyn@CJFMarketingInternational.com](mailto: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](http://www.cjfmarketinginternational.com). ■

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