

# TOURISM "CROSSED" IN THE MSAR WITH DIPLOMACY AND SUSTAINABILITY

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The Asia-Pacific Tourism Association (PATA) has joined 77 tourism organizations at Cotai Expo, where the cluster of "stands" allowed to know some of the most popular travel destinations, but also the variations in trends in the sector and the factors that the influence

## Salomé Fernandes

At the "Pata Travel Mart 2017" meeting held by the Asia-Pacific Tourism Association at Venetian Macau, business reminded of diplomatic relations. In the background, Macau has been at the heart of a sector where being competitive also implies a desire for peace and sustainability, even because environments of insecurity and cultural destruction are factors that alienate customers.



Ralf Ostendorf, director of the "Visit Berlin"

Mubarak Rashed Al Nuaimi, director of the Abu Dhabi Foreign Affairs Office, highlights the importance of visa policies in tourist flows. "Since the beginning of the year, visas to China have been given upon arrival, and the number of tourists has increased by 55% compared to last year," he told the newspaper TRIBUNA DE MACAU, noting that, after Indians, Chinese visitors are those that have the greatest impact on tourism in the United Arab Emirates.

In addition, Russian citizens, another market highlighted by Mubarak Nuaimi, also only need to request visas upon arrival. "It is a good thing that my country has very good political relations with others," he said, assuring that there is a tourist offer for people of different cultures, such as hotels where alcoholic beverages are not allowed, and also the opposite depending on the different beliefs. It is a country "open to all", he emphasizes.

Rahul Sharma, of the Indian Tourism Department, believes that religion can promote his country as a tourist destination. "There are Buddhist beliefs scattered throughout Southeast Asia, so we are trying to promote some places as a religious destination." Despite ensuring that Macao residents are also targeted, Rahul Sharma hopes to attract visitors from regions with larger populations, and without restrictions, since "Buddhist philosophy attracts everyone."

Interest in attracting tourists from Southeast Asia also spreads to Europe. "Of the tourists who arrive in Berlin, only 5% are from Asia, whereas in countries like the United Kingdom they are 10%", explains the director of market management of the "Visit

Berlin". For Ralf Ostendorf, it is possible to increase this percentage due to the development in Asia. "You see a rise of the middle class in Asia, and when you achieve that stability people want to travel and this affects the tourism industry worldwide," implying strategic readjustments.

"There are a lot of interesting countries to develop at a high rate," added Ostendorf, noting the increased relations between Asia and Europe.



Nora Dunn, author of the blog "The Professional Hobo"

However, if narrowing of political ties facilitates the promotion of some tourist destinations, the reverse situation causes some obstacles. Kim Min Ju, of South Korea's International Tourism Cooperation team, confesses that the tension with North Korea "does not affect South Korean citizens, but it worries tourists."

Even so, this reality does not change the number of visitors, which reaches about 17.2 million, coming mostly from Asia, says Kim Min Ju. If visitors from neighboring countries are primarily interested in exploring scenes from Korean films, those from more distant geographic areas are "more interested in the history" of the country, she said.

### **sustainable tourism**

Kim Min Ju also raises the issue of sustainable tourism by ensuring that "it has become very important in Korea to preserve and care for what is local." The ideal of international tourism that promotes development is a PATA commitment, which underlined the intention to act as a "catalyst" for the responsible development of travel and tourism to, from and between the Asia Pacific region. A commitment also promoted by the United Nations, which declared 2017 as the international year for Sustainable Tourism Development.

Along the same lines, the author of the blog "The Professional Hobo", Nora Dunn, explains that her project aims to "educate those who travel to do it in a way that is sensitive to the local culture, because there are tourists that can hurt economies and infrastructure of countries without even realizing it". The blogger warns of the need for people to travel "responsibly" and expresses satisfaction with PATA's recognition that "bloggers can be influencers and create new forms of marketing in the industry."



Komkrit Ngamwongwirot, of "Bangkok Airways"

In addition to alerting tourists, there are also other ways for industry players to seek to positively influence populations. Gerge SF Wong, of Philippine Airlines, a company that seeks to increase the number of flights to China, recalls that the carrier provided support in 2014 when the government withdrew Filipino citizens from Libya for security reasons.

In turn, the Bangkok Airways Corporate Responsibility Department has launched initiatives such as "planting coconut trees, cleaning beaches, and helping schools and orphanages," said Komkrit Ngamwongwirot. The regional director of the company believes that "sometimes you have to give back to society". And, he emphasizes, "today tourism is a great industry and helps people to realize what is happening in the world," and is therefore an experience that "opens the eyes."

Damien Brosnan was present at "Pata Travel Mart 2017" due to the fact that there are still issues associated with tourism that remain in an obscure or semi-taboo area. Brosnan represented the association "The Code", which works in the area of prevention of child sexual exploitation, by offering training to its members. "Child sexual exploitation is not the fault of the tourism industry, but it can help solve the problem," he said.



Damien Brosnan, of the association "The Code"

"The Code" has representatives in some 20 countries, where they collaborate with authorities and nongovernmental organizations to combat this phenomenon. Brosnan noted that "it is not only the stereotype of the Western man who travels to a Southeast Asian country expecting child abuse" but also "a regional and domestic problem in which people who travel on business, sometimes in their own country, and that because they are outside their usual environment they feel invincible and that there will be no repercussions for exploiting a child." For all this, Brosnan understands that this subject must be "kept on radar".

### **Missed meeting ... Macau**

Although it was a tourism fair, some participants were unable to take advantage of the fair to know the host city properly. Blogger Nora Dunn even confesses that it was "very difficult to get an idea of what Macau is" because she was so busy with the event.

From what he knows of the region, he assumes that he liked to have written "about the contrast between Macau as a former Portuguese colony and Hong Kong as a former British colony." If the city tour, which the organization offered to participants on the first day, caused Nora Dunn a "scheduling conflict" with the rest schedule, for others revealed less positive facets.

Philip Haines, present at the event as a buyer, visited a local restaurant for buyer's through local community organization, this subject must be "Live Travel", indicated that the failure was in the absence of a meal at a local restaurant to "relax and get to know the atmosphere".



"PATA Travel Mart" joined 77 tourism organizations

In a territory where the casinos now abound, Haines recalled nostalgically for Macau that he first met 30 years ago. "I was in a very old house. Very large, very cheap and very dirty, but with a fantastic atmosphere for a young British. The combination of Portuguese and Chinese culture gave it a very romantic touch," says Philip Haines, lamenting that today he can not help but feel "the romance is lost."

### **Sands and Melco win "Gold Awards"**

The "PATA Gold Awards 2017" was one of the highlights of the "PATA Travel Mart", which ended on Friday, with two Macau tour operators with three awards. Sands China has triumphed in the "Environment - Corporate Environmental Program" categories thanks to its "Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability" program and "Media Marketing - Broadcast Media", the promotional video of the opening of the Parisian Macao with the French actress Sophie Marceau strolling the streets of Paris and the integrated "resort". Melco Resorts & Entertainment has also won a "PATA Gold Award" in the "Marketing-Hospitality" category for their success in collaborating with the popular Hungarian TV's "Up Idol II" celebrity reality show from the Mainland, as well as due to promotion on social networks and related programs such as "Up Idol II x Dancing Water Backstage Adventure." In total, PATA has awarded four "Grand Awards" and 27 "Gold Awards" involving seven major categories.