

Singapore's MICE Industry Stays Ahead of the Curve *By Sarah Chew*

Over the last few decades, prime locations for tradeshows and events have naturally shifted as old favorites become saturated and new destinations beckon with tremendous client opportunities. International MICE planners are switching their focus far east, and in recognition of the changing tide, Asia now hosts more than one-fifth of the world's meetings, while offering a total gross indoor space of over 6 million square meters. It is time to think about Asia.

The positive outlook of the MICE industry continues to mirror the growth of the global economy, and show organisers are constantly looking for sophisticated and professionally staffed business hubs to launch new or enhanced tradeshows. While the potential rewards of moving trade-shows and events to Asia do exude a certain siren's call, the language, travel and cultural barriers can raise quick red flags for many planners. However, choosing a cosmopolitan city can help bridge the gap.

Asia, and specifically Singapore, continues to be an appealing destination for MICE organizers due to its excellent air connectivity, vibrant business ecosystem, robust economic sectors and knowledge networks, and diverse leisure activities. Apart from

being a base to more than 7,000 multinational corporations, Singapore's strategic location in a resurgent Asia is the perfect launchpad to access the emerging economies of ASEAN and the vast markets in China and India.

The city-state's strong global trade and communication networks provide market access and trade flows between Asia Pacific and the world, resulting in a spot for the world's best to converge. By drawing established players, opinion leaders and decision makers from around the globe, these events augment Singapore's standing as a thought leader and knowledge hub within the region.

Through public-private collaborations, Singapore continues to build and attract a robust pipeline of events and establish thought-leadership through new compelling content. The Republic is looking forward to an even stronger momentum in the year ahead with both returning tradeshows and new ones.

First-in-Asia events held in Singapore, include the 9th International Conference on Intelligent Sensors, Sensor Networks and Information Processing (ISSNIP); the Special Education Network in Asia (SENIA) conference; and the International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling (ICIDS).

Singapore's status as a leading biomedical centre for R&D has also played an important role in securing the World Congress of Cosmetic Dermatology this year, the International Society for Magnetic Resonance in Medicine (ISMRM) 24th Annual Meeting & Exhibition and the inaugural Asian edition of Spine-Week in 2016. More lifestyle related business events have also reared their

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heads, a result of Singapore's growing position as Asia's lifestyle hub. New lifestyle events in recent years include Art Stage Singapore, Blueprint and Beerfest Asia amongst others.

These exhibitions and events are great examples of how show organizers are looking at Singapore with renewed interest, adding onto the allure of Singapore as an attractive MICE venue that has already won several accolades, and part of that success is owed to the government's efforts in promoting Sin-



gapore as an ideal MICE destination.

The Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau (SECB), an arm under the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), has a proven track record of successfully securing inaugural events for the city-state. SECB encourages the MICE industry to anchor and grow quality events as well as catalyze the innovation of new content. It continually supports the evolving and varied needs of the industry by providing funding support to qualified businesses, companies and associations through the Business Event in Singapore (BEiS) scheme.

Singapore's recognition as a top MICE country comes at the heels of

an initiative to maintain its top position, even as neighboring countries are building new infrastructure and offering aggressive incentive schemes to attract new businesses. To achieve this, Singapore needs to up its ante, and the MICE 2020 Roadmap is one such way. Jointly developed by STB and the industry, the MICE 2020 Roadmap focuses on bolstering the country's existing strengths and developing new ones through incentives that will be implemented in phases in the coming years. The plan will begin its first phase by enhancing the MICE industry's experience creation capabilities, through attracting and conceptualizing events' content premised on value-creation.

Looking ahead, as Singapore reinvents itself with the growing number of hotels, attractions and unique event venues such as the Integrated Resorts, the country continues to see growth in repeat shows and welcome prominent events; increasing its offering of breath-taking experiences. Possessing incredible opportunities and room for further growth, Singapore will remain as a leading MICE destination for MICE planners worldwide. 🌐

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