



CULTIVATING SUSTAINABLE MEETINGS

Poom Monterde, Director of Sales, Naumi Hospitality, believes that going green in the MICE sector means doing much more than paying lip service.

“Being green is a service culture – it is not just about switching off the lights,” she says.

“It is also a balanced approach to business, which aligns our economic decisions with our commitment to the environment as well as corporate social responsibility.”

Astrid Hebert, Director of Sales and Marketing, Novotel Singapore Clarke Quay, agrees.

She explains corporate clients are increasingly looking at their environmental impacts and including these criteria in their meeting and incentive programmes; in the same way they looked at corporate social responsibilities a few years prior.

The notion of going green has now extended to the MICE sector, with meetings in particular taking on environmental precedents. *HRM* finds out what lengths MICE players are going to entice eco-friendly companies to their meeting venues

Sham Majid
sham@hrmasia.com.sg



“A few aspects are linked to cost savings through reducing the energy consumption and waste generated; but it’s also a question of company culture, corporate ethics, as well as leading by example.”

Hebert explains that despite the MICE sector being a multi-billion dollar industry with a high carbon footprint (think of all of the attendees’ transportation and activities, as well as the energy involved with event setups and lighting), companies are nevertheless paying close attention to the environmental impacts that are associated with such events.

“Organisers and venues need to provide alternative offers to match the expectations of planners,” she says.

“Being greener is becoming a logical thought process; where awareness and local actions are primordial.”

Going gaga over being green

There is no doubting that sustainability has become a focal point for MICE players in

Singapore and the wider Asia-Pacific region.

In fact, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) unveiled formal guidelines for the MICE industry in late 2013, with these based on international standards such as the ISO 20121 and the APEX/ASTM Environmentally Sustainability Meeting Standards. They are quickly being aligned towards MICE partners who are keen to adopt sustainable practices.

Monterde says Naumi Hospitality supports the STB’s call to promote sustainable development within Singapore’s MICE sector.

“With more concern placed on the rapid environmental decay today than ever before, Naumi Hospitality recognises that being ‘green-friendly’ has grown to be an impertinent aspect of MICE venues, even for a luxury boutique hotel offering smaller event venues like us,” she says.

“There are needs that have to be taken into consideration before a venue is confirmed, unlike in the past. These stem from a growing group of discerning travellers and corporate companies who are committed to incorporating social and environmental responsibilities into their events.”

Hence, Monterde stresses that organisations now have to take into consideration the impacts their events have on the environment, be they large-scale or small. At the same time, cost effectiveness and maintaining balance with their own brand reputation and corporate social

responsibility remain important.

“For example, a centrally located green hotel, like Naumi, can provide sufficient lodging and meeting space for event attendees, and eliminates the need for additional transportation. This in turns reduces the carbon footprint of the actual event as well as reduces the cost of running the event,” she says.

According to Hebert, the MICE industry has the potential to become a “beacon of sustainability”.

“Being part of Accor; we are joining the Planet 21 programme where sustainable initiatives are encouraged,” she says. “This is part of our identity and commitments.”

Under the Planet 21 framework, Accor has made 21 commitments in favour of sustainable development (see: boxout).

Green offerings

So just what are some of these “green” offerings being offered by MICE players hoping to entice environmentally-friendly organisations to their premises?

Monterde says Naumi Hospitality has a total of four event venue options.

One is 8M, a cosy meeting space for up to six people with natural daylight, while Varta, a gentlemen’s lounge-inspired meeting room, can hold everything from a 10-person boardroom meeting to a 50-person theatre-style event.

Another offering is Cloud9, an alfresco rooftop pool and bar area for events of up to 50 people, while the fourth option



Varta Meeting Room - Naumi Hospitality

Accor’s Planet 21

- Planet 21 echoes the urgent need to focus efforts to change Accor’s production and consumption patterns with the goal of protecting the planet, its people and their environment.
- Novotel Singapore Clarke Quay has reached “Platinum” status in Planet 21, the highest level of social and environmental performance.
- Following the hotel’s recent ISO 14001 certification, the hotel was awarded the Champion of the Singapore Environment Council under the Kimberly Clark Singapore Environmental Achievement Award in 2014 (Services category).

Source: The Accor Sustainable Development Program



Novotel Singapore Clarke Quay

is Table by Rang Mahal, a casual Indian restaurant that can hold up to 80 people for a standing cocktail event.

Naumi Hospitality encourages its meeting guests to utilise the LED televisions provided in the Varta room (instead of a projector and screen), reduce printing or printed materials, and to turn on the equipment and air-conditioning in the room only when required.

Furthermore, instead of a separate standing lunch or buffet, the company recommends the set lunch at Table by Rang Mahal, to minimise food wastage.

Green efforts are also epitomised when it comes to beverages.

Monterde says instead of serving coffee and tea in urns, Naumi Hospitality offers the usage of a Nespresso coffee machine, as well as single-serve TWG teas. These produce only what is required, helping to reduce wastage while maintaining the prestige of an event.

In addition, she adds they also offer Naumi pencils which are considerably friendlier to the environment than disposable pens.

With the 73-room Naumi Hotel being certified as Green Mark (Gold) by the Building & Construction Authority, Monterde says 95% of the lighting used in the hotel has been retrofitted with LED technology. The hotel also has an award-winning green wall façade on its exterior, which helps to cool the building.

“The hotel also runs on an efficient air-con system and conserves a healthy amount of the energy consumed in our business,” she explains.

Monterde says the team is very involved with its environmental credentials, and has developed a number of green policies in collaboration with Naumi Hotel’s management. These include the Responsible Purchasing Policy which educates and reminds the team to align their economic decisions with the hotel’s commitment to environmental sustainability and social responsibility.

“Another example would be the Waste Reduction Plan with which the hotel pledged to reduce at least 10% of its non-recyclable waste production in 2013, and a further five percent over the next three years,” Monterde says.

“We are also running an on-going recycling campaign.”

The take up rate of events at Naumi Hotel has been increasing steadily since it re-launched in October 2013. It more than doubled in the first six months of 2015, compared to the same period last year.



Green Wall Facade - Naumi

Marina Bay Sands’ “Fun Green Facts”

Sands’ ECO360° programme integrates the company’s best practices, technologies and methodologies in the area of sustainability across all properties. Sustainable practices under Sands ECO360° include:

- **Green Meeting Concierge:** dedicated service personnel who will help clients craft sustainable meetings using the Sands ECO360° Meetings Planning Tool
- **Sands ECO360° Event Impact Statement:** provides a post-event sustainability report that captures an event’s sustainability highlights and provides a comprehensive summary of energy and water consumption at a glance
- **Sub-metering of MICE floors:** allows organisers to effectively track energy usage across specific areas.
- **Harvest Menu:** offers locally-sourced food and beverage options to lower the emission of greenhouse gases during transportation.

Source: Marina Bay Sands Singapore Fact Sheet (As of January 2015)

“Our initiatives will continue to alleviate the Naumi Hospitality brand and allow us to offer our guests unique meeting options,” she explains.

Meanwhile, Hebert says Novotel Singapore Clarke Quay has recently launched a “Green Meeting@Novotel” offering under the theme: “Planting your company success.”

The hotel is also launching a series of green meeting packages that are completely free of plastics.

The packages are inclusive of coffee breaks, an international buffet lunch, meeting room rental and wireless internet.

According to Hebert, the packages are ideal for workshops, seminars or brainstorming sessions. The meeting rooms come with natural daylight, LED lighting, climate control air conditioning and a large foyer for guest registration and coffee breaks with locally sourced products or working lunches.

The hotel also recently introduced eco-pens as part of its green meeting packages.

These pens are handmade in Indonesia, using recycled newspapers: part of the “Yayasan Peduli Tunas Bangsa” Accor foundation, which accommodates the “A Tree for a Child” programme.

“The funds collected are then used to run workshops and financially support the underprivileged who, through employment, are able to send their children to school,” says Hebert.

“Our programme is supporting the Yayasan Peduli Tunas Bangsa foundation which is producing the Eco-Pen as well as Plant for the Planet; a reforestation programme in Indonesia,” she surmises.

“We are providing a 10% discount until the end of September 2015 on our series of Green meetings.”

Hebert says Novotel Singapore Clarke Quay has seen a positive take up from international companies and governmental agencies whose environmental and CSR criteria are part of the venue selection.

“Awareness is key,” she stresses.

Making prudent savings

Herbert says there are many misconceptions that being green is necessarily an expensive initiative.

“Although some of the initiatives that we have embarked on, (changing of our chillers to more energy efficient ones, replacing halogen bulbs with LED ones, and installing water saving taps) can be quite costly, we also believe that by carefully selecting and shortlisting our vendors, we will be able build on a cordial relationship and pass on the savings to our clients.”

Her counterpart Monterde states that green MICE venues like Naumi Hotel, do help event organisers save costs with few complications.