

REPORT

ITB 2007 SOUTH PACIFIC VILLAGE & south-pacific.travel PARTICIPATION



DATES: 7TH – 11TH MARCH 2007

VENUE: MESSE BERLIN, BERLIN, GERMANY

By Marketing Manager

1. ITB 2007 Brief Statement

The South Pacific Village at ITB 2007 has been rated a huge success by all NTO and private sector participants. There were seven member countries represented and a total number of 38 private sector from six different countries.

The only exception was Vanuatu, which was only represented by the National Tourism Office only and no participation by private sector members. Also with the exception of the Solomon Islands, the other six countries have been allocated a stand with counter in the Village compound. Solomon Islands has been allocated a table and 3 chairs but were without a stand and counter. They however have their name and logo appear with all other countries and have it legibly printed and displayed above their allocated space and table.

2. ITB 2007 appointments and Meetings

While all the private sector participants have their appointment schedules for the first three days ready prior to ITB, south-pacific.travel staff has also made certain appointments with people and companies that have requested appointments during ITB.

These appointments were mainly meetings with the following: (a) show organizers who wish to promote their events and present their proposals to south-pacific.travel for countries who would be interested or proposal for similar South Pacific Village. (b) PR companies who are interested to represent south-pacific.travel in the German speaking markets and would like to present their profile and promote their services. (c) Magazines and publications that would like to feature the South Pacific Islands and needed more information or those who were merely trying to sell advertising spaces.

The general meetings, which were not based on any prior appointments consist mainly of travel agents, tour operators and wholesalers who were looking for more information about a particular country or on the region as a whole. In such cases, south-pacific.travel would present an overall view and coverage of the whole region and then refer them to each of the countries present to gather more specific information on each country's product.

3. Key Highlights at the South Pacific Village Stand

Listed below are some of the key highlights at the South Pacific Village, which were contributed by some of our member countries to showcase not only their countries but has immensely promoted the whole region as well since it was all conducted under the South Pacific Islands banner. These are some of the key highlights over the course of the 5 ITB days:

- (a) The new design and decorations of the 'Village' setup, which although similar to last year, there were a few visible improvements to the individual country stands and counters. The image on the large backdrop was proven to be a attention-

- catching feature at the Village both during the Trade and the consumer days. Each of the countries also have their counters decorated with images of their respective countries;
- (b) The live cultural dances and performances by the Cook Island dancers, who were brought all the way from the Cook Islands. The group perform on certain intervals just adjacent to the Cook Islands corner of the stand, which drew large crowds to the South Pacific Village throughout the whole five days;
 - (c) The Papua New Guinea have brought with them two traditional warriors in full traditional costumes who were also key attractions at the South Pacific Village during the five days;
 - (d) The South Pacific Cocktail was held on the stand on the evening of Friday 9th March with an excellent turnout of invited guests from the trade market at were present at ITB. There were also invited guests from Embassies and Trade offices of some of the member countries. The cocktail has truly provided another excellent networking opportunity for all South Pacific delegates with the invited trade guests;

4. Assessments of ITB 2007

According to the evaluation conducted after ITB 2007, the most prominent reason the participants highlighted for attending ITB was to increase the number of clients. A good number of partners also highlighted that one of the primary reasons was to reestablish and renew business with past contacts. The other reasons highlighted were to update their respective companies on the latest market trends and to negotiate special packages with operators and buyers. These reasons reinforces the importance of ITB as a key event for the private sector partners in member countries but south-pacific.travel has to address some of the key recommendations for the improvement of the South Pacific presence. These are highlighted in the next section.

About 80% of the partners have indicated that their objectives for participating at ITB 07 were achieved but only to a certain extent. This could be because of the fact that the actual number of the trade visitors in the first day was less than what was expected. However, the other 20% indicated that their objectives for participating in the 2007 event was well achieved. This would mainly be those partners that indicated their primary reason was to renew business with past business contacts and maintaining a working business relationship.

The 'South Pacific Village' was assessed on different aspects, which include things like the space, location, the venue in general, the dates of ITB, the decorations, the design of the whole village and the common facilities that were provided during the five days. For all these aspects of the 'Village', between 55% to 70% of participants responded that they were 'satisfied'. This indicates that there is more room for improvements to further South Pacific presence in future events.

Overall, 55% of the partners have expressed that they were either ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with the ‘South Pacific Village’ at ITB 2007. However, 40% of the partners who responded to the survey indicated they were either ‘not very satisfied’ or ‘not satisfied at all’. Thus, the next section highlights the areas for improvements recommended by those who were either ‘not very satisfied’ or ‘not satisfied at all’.

5. Assessments for Improvements

An evaluation was conducted through a questionnaire during the last two days of ITB 2007 to get feedback from all participants on how successfully the event was to their business or for their NTO. Among other reasons, a prime purpose of the evaluation is to seek suggestions and ideas for further improvements to the ‘South Pacific Village’ concept in future ITB events.

Out of a total of 32 private sector partners and 7 NTOs, a total of 20 responses have been received through the evaluation form. Out of the 20 respondents, 6 were NTO feedback and 14 were from private sector partners, which also represent 5 countries (as Solomon and Vanuatu just have NTO reps).

Based on the analysis of the evaluation forms completed by the partners, below are key recommended areas for improvements, which would be taken into consideration when planning and designing the next ITB South Pacific Village in 2008.

- (a) The design of the whole ‘South Pacific Village’ needs to be changed in order to portray and create more visibility for each country and their private sector members. This means that each country’s area within the ‘Village’ has to be clearly demarcated with their counter. This would mean the use of partitions or with clear written labels. This would promote more individual countries but at the same time they are identified under the South Pacific Islands theme;
- (b) The ‘South Pacific Village’ should have a new Design that is suitable for both the trade days where one-on-one appointments are conducted as well as for the consumer days when the general public would be coming into the halls. Thus, a new design has to improve the flow of people through the ‘Village’ without disturbing the appointment schedules that takes place in the area concurrently. Therefore, we have to generate a few alternative designs that would suit the purposes and also improve the appearance of the whole ‘Village’;
- (c) The option of having private sector partners teaming up with a preferred wholesaler and actually doing retail selling during the consumer days has been raised. Thus, it will be an option and recommendation that has to be assessed within the Messe Berlin / ITB Rules and Regulations and off course the cost implications for partners and member countries;
- (d) For the South Pacific Cocktail that is usually hosted by all countries for the key trade people in the German speaking market, there were also few key recommendations for further improvements. The most obvious is to strictly check all invited guests by requesting them to present their invitations before

- entering the Village for the cocktail. This means that the design of the village should take into account creating one main entry point into the whole ‘Village’ only. This is to firstly prevent freeloaders coming in to join the cocktail and also to ensure that the venue is not overcrowded, thus making it more of a networking session than a drink fest;
- (e) The need for the small office at the ‘Village’ should be reviewed in light of the fact that there was very limited use of it. Apart from some storage, the space was not fully utilized as intended to be. Thus, a better purpose should be determined for the space as partners feel that it is money wasted on a significant space that is under utilized;
 - (f) There were certain equipments that partners highlighted as being important to be provided to all countries and to be built into the cost that each country pays. The following is a list of the equipment and items highlighted as priority for the participants during ITB:
 - i. At least one Internet Connection for each country (wireless);
 - ii. Each country should have on their counter a TV screen and a DVD player;
 - iii. South-pacific.travel should have a large LCD screen mounted above the ‘Village’ above the south-pacific.travel counter to showcase the key general attractions of the region. One suggestion is to have a general video on the whole South Pacific tourism flavor and experience;
 - iv. Since it is likely that for future ITB events each country might wish to bring in their cultural performers, it is highlighted that there should be an area within the ‘Village’ space to be designated as a mini stage. Countries can be scheduled to utilize the stage for their performances during the event days;
 - v. While there has been concerns raised by some partners regarding the need and the use of the office space, it is important that the equipments usually housed in the office be provided at the common south-pacific.travel desk and counter. These equipment include printer, a computer with Internet connection, phone / fax and a photocopier.

6. Concluding Statement

ITB 2007 South Pacific Village presence was a great success for both the member NTOs that participated and their private sector partners. However, based on the evaluation that was conducted there are certain areas in terms of how the event is arrangements, coordinated and managed that needs further improvement. Such improvements that are

recommended should be looked at carefully and addressed since it's the partners and NTOs that pay for the costs through their contributions.

The key areas for discussion regarding further improvement of the South Pacific presence will be presented to the Board and needs to be resolved before preparations for ITB 2008 could commence. Outlined below are some of the key issues for board discussions in its May 2007 meeting:

- The ways and means of improving all the aspects of the 'South Pacific Village' to ensure that some of the crucial concerns of partners are adequately addressed in a satisfactory manner. All aspects of the 'Village' would include things as the (a) Stand Location (b) Stand Space (c) Stand Design (d) Stand Decoration and (e) The Common facilities for all partners;
- Discuss the standard key equipment and items that should be included in each country's component for participation at any future ITB events. Some of the key standard equipment and items would include (a) Internet Connection – at least one per country (b) TV screen & DVD player per country. The board can also identify other equipment and items that could remain as optional, which would depend on each NTO preference;
- The board to discuss the ways by which they would like to see of their countries being showcased more under the South Pacific banner. While all countries would be exhibiting under the umbrella of 'South Pacific', there has to be some agreement amongst the Board as to whether to have a standard look for all the countries or each country to have their own preferred look to profile their national identity;
- There has to be a general consensus by the board regarding the designated party to coordinate and manage the 'South Pacific Village' at future ITB events. One of the reasons for this is because the Interface International had managed the whole process for the last two years as south-pacific.travel Europe rep and it has not been fully supported by some member countries. Given the sensitivity of losing the South Pacific Village concept, the board needs to agree on an approach that would enhance the South Pacific joint presence while not impeding the promotion of the individual countries, thus creating concerns by some countries to pursue individual stands at future ITB events. Having mentioned this, the following are some of the options presented for further discussion by the Board:
 - o Option 1 – south-pacific.travel to maintain the Interface International GMBH as its Europe rep to continue on with the coordination and managing of the South Pacific presence at ITB provided that certain conditions are adhered to taking into account concerns and inputs by all member NTOs and their Europe reps. This means there must be closer liaison between south-pacific.travel Europe rep with the member NTO reps in Europe. This is to ensure that everyone's interests are accommodated;

- Option 2 – the coordination and management of the South Pacific presence at ITB to be rotated around to the various NTOs reps in Europe as well the south-pacific.travel Europe rep. This will also ensure that the work involved in the whole process are fairly distributed between different member NTO Europe reps but south-pacific.travel will continue to play the central coordinating role from Suva Head office. This would mean that the appointment of the coordinator and manager for each will be made by south-pacific.travel head office;
 - Option 3 – the whole responsibility of coordinating and managing the South Pacific presence at ITB each year will have to be tendered out to interested independent bidders or groups based in Europe.
- By and large, the key consideration of the board when deliberating on these issues to reach resolutions that will ensure the ‘South Pacific Village’ concept and the commitment that each country has towards this arrangement is held intact. Once a common understanding is reached by the board these issues then south-pacific.travel will then start pursuing the necessary arrangements for ITB 2008 with immediate effect.