

## TKS Exhibition Services

# Directing the show

Managing director K. S. Tong says that, in a fast-changing MICE industry, innovative strategies to develop new markets are vital to keep the clients coming

**T**KS Exhibition Services is an international trade show organizer and one of the company's important roles is organizing every year the International Travel Expo Hong Kong and ITE MICE in June.

The MICE industry, particularly exhibitions, in this part of the world has been booming. According to the latest study by the Hong Kong Exhibition and Convention Industry Association, there were 62.5% more exhibitions in Hong Kong in 2006 and the number of exhibitors in that year rose by 50% over the previous year.

"While the number of local exhibitors in Hong Kong exhibitions in 2006 rose by a significant 25%, it was dwarfed by the 139% growth [of exhibitors] from mainland China and the 50% from the Asia Pacific," says K. S. Tong, managing director of TKS Exhibition Services.

"There were also phenomenal growth in the number of overseas visitors to Hong Kong exhibitions in 2006, with a 43% increase from Asia Pacific, and 24% from mainland China. Moreover, these overseas exhibitors, on average, stayed 70% longer and spent 110% more than overnight tourists, while exhibition visitors from overseas spent 120% more."

For exhibitors attending international trade fairs in Hong Kong, Tong says it is advisable to have materials in English and Chinese, though it is not a must.

"There are good reasons," he says. "Firstly, you can capture more Chinese visitors as there will always be some who do not speak English or pre-

**SOMETHING DIFFERENT:** K. S. Tong says it is important to incorporate fresh ideas to foster new developments and niche markets in the fast-changing industry.



**FLYING IN:** The International Travel Expo Hong Kong and ITE MICE at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre is one of the biggest travel shows in the region. This year, the two events, organized by TKS Exhibition Services, will run on June 12-15.

fer speaking only in Chinese. Secondly, it is to ensure accuracy as trade visitors are often not the end user, and somewhere someone will have to translate your product information into Chinese for the end users."

Tong compares the role of an exhibition organizer to that of a stage manager, with the exhibitors as performers on stage and the visitors as the audience.

"From this angle, the organizer's prime duty is to gather the different parties and ensure a smooth running of the 'show'. In a fast-changing market, there are always new developments and new niche markets emerging and an organizer will have to incorporate such new elements into its existing base to help create and develop new markets," he says.

"For example, we will set up an education corner on cruise travel this year to provide comprehensive background info targeting those who are new to cruise travel."

Besides measuring success or failure, he says it's important to gauge if exhibitors are

shifting their preferences, which is important for setting new objectives for future events. "A noticeable trend is the growing popularity of FIT [free independent traveler] and tailor-made groups, which are usually more costly than package tours, so it's likely more of these travelers are of higher income," Tong says.

"Between 2004 and 2007, our admission charges for the public days were raised at most by 200% and the number of public visitors dropped only by about 5% – a worthy trade-off. Our next objective is to keep the quality and the admission price and attracting more visitors.\*"



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