

ICE Asia Digital – Interview with Annie Siara of 86 Connects

London, United Kingdom – ICE Asia Digital 2020 – Day 2 – kicks off today at 9am London / 5pm Macau time. In advance of today's sessions, Clarion Gaming sat down with Annie Siara of 86 Connects to discuss the future of Chinese tourism and consumerism in the new post-COVID19 world.

Clarion Gaming: Hi Annie – thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us. We'd like to provide some insight into our audience on the current state of the China travel market. While we are all well aware of the macro impacts of COVID19 on international travel, what is currently happening in China across both the domestic and overseas travel scope?

Annie Siara: Thank you for having me.

Domestic travel in China is recovering slowly. The Chinese people are choosing to drive or take high-speed trains rather than flying. Staycation is amongst the popular choices for a getaway. The confidence is coming back for travelling, but still cautious and prefer to stay closer to home for the time being.

International flights are capped at one a week per airline and per country from China. Only diplomatic, C-visas or visas issued by the Chinese embassies are granted to travel in and out of China. International leisure travel is still restricted. Hong Kong announced last week that the 14-days quarantine would be extended until July 7 for travellers



coming from Macau, China and Taiwan.

Clarion Gaming: With regards to land-based gaming, what are the behavioural differences that operators can expect to see from Chinese citizens when they do begin to travel again? How will the needs of Chinese who travel overseas to gamble be different than those of other countries?

Annie Siara: First, I think we need to understand the different player segment and their purpose of travel. There are Mass, Premium Mass and VIP player segments. Each of these player segments and their intention of travelling to a casino is different. Take the mass market; this player segment like to crowd around the table and socialize with other players. With social distancing measures, this atmosphere on the casino floor will not be there. Therefore, I think we will see a reduction in the mass market, more so than the others.

We are seeing changes to the traveller demographic from China compared to pre-COVID-19. Chinese travellers are opting in for scenic, outdoor, health and wellness travel products. That said, casino operators can tailor its gaming and non-gaming offerings to meet the current demands of this traveller profile.

Clarion Gaming: Do you think there is any „low hanging fruit“ in the short term? What should gaming operators be looking at and doing to prepare for the future with regards to Chinese players?

Annie Siara: Health and safety measures will be critical. We are seeing Macao operators leading the way of these measures such as facemasks for both dealers and players, disinfecting areas regularly and hand sanitisers available. Understanding the change in the Chinese tourism market, as mentioned in my previous question, the main drivers for outbound tourism from China will be changing in the Post COVID-19 era, and this consumer group is essential in the

tourism market. I believe diversifying non-gaming offering and leverage the current trends of technology to engage with these players remotely.

Clarion Gaming: Considering the current situation, what weight should operators be placing on the targeting of players from across the spectrum – mass, premium mass and VIP. Where should operators be focused on when planning their post-COVID19 recovery and Chinese players?

Annie Siara: At least for the first wave of travellers from Mainland China, the VIP and Premium Mass player segment should be the focus for gaming operators. These travellers will be travelling in smaller groups, playing in a more private environment, and baccarat will still be a main revenue drive in the Asia casino landscape.

Clarion Gaming: In your experience, have you seen significant interest from operators in the European land-based markets in targeting Chinese players or investing more into the China outbound market?

Annie Siara: Before Covid-19 situation, our company were engaging with European casinos to help them better understand this consumer segment. I believe the China outbound tourism market for European land-based casino is untapped. There is a domestic player segment of Chinese nationals in the European casinos, but, it is widely not understood by gaming operators on how to tap into this market.

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