EFTI ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR SPEAKS ON CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN TOURISM
Social Networks Can Mitigate Damage from Natural Disasters

Cusco, Peru, March 25, 2012 -- [Reprinted with English Translation] Social networks like Facebook and Twitter can become useful tools for the mitigation of natural or man-made disasters. This discussion was led by experts Dr. Lori Pennington-Gray (University of Florida) and Christopher C. Schons while conducting a workshop on “Crisis Management in Tourism” in the Chamber of Commerce auditorium in Cusco, Peru.

The workshop was aimed at teaching about the impact of earthquakes and landslides as well as manmade disasters such as forest fires, social conflicts, and terrorist attacks, all of which could harm the arrival of tourists.

Pennington-Gray and Schons shared their experiences with representatives of public entities including the Lieutenant Mayor of Cusco, Silvia Uscamayta, the Destination Management Organization (DMO) and the Management Unit of Machu Picchu (LU).

The two experts spoke on the use of intervention tools by both public and private sectors to resolve the crisis, using strategies based on social networks as communication systems to both inform and solicit public support.

Arteaga Christiam Hurtado, a partner at DTS Consulting and the organizer of the event, said social networks like Facebook and Twitter should be considered useful tools that can provide immediate responses and assistance during a disaster.

Hurtado said that Pennington-Gray explained that both public and private sectors are responsible for tourism issues, especially in regards to crisis management. Both sectors must come together and address the problem jointly so that tourists can be taken care of and reassured in a crisis situation.
"The University of Florida has conducted studies on the impact of social media in crisis situations. The researchers concluded that the use of social networks in a crisis situation is very important because the media may not be able to get to the area of disaster immediately or know what needs to be done during the crisis. Tourists need to know the reality of the situation and without the use of social media, they may get the message too late or not at all," he said.

During the workshop, participants shared the experiences they had during the first three months of 2010 with heavy rains and landslides in Cusco. They discussed the consequences on the tourism industry, as well as social conflicts, strikes and lockouts.

Pennington-Gray's action plan that was discussed is designed to address tourism crises that result from natural phenomena (such as hurricanes) and manmade disasters (such as the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010).

For the article in El Siglo de Durango, use this link: http://www.elsiglodedurango.com.mx/noticia/362977.e-mail-redes-sociales-pueden-mitigar-danos-por-desastres-naturales.html

For the article in Terra, use this link: http://noticias.terra.com.pe/nacional/redes-sociales-pueden-mitigar-danos-por-desastres-naturales,fbba3214ab46310VgnVCM5000009ccceb0aRCRD.html

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