

Jersey Shorecast Panel: Offering Customers More Fun Experiences Is Key for Atlantic City, Shore

Increased Tourist Spending Predicted Through Diversifying the Market

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Contact:

09) 652-4593

www.stockton.edu/media

Galloway, N.J. - Atlantic City and other southern New Jersey shore resorts are diversifying the kinds of entertainment and other “fun experiences” the region has to offer to new customers as well as traditional ones, a strategy that is working, according to panelists at the Jersey Shorecast held in Atlantic City today.

The market has focused on growing non-casino revenue from shopping, dining, entertainment and longer hotel stays, drawing more people here for major events in the wake of four casino closings and concerns about Atlantic City’s economy.

The annual event, sponsored by the Lloyd D. Levenson Institute of Gaming, Hospitality & Tourism (LIGHT) of Stockton University, featured two panels of experts from Stockton and the tourism industry. The panels were moderated by Rummy Pandit, executive director of LIGHT, and Felicia Grondin, LIGHT associate director.

Atlantic City Mayor Don Guardian welcomed attendees and said the city is “tracking almost \$1 billion in development in Atlantic City,” including a campus for Stockton University and offices for South Jersey Gas. He said the city is “putting together a plan for recovery,” by working with the state government.

Guardian said business was strong over Memorial Day Weekend, and with “six beach concerts - double the number last year,” plus the Atlantic City Airshow moving back to mid-week in August, and an Iron Man competition and Miss America Pageant.

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that while the beach and boardwalk remain the county's biggest draws, more tourists are visiting to tour wineries, breweries and farms, and to eat at "farm-to-table" restaurants. "Weddings are huge," as a segment of tourism, she noted.

Another example of diversifying the market is targeting youth sports, said Gary Musich, vice president of convention sales at Meet AC. "This year the Convention Center brought in 50,000 cheerleaders in two shows - one show was 25,000 alone, and that was in January," he said.

He said meetings and conventions are important to introduce new visitors to the market, and then "people return to destinations where their convention was held," particularly when they know about other amenities such as golf and shopping.

He said stays have expanded from two days to two-and-a-half days, with visitors spending as much as \$1,000 a day on food, golf and shopping.

Michael Burk, president of the Cape May County Department of Commerce, said the county is targeting visitors from the Northeast and Midwest. He said the county is also targeting visitors from the Midwest and Northeast. He said the county is also targeting visitors from the Midwest and Northeast. He said the county is also targeting visitors from the Midwest and Northeast.

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Other topics of discussion included:

- Owners of second homes are extending the spring and fall seasons, particularly in Cape May County, said Clark;
- The lower exchange rate with Canadian currency per dollar is hurting Cape May County's traditional base of tourists from there, but lower gas prices may offset that, according to Wieland;
- Expanding casinos to North Jersey casinos would be "devastating to Atlantic City," Busler said, with Kelly saying that it could force the closing of two more casinos(t)-6.6(3(he)10.5(l)2i)2