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PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

ENTERPRISE

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China documentary features local businesses

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Pacific Business News

TV viewers in China will get a rare look at Hawaii's culture and business environment through the lens of a groundbreaking documentary scheduled to air this summer.

The history channel-type format is being produced by Hawaii-based CMC Consulting Group Inc. and the Documentary Channel of Shanghai TV, which reaches some 200 million viewers in Shanghai and the surrounding provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shandong and Jiangxi, 70 percent of whom are among the wealthiest segment of the population.

A Shanghai TV crew was in town this week to interview Hawaii businesses for the show.

"Our main objective is to give the Shanghai audience the opportunity to learn more about Hawaii's connection historically and culturally with China," said Xianliang Zhu, managing editor of the Shanghai TV Documentary Channel, through an interpreter. "That is why we titled this documentary, 'Hawaii's China Connection'."

Shanghai TV is part of the state-run Shanghai Media Group, China's second-largest media conglomerate with 12 TV channels, 10 radio stations, three newspapers, one magazine, 15 performing arts groups and 6,000 employees.

Hawaii's cultural connection to China dates back to the early 19th century, with many Chinese and part-Chinese here tracing their roots to provinces in Southern China.

A first for China

The Hawaii documentary is not only a first for Shanghai TV, but the whole country, Zhu said.

"In recent years, Shanghai has gone through tremendous changes and has really become an international metropolitan city," he said.

Earlier this week, Hawaii businesses featured on the program met with the film crew for a dinner at Seafood Village restaurant in the Hyatt Regency Waikiki, one of several local businesses sponsoring the event along with the state Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism.

Outside of Beijing, Shanghai is the second most important city in China with 94 percent literacy and the highest per capita income, said Mike Fitzgerald, CEO of private economic development group Enterprise Honolulu, which arranged airfare for the film crew.

The documentary will give Shanghai entrepreneurs a unique perspective of Hawaii, Fitzgerald said.

"There are in fact investment opportunities here besides tourism," he said. "And they can take advantage of them."

Most of the companies featured in the documentary have a Chinese connection, Zhu said.

One of those featured is JAIME -- the Japan-America Institute of Management Science -- a nonprofit postgraduate institute in

Hawaii Kai. The school offers a China-focused MBA program with the University of Hawaii's College of Business and a three-month corporate internship, usually in Shanghai, said JAAMS President Glenn Miyataki.

"It's a terrific opportunity for the school to get exposure," he said of the documentary.

JAAMS sees itself as a cross-cultural link between East and West, Miyataki said. But it also wants to strengthen relationships between Japan and China.

"JAAMS started 32 years ago with the understanding that to do business with each other you have to learn each other's culture," he said.

Though starting with Japan and America, the company has adopted a global perspective.

Hawaiian Host also was featured, along with its legendary chocolate-covered macadamia nut candies, which the company distributes to retailers throughout Asia. Exactly how much is a trade secret, said Executive Vice President Keith Sakamoto.

"We've been distributing product in China since 1994," Sakamoto said. "But we really want to see if we can try to grow that market. We don't think we are anywhere close to the potential."

Offshore sales now comprise about 30 percent of Hawaiian Hosts' business. But the documentary could substantially boost awareness in China, Sakamoto said.

Market for consultants

Consulting services are some of the most lucrative business in China and Hawaii companies want to play a lead role in the sector. Architectural and interior design firm Group 70 International is one of them. The company entered the China market in the early 1990s, said Vice Chairman Norman Hong. It too is featured in the documentary.

China now accounts for less than 5 percent of the company's business, which grossed \$16 million last year, Hong said. But he projects over the next decade Asia and China could bring in 25 percent to 50 percent of the firm's business.

"China really needs effective planning, including environmental impact studies," he said. "We are the only firm here that's integrated through planning all the way through to architecture and interior design."

The Hawaii documentary is scheduled for three half-hour segments, which will first air in June to coordinate with the Shanghai International Film Festival. DBEDT also is planning a Hawaii promotion with the festival.

"We want to profile the business side of Hawaii, not just sun, sea, surf and hula girls," said CMC Consulting Executive Vice President Johnson Choi. "Everyone knows Hawaii is a tourist destination. But not too many people in China know about Chinese in Hawaii. Programs like this may help make that connection."

Shanghai TV hopes to do more specials on Hawaii, Zhu said.

But he hopes next time it will be easier to get here.

Zhu said his crew waited a total of five hours on each of two occasions, outside the American Consulate in Shanghai, in temperatures as low as zero degrees, to obtain U.S. visas.

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