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Frantic scramble for SIA business begins

By Staff Writers

Singapore - Following Singapore Airlines announcing its account up for review, *Marketing* confirms at least eight of the largest agencies in Singapore will square off against incumbent Batey for the lucrative job which it has held since 1972.

Agencies confirming their ambitions for the account include Leo Burnett, DDB, Bates, Euro RSCG, Publicis, Grey Global Group, Y&R Singapore and TNBT. *Marketing* believes TBWA will fight for the business as well.

In what will be undoubtedly a ferocious battle, Batey will "use whatever WPP resources we require" in a bid to hold off rival agencies. CEO for Batey, Alan Fairnington says the battle will involve "pretty much any other agency who is not currently holding an airline account -- so any agency around the world is likely to join the pitch".

CEO and president for M&C Saatchi Asia, Kim Walker squashed any ideas of M&C Saatchi being involved in the pitch saying "they're very happy with the relationship with Qantas".

Ogilvy & Mather Singapore, who handles airline accounts in Malaysia Airlines, Jetstar and SilkAir, would not comment on its potential interests towards the business but group chairman Stephen Mangham agreed the decision to review the account was significant saying, "for SIA it's a momentous decision and obviously it's never good news for an agency, you can't pretend otherwise and Batey will fight tooth and nail to retain the business".

When *Marketing* approached Fairnington regarding reports suggesting the Batey CEO believed the future of the agency rested on retaining the business, he said "It was as a hypothetical question that I answered -- SIA is a huge account and so if we lost it would we continue as an independent ad agency or would we take a more financially pragmatic approach and merge? It's a long way off and whatever happens we will do everything we can to keep the Batey brand alive".

Agencies McCann-Erickson and BBH will not vie for the business as both hold conflicting airline accounts in Cathay Pacific and British Airways respectively.

Singapore Airlines is expected to make the Request for Information details available later today on its website.

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