

December 2018/January 2019

KONIPPS1888/02/2017(01/25/35)

TTGmice

Asia-Pacific's intelligent business events resource

Siem Reap awakens
for business events

Fukuoka's rising strength

Who loses in the stiff fight for
incentive tour contracts?

THE SOUL OF BUSINESS EVENTS

Asia's business events industry has come a long way, from being simply a component of tourism to one that can effect deep impact on the community. This is the story of the industry's past, present and future



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No crystal ball needed

One common question comes up every time I meet with industry friends, and it is 'how's the business events industry looking ahead?'

That's them asking me, the journalist, although I always turn it back to them – the experts who are in the business themselves.

But this sort of discussion always brings me back to the day I asked my history teacher why her lessons were necessary. The incidents were long past, way before my time, I argued.

Her reply: to see our future, we need to appreciate our past and present.

Wise words no doubt drawn from ancient wise men.

Those words hold true for businesses too. For us to plan how the business events industry should advance, we have to understand how it has evolved and how it is progressing today. We have to understand the history and soul of the industry.

So for the cover feature of this issue, we have called upon industry veterans – some retired, some almost and some still in the thick of the action – to discuss the evolution of Asia's business events, and their hopes for the industry's growth going forward.

And to lighten the mood since it is our year-end issue, we even got some of them to recall fond moments from when they just started out in the business (before we had help from modern technology!), plus toss us photos of themselves from their younger days.

In evaluating the current progress of the industry, it is also worth appreciating that business events aren't just about achieving commercial and financial goals. Increasingly, business events are presenting opportunities for planners and their attendees to give back to the wider community through projects that improve lives of the public, support the needy or build a sustainable future.

Finally, to discuss the future, we cast attention on the development of next-gen leaders in the business – what academic institutions are doing and how industry stakeholders are playing a part in grooming the quality talents that are so lacking now in Asia.

We hope this cover feature gets you thinking about how you'd like to see the industry evolve and what is needed for a brighter future. And once all that deep thinking is done, we hope you will find time to celebrate the end of 2018 and welcome the new year.



TTGmice, endorsed by the Asian Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus, is published by TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd, and is mailed free-of-charge on written request to readers Asia-wide who meet a set of predetermined terms and conditions. Annual airmail subscription charges are US\$70 (Asia) and US\$90 (elsewhere). All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher.

MCI (P) 028/08/2018 KDN
PPS1888/02/2017(025626), ISSN 0218-849X
Printed by Times Printers Pte Ltd
16 Tuas Avenue 5, Singapore 639340



4



6



12



18



22

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COVER STORY

12 The soul of business events

Asia's business events industry has come a long way, from being simply a component of tourism to one that can effect deep impact on the community. This is the story of the industry's past, present and future

COUNTRY REPORTS

18 Japan // Rising capital strength

Expanding tourism hardware and a pro-business innovation approach are fuelling Fukuoka's rise as a business events city. By Kathryn Wortley

20 Macau // Welcome touch of luxury

Integrated resorts and luxury hotels in Macau are constantly reinventing themselves to keep high-end incentives interested, reports Prudence Lui

22 Cambodia // Resort town's awakening

Siem Reap's leisure tourism boom is stimulating interest among planners of corporate meetings and incentives, writes Marissa Carruthers

DEPARTMENTS

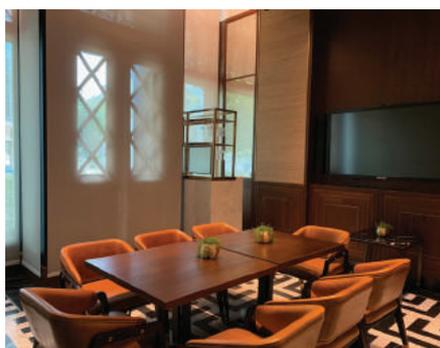
- 1 To our readers
- 3 Connect
- 4 Marketplace
- 6 Talk of the trade
- 10 In focus
- 25 Case study
- 26 People
- 28 Over coffee with

Snapshots

@ttgmice



Look here! ICCA Congress 2018 delegates are called upon to donate their unused glasses to charity.
November 12



TTGmice visits The Capitol Kempinski Hotel Singapore, a newly opened hotel in the downtown Civic and Cultural District.
November 7



The ASAE Association Leadership Forum opens with a mighty bang – literally, thanks to a vigorous drum performance – today at Grand Hyatt Singapore.
October 30



Eight national industry associations have signed an MoU to form the Business Events Council Malaysia.
October 11

PERSPECTIVES



As more business and leisure trips collide, International SOS & Control Risks' Aditya Luthra says companies need to reevaluate their degree of duty of care to travelling staff

Q&A

With 14 years of experience with Marriott International under her belt, the young Ashley Lai is relishing in her new role as general manager of the Courtyard by Marriott Siem Reap Resort – the brand's Cambodian debut



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Letters

TTGmice October issue's feature story, *Events on the high seas*, made for a very interesting read. For several years I have wondered when the cruise industry would take a more proactive role in attracting the business events market. It would appear they are now getting serious about this lucrative sector.

However, based on my many years in destination marketing in the business events industry, I believe

there needs to be an awareness of potential constraints the cruise industry may face in securing some association and corporate meetings. That said, cruises are strong contenders for the incentive travel market.

The general perception of cruising is that it is a leisure experience in a casual environment, which is not necessarily conducive for a business or association event.

I have often found too much emphasis being placed on destination attractions (in marketing efforts towards business events). While this is fine for pre/post tours, it is important to (realise that) attractions can

become distractions for some, if not many, meeting delegates.

A final important factor in bidding for and hosting business events, is the destination's relevance to the association's or corporation's social and economic interests.

The global business events industry needs to strongly emphasise that meetings mean business.

David Hall
David Hall Consultancy,
Australia





We love

Sail away to Komodo in style

Why get to Indonesia's Komodo Island the usual way when you can do it in style and touched by the fingers of luxury?

Ayana Hotels, known for its lavish accommodation and stellar hospitality in various highly-prized locations around Indonesia, has recently debuted a specially-built Phinisi cruise ship that sails to Komodo Island, calling at well-known areas such as the Komodo National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Excursions on *Ayana Lako di'a* (which means safe journey in Balinese) are two-, three- or five-nights in length, and making the experience perfect for corporate charters.

Onboard the 54m-long Phinisi vessel – the world's largest – are nine luxury cabins, which can hold a maximum of 18 passengers. Guests can expect five-star treatment, full dining options and spa treatments. Water activities such as snorkelling, diving, and stand up paddle-boarding are available, alongside dry activities such as yoga and dolphin watching.

Cruises set sail from Mondays to Saturdays on a regular basis, and on Sundays, *Ayana Lako di'a* can be used as a corporate event venue.

Event spaces onboard include the multipurpose front deck, spacious dining room, and the upper deck. The ship can accommodate up to 120 people for a reception, and 70 in round-table format.

Event planners can also choose to combine the luxury cruise with an equally exquisite land programme at the Ayana Komodo Resort on Flores Island's breathtaking Waecicu Beach. The five-star picturesque property has a grand ballroom for up to 220 guests.

Opened in September with 13 suites and 192 guestrooms, each offering ocean views, the resort is the only five-star hotel in Komodo. Other facilities include six F&B venues, a spa, a gym, and two swimming pools.



Hilton opens at Resorts World Manila

Hilton has opened the Hilton Manila within Resorts World Manila, marking the brand's entry into the Philippines.

Hilton Manila offers 357 guestrooms furnished with Hilton's Serenity bed; a four-point bathroom comprising a vanity area, toilet, and separate bathtub and rain shower; and the Digital Key "direct-to-room" technology, which allows guests to use their smartphone or tablet as their room key for seamless access – a feature exclusively available for Hilton Honors members.

There are three restaurants and two bars on-site, ranging from the New York-inspired Madison Lounge & Bar to modern Shanghaiese restaurant Hua Ting. Recreational facilities include a free-form lagoon pool, 24-hour fitness centre.

Event planners can avail six function venues, comprising the 545m² ballroom with a six-metre crystal-encrusted ceiling which can accommodate up to 600 people for a reception. All venues feature natural daylight and are fully equipped with the latest audiovisual technology.



First Radisson resort rises on Phu Quoc

Radisson Blu Resort Phu Quoc, has opened its doors on Vietnam's Bai Dai beach, as part of an integrated resort.

Standing on Phu Quoc's north-west coast, the property offers 514 villas, rooms and suites. Rooms start from 45m² and goes up to the villas at 635m². The villas, along with the executive rooms, executive suites, one bedroom suites and two bedroom suite, offer access to the ALUMI executive lounge.

Aside from the lounge, other F&B establishments on-site include all-day dining restaurant Avenue which can seat 300 indoors and 100 on the poolside terrace. There is also a poolside bar and a lobby lounge.

Guests will also have direct access to an adjacent complex, where facilities include a 26 treatment-room spa and wellness centre, gym, water park, convention centre, shopping centre, restaurants, theatre and Vietnam's first casino to permit domestic entry. An amusement park, 18-hole golf course and safari conservation park are also on the resort's doorstep.

The Radisson Blu Resort Phu Quoc is located 30km from Phu Quoc International Airport.

Stage an event by the seaside in Singapore

Siloso Beach in Sentosa has opened a brand new events space, Glass House, within the C Side beach destination.

Glass House stands next to the Coastes beach bar and restaurant, and boasts floor-to-ceiling glass walls – which allows in lots of natural sunlight – and an al fresco deck area overlooking the beach. The 84m² air-conditioned space can accommodate up to 120 people for a standing reception, to 80 people for a sit-down affair. Food and drinks can be catered from the main kitchen at Coastes.

To book out the entire space, a minimum F&B spending or venue rental of S\$3,000 (US\$2,176) or S\$4,000 is required for week-



days and weekends respectively. Rates are based on four-hour booking blocks. Contact events@cside.sg.

Hot deals

Pan Pacific Hotels Group

Pan Pacific Hotels Group has launched a new offer entitled Smart Meetings, targeted at meeting organisers and event planners who hold events at Pan Pacific and Parkroyal properties worldwide.

A Full Day Residential Meeting Package will include five per cent savings on the catering and banquet bill (excluding taxes); use of meeting room from 08.00 to 17.00; meeting setup with flipchart, whiteboard, markers and bottled drinking water; Wi-Fi access; morning and afternoon tea breaks including two refreshments with coffee/tea; and buffet or set lunch with free flow soft drinks. Note there is a minimum booking of 15 delegates and 10 guestrooms.

If event planners were to book a next meeting to be held within the next 12 months from the last meeting date, they save an additional three per cent on the catering and banquet bill (excluding taxes) at the next hotel.

In addition, the more rooms booked and delegates hosted, the more privileges planners will get. For instance, 10 rooms and 15 delegates will entitle planners to select one

privilege, while 50 rooms and 65 delegates will entitle planners to four privileges.

Privileges include two local hotel-specific privileges such as complimentary parking or airport transfers; room upgrades; and one-hour cocktails including canapés, beer and house wine.

Smart Meetings run from now until March 31, 2019, and for meetings and stays held before December 31, 2019. This is subject to availability and black-out dates may apply. Other terms and conditions apply.

Oakwood Premier OUE Singapore

The 268-key Oakwood Premier OUE Singapore in Singapore's CBD offers several meeting spaces.

The Executive Boardroom can cater up to 12 people comfortably (minimum booking four people). Boasting floor-to-ceiling windows that open out to the city skyline.

Full-day meeting packages start from S\$65 (US\$47) per person, which includes two coffee breaks. At S\$85 per person, the package will include one lunch and two coffee breaks. At S\$105 per person, the package includes one lunch, two coffee breaks, and one-hour-long free-flow alcohol. Half-day meeting packages start from S\$25 per person just for boardroom rental, up to S\$70 per person with lunch and coffee break.

For larger groups, book an outdoor barbecue package at the pool terrace with two-hour-long unlimited house beers and wines, plus on-site chef service from S\$80 per person. With a minimum spend of S\$2,500, exclusive usage of The Oakwood Executive Club will also be thrown in. This is applicable for a minimum of 20 persons and maximum of 60 persons for a rental period of three hours from 18.00 daily.

Email dining.opsg@oakwood.com.



Pan Pacific Melbourne Woodside

In the pipeline



The Westin Adelaide

Marriott International is set to open a brand new 15-storey luxury property in Adelaide's city centre by 2022. The Westin Adelaide will have 285 rooms, and will be housed within the city's historic General Post Office Building. There will be more than 310m² of meeting and event space, a 24-hour business centre, a spa, fitness studio and swimming pool.



Mandarin Hotel Saigon

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group will manage a new hotel in Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City, scheduled to open in 2020. Alongside 227 guestrooms and suites, the hotel will also feature six restaurants and bars, a range of meeting and banqueting spaces, a fitness centre, a spa, and an outdoor swimming pool.



Kimpton Bangkok

Bangkok will welcome a Kimpton hotel when InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) brings the boutique brand, which it acquired in January 2015, into the Thai capital in 2020. The property will feature 349 guestrooms, including 124 serviced establishments, a swimming pool, gym, spa and seven meeting rooms.

Korean Air brings Danang closer

Korean Air has launched a new, regular service between Danang, Vietnam and Busan, South Korea.

The daily service operates on a B737-900 aircraft. KE465 will depart South Korea's Gimhae International Airport at 21.25, arriving at Danang at 12.20 the next day. KE466 will depart Danang at 02.45 and arrive at Gimhae at 08:30.

Meanwhile, Korean Air is also boosting frequencies on some popular routes: Incheon-Istanbul service will now be operated four times a week, while Incheon-Nha Trang will be a daily service.

Incheon-Seattle and Incheon-Las Vegas will get an extra service in December and January, making each a six-times-a-week operation.

New So Sri Lanka campaign forges ahead

By Feizal Samath

Sri Lanka's industry officials have confirmed that the country's new tourism campaign, *So Sri Lanka*, will launch as planned after obtaining support from the new government.

The destination marketing campaign was earlier in limbo after the sudden sacking of prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe by president Maithripala Sirisena on October 26, which threw the country into a constitutional crisis.

But the *So Sri Lanka* campaign was launched as planned on November 5 at WTM London. The campaign will filter into a larger three-year long destination marketing campaign starting in 1Q2019.

This certainty was reached after industry officials met with the new tourism minister Wasantha Senanayake, who reassured officials that the campaign can proceed as planned.

Sri Lanka Tourist Hotels Association's president Sanath Ukwatte, who was pre-

sent at the meeting, said they presented the new campaign to Senanayake, who then agreed to its continuation.

Although tourism promotion and marketing campaigns are normally done by the official Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau in consultation with the private sector, SLTPB's then-managing director Suthesh Balasubramanian was not present at the meeting. His contractual term ended on November 1, 2018, as positions like these are political appointments made by the then minister-in-charge. Balasubramanian however, confirmed that the new minister agreed to proceed with the campaign.

So Sri Lanka has been in the works for the past three to four years, having made to jump through bureaucratic hoops, tender processes, various procedures and changing governments. The industry has been clamouring for a new promotion campaign since the aftermath a 30-year-long ethnic conflict that ended in 2009.



givaga/shutterstock

Sri Lanka gets its tourism campaign as planned

Meanwhile, it is business as usual for Sri Lanka's tourism and meetings sectors.

A hotel manager at a five-star hotel in Colombo told *TTGmice* that there have been no cancellations. Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators' president Harith Perera, also reported no major cancellations.

The five-day Cinnamon TBC Asia 2018, which brought 61 influential bloggers from 40 countries to Sri Lanka during the country's constitutional crisis, also proceeded as planned.

Lanka Exhibition & Conference Services' CEO Aasim Mukhtar said this was generally a low season for events.



Fiji's Denarau island houses MICE-ready hardware

Fiji gets MICE serious

Three years after forming the Fiji Convention Bureau in 2015, Tourism Fiji is now looking to establish a second events team that will bring greater power to its pursuit of international business events.

Kathy Koyamaibole, regional manager Asia with Tourism Fiji, told *TTGmice* that Asian markets are registering strong potential. For now, China leads in Asian business events arrivals, with "significant interest coming out of Singapore".

When asked about the challenges Fiji faces in attracting Asian planners, she pointed to the misconception that Fiji was "primitive". "But when planners get a chance to visit Fiji, they are always blown away by what we have to offer. We have so many international hotel brands, all of which have conference facilities. We also have unique attractions that are a great match to our international-standard hardware," she said. – **Karen Yue**

Access a problem for secondary cities

Convention bureaux of secondary cities in Japan are investing more heavily into raising awareness among overseas business event planners, such as through participation at annual sales missions, but buyers say that accessibility continues to be a tough hurdle for destinations to cross.

Business event planners expressed uncertainty over their ability to push corporate groups – meetings in particular – beyond accessible main cities. Their concerns are mostly over travel logistics.

Tan Li Ting, manager of Apple Vacations Singapore which organises meetings and incentives solely in Japan, said for the secondary destination to work in a corporate programme, it must be accessible by an international airport or be close to a major meeting city.

Tan explained: "Take for example Mie Prefecture which would be accessible for groups that arrive by flight into Kansai International Airport. Shizuoka Prefecture would also be accessible if the group was extending from a meeting in Tokyo or Osaka. However, the programme is unlikely to be built around a specific outlying destination like Okayama Prefecture or Shikoku Island."

Eve Chia, director of The Meeting Lab,

concluded: "We will recommend destinations that are more accessible in terms of flights because our clients usually don't want to travel so much."

Japanese convention bureaux representing secondary cities told *TTGmice* that they are not discouraged by planners' feedback, as they believe that their destination has their own merits.

Gifu Convention and Visitors Bureau's managing director Atsushi Ishida, pointed to Ukai cormorant fishing – designated as an Important Tangible Folk Cultural Property of Japan – as an example of a uniquely Gifu experience that would work as a perfect evening activity after a congress or meeting.

In addition, Ishida said Gifu is accessible for event delegates as the Gifu Miyako Hotel is directly connected to the Nagara-gawa Convention Centre, which saves on transportation.

For Yuko Sawatani, Okayama Convention Center's operation department marketing and sales division head, Okayama's compactness makes a strong lure for time-starved corporate groups.

She said: "Okayama Convention Centre is just a three-minute walk from the train station, and we have 7,000 hotel rooms around the station." – **Rachel AJ Lee**



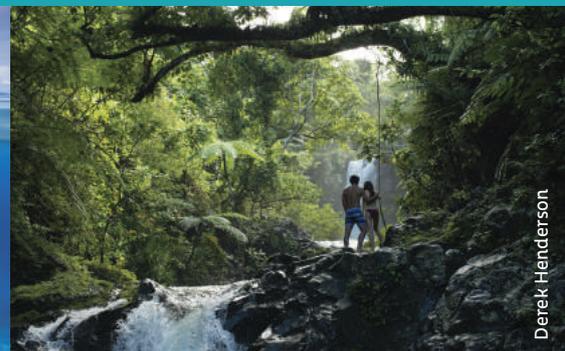
An unforgettable experience awaits in Fiji

Tourism Fiji

Indulge your delegates as you turn their dreams into reality. Enchant them with the spellbinding beauty of this paradise at the world's finest islands in one of the most beautiful spots on earth.



Mark Snyder



Derek Henderson

An inspiring meeting venue

Located in the heart of the South Pacific, Fiji is home to 333 tropical islands where hidden turquoise lagoons inhabit breathtaking reefs, and stretches of pristine white sand await. Fiji will undoubtedly be one of the most exclusive rewards available today for meetings and incentives.

The solitary nature of the resort islands provides an exclusive location for meetings and a luxurious environment to inspire delegates. There are plenty of different options available – from one of Fiji's many majestic five-star resorts to chartering a luxury yacht to taking over one of the many

white-sand, palm-studded coral isles for a pristine island experience.

Teambuilding activities packed with adrenaline

Inject a palpable sense of adrenaline with the endless offering of activities that will satisfy those seeking adventure, culture and relaxation.

Snorkel through Fiji's flamboyant coral reefs which boast a diversity of habitat and marine life through a kaleidoscopic maze of brilliant underwater world. Satisfy your sense of adventure as you charge down thundering rivers in an inflatable raft or along rugged terrain in an off road buggy; enjoy panoramic views as you parasail over the calm

South Pacific Ocean, or turn up the thrill factor and take a bird's eye view of the islands as you hurl yourself out of a plane and into an adrenalin charged free-fall.

For an overland experience, take a hike deep into the thick natural rainforests while discovering waterfalls pouring into the inviting cool crisp pools. It is possible to even zipline to fly over river canyons or take a quad bike through the forests as you marvel at the beauty of the surrounding native plants and wildlife.

And of course, be sure to catch a glimpse of the traditional Fijian way of life by visiting one of the authentic villages for a fully immersive cultural experience.

Indonesia starts US\$1 million bid fund

By Tiara Maharani

Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism will be creating a US\$1 million bid fund for 2019, as part of the government's efforts to boost the country's business events sector.

The funds will be used mainly for the bidding of international events.

When interviewed on the sidelines of the Ministry of Tourism's National Coordinating Workshop, Arief Yahya, Indonesia's minister of tourism, said: "Business

events are a (high-yielding) sector, and we encourage the industry to bid for events, while the government provides the funding."

Aside from the creation of the fund, the government is looking into developing and promoting MICE-ready destinations like Batam and Bintan. Currently, only Bali and Jakarta are considered ready.

Arief continued: "We will not be able to win Singapore if we compete heads on. What we can do is pair Singapore with Batam and Bintan for side events, and pre- and post-programmes."

These actions are important as it will help to boost both the number of arrivals and the country's revenue, as the government is accelerating foreign exchange earnings to lower the current account deficit.

Also speaking at the same workshop was Bambang Brodjonegoro, minister of national development planning of Indonesia. He pointed out that Indonesia's tourism sector needed to go beyond achieving tourists arrivals, and should focus on raising yields by attracting business events.

"We should not be content at seeing long queues at the immigration coun-

ters anymore, but instead how to make travellers stay longer and spend more," Bambang remarked.

Bambang cited the upcoming 2018 IMF-World Bank Annual Meeting in Bali (October 12-14, 2018) as an example, where he estimates the meeting will yield about 5.9 trillion rupiah (US\$3.3 million), and that the estimated spending from participants during their stay will hit 1.1 trillion rupiah.

Bambang believes that as major events contribute to higher tourist spend, the tourism sector can help to strengthen the value of the rupiah.

Hosea Andreas Runkat, chairman of the MICE Acceleration Team under the Ministry of Tourism, said the IMF-World Bank Meeting would herald the revival of business events in Indonesia and prove that the destination is capable of hosting events with more than 15,000 participants.

Hosea said: "We are now formulating a MICE development strategy that will become a reference for our working plan for 2019-2020. Our goal is to bid for seven (international) events."



Aside from Bali, Jakarta (pictured) is the only other MICE-ready city in Indonesia

Sentosa poised for new hotel cluster

Sentosa and its surrounding waterfront areas will undergo total rejuvenation and development, following announcements by key players at ITB Asia 2018.

Three new hotels were announced by Far East Hospitality's CEO, Arthur Kiong, to bring the island destination "a wonderful mid-tier range of products".

These are Village Hotel at Sentosa, offering 606 rooms including family rooms, as well as the 193-key adults-only The Outpost Hotel – both slated to welcome guests in April 2019. Come 3Q2019, The Barracks Hotel will open with 40 rooms in a conserved colonial building.

The three properties will raise Sentosa's total room count to 4,200, and their rooms will be "egalitarian" and "priced effectively", said Kiong.

He explained: "Sentosa is a driver of business (for Singapore's tourism) and is very popular, but it's interesting that 90 per cent of its room inventory are in the luxury class. (Our new cluster) caters to families, groups, business events and niche segments. Visitors may be encouraged to extend their stay in Singapore and Sentosa from one to two days."

This comes on the back of an announcement by Singapore's senior min-



From left: Far East Hospitality Management's Christine Choo, Gill Ishwinder and Arthur Kiong

ister of state for trade and industry, Chee Hong Tat, of plans to reshape the entire Sentosa island, as well as to develop the adjacent Pulau Brani, and the 1,000ha waterfront area along Tanjong Pagar.

This area, which Chee said is "as large as Sentosa itself", will be branded the Southern Gateway of Asia. He revealed: "One area which I am personally very keen to explore and push ahead is how we can encourage more activities at night on Sentosa."

Kiong expressed: "This is the harbinger of very, very exciting developments for Sentosa as well as the rest of the precinct." – Pamela Chow

In brief

NZ to impose tourist tax

The New Zealand government is implementing an International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy.

Most international visitors entering New Zealand for 12 months or less will be charged a levy of NZ\$35 (US\$23). The levy will be collected through visa fees, and for citizens of visa waiver countries, via the proposed Electronic Travel Authority process.

The levy will be expected to be implemented in 2H2019.

Hyatt launches tool for planners

Hyatt Hotels has unveiled the Hyatt Planner Portal, a comprehensive tool for meeting planners designed to enhance the overall planning experience at Hyatt.

With this solution, meeting planners can work in one tool throughout the planning process to manage meeting details, including contracts, attendee information and costs throughout planning stages. Additionally, the Hyatt Planner Portal will contain information on current, upcoming and past meetings and events, giving planners the ability to review details, access event history and generate reports whenever needed.

The portal will be available across Hyatt's global portfolio in early 2019.

Philippine's incentive demand holds strong amid challenges

By Rosa Ocampo

Longhaul bookings from Philippine corporations remain surprisingly upbeat despite high inflation rate, weak local currency, and other economic developments that are poised to render outbound travel from the country more expensive.

Toyota Motor Philippines' senior travel consultant Pritchie Sumeracruz, told *TTGmice* that the need for incentive programmes remains as it is not good to "stinge on our achievers as they bring in the sales".

She shared that every year Toyota Philippines has six to eight incentive groups – from 30 to 300 pax – that prefer longhaul destinations. This year, destinations that rank highly for top achieving principal dealers are Slovenia, Croatia and Vienna.

It helps that DMCs offer competitive rates despite the eight per cent drop in the value of the Philippine peso a year

ago, and 6.8 per cent inflation raid, Sumeracruz said.

Meanwhile, Vivienne Cruz, vice president of Yokohama Tire Sales Philippines, said that instead of cutting budgets for incentive trips or sacrifice the quality of the trips, the company instead increases the sales quota for their achievers.

This is because their achievers prefer Europe, widely considered as a plum destination unlike countries like the US and Japan where it is relatively easier to visit on their own and to secure visas.

Meanwhile, other corporations that are already familiar with domestic and Asian destinations are increasingly turning to longhaul options. For instance, Atlas Fertilizer sent representatives to a JTB Philippines' MICE roadshow last October to look for European packages which the company will be rewarding their sales team with.



Destinations in Europe still rank highly for Philippine outbound incentive groups; Switzerland pictured

On the other end of the spectrum, Dominique Oi, Switzerland Tourism's MICE manager South-east Asia, acknowledged that incentive trips from the Philippines is "picking up", and that Europe is still the number one longhaul favourite.

The new year is promising to be as good as 2018, enthused Oi, with incentive groups choosing Switzerland as a single destination. These groups, according to her, spend 4N/6D on average, with some having relatively higher budgets than others.

Bella Calleja, JTB Philippines' MICE manager for non-Japanese corporations, shared that corporate clients were more inclined towards longhaul destinations they considered new and exotic, such as South Africa, New Zealand, and Turkey.

Malaysian associations birth business events council



Eight national industry associations have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to synergise efforts to advance Malaysia's competitiveness as a preferred business events destination by forming the Business Events Council Malaysia (BECM).

The eight national associations were The Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (MACEOS); Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA); Malaysian Association of Hotels; Malaysian Society of Association Executives; Malaysia Shopping Mall Association; Malaysia Retailers Association; Arts, Live Festival and

Events Association; and the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA Malaysia Committee).

The agreement was signed during the Business Events Forum organised by MACEOS on October 10.

BECM is currently headed by Alan Pryor, general manager at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, as the pro-tem chairman.

Pryor said the immediate priority is "to engage with the government as their support for Malaysia's business events industry is critical".

As an independent industry council, BECM is also supported by the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) and state convention bureaus in the country to provide oversight and support for the implementation of Malaysia's Business Events Road Map 2020.

According to the roadmap, business events is expected to grow to eight per cent of total visitor arrivals, and contribute 16,720 jobs and RM3.9 billion (US\$939 million) incremental Gross National Income.

Airbnb extends reach in corporate sector

Apart from offering unique vacation spaces for travellers, Airbnb is ramping up its efforts to capture more of the corporate market by expanding its Airbnb for Work offerings.

The multibillion dollar company is now keen to tap three new key areas – teambuilding, offsites and relocations – as part of their "new strategic direction".

This means that existing teambuilding activities (offered through Experiences), offsite and meeting locations (offered through Homes), and longer-term rentals for relocations (also through Homes) are now being promoted to the corporate community alongside Airbnb for Work's existing product.

According to Alvan Yong, regional lead, Airbnb for Work, Singapore, Airbnb for Work now accounts for 15 per cent of the company's overall bookings since its launch in 2014 when it was first named as "Airbnb for Business".

Yong told *TTGmice*: "One of the biggest challenges for human resources today is engaging their employees."

As such, he said the use of Airbnbs for work offsites could benefit companies with their offer of unique environments, which can be catalysts for belonging and personal connections – a factor much sought after especially among millennials.

– Paige Lee Pei Qi

A losing battle with price

The battle for an incentive trip contract is becoming so stiff that price wars are common, but experts warn that everyone might just emerge losers. By **S Puvaneswary**



Sergey Nivens/Shutterstock

Incentive travel is all about rewarding top commercial achievers with an experience so impressive and memorable that they are motivated to do even better in the following year and beyond.

But what happens when the world that incentive travel planners and suppliers exist in gets so competitive that the programme that gets chosen eventually for top achievers is the one that is the cheapest?

Unfortunately, this is the reality today, said incentive specialists who lamented that some bid are won solely on pricing, rather than unique experiences and quality offerings that will leave lasting memories for participants.

Reasons for the intensive price war are many.

Transparency of pricing listed on the Internet may be a contributor, so too is increased competition for business in destinations where there are plenty of suppliers (hotels, ground handlers or DMCs).

As well, new entrants trying to gain a foothold in the market are more than willing to offer their services at cost or even below.

Victor Mogilev, group director of sales with Diethelm Travel Group, warned that the stiff competition based on price

will hurt many parties in the long run.

Mogilev said: “Cutting rates also means cutting profit margins, so this can easily impact the quality of services as suppliers start offering less added value, or transport operators opt for lower quality vehicles.

“In the worst case scenario, companies could go bankrupt, which in turn will affect jobs. Should this happen, clients end up paying for services not rendered.”

Destinations can also be on the losing end.

Arokia Das Anthony, director, Luxury Tours Malaysia, said: “If clients didn’t get a good experience (because the programme was selected based on price and not quality), they would not return to the destination and they might also (convince) other decision makers that the destination lacks the capability and professionalism to organise an incentive event.”

Sam Lay, senior director, CWT Meetings & Events Asia Pacific, warned that destinations might end up being labelled “cheap” in a price war, which goes against the messaging that con-

vention bureaus and tourism boards are trying to convey.

“I don’t think any destination will want to portray itself as being low-cost, rather than one where organisers see value in bringing their incentives to,” said Lay.

Are there markets that are the bigger culprit in fuelling this incentive travel price war?

Panorama Destination Thailand country manager, Nicola Scaramuzzino, thinks there are.

Scaramuzzino explained that Asian clients were more price sensitive than those from longhaul markets such as the US and Europe, due to relatively weaker Asian currencies. Furthermore, as top achievers from the longhaul markets had to travel farther to get to Asia, organisers are more determined to ensure a “wow” experience that is not restricted by price.

Arokia has also observed a tendency among Asian clients to shop around for good deals.

While Lay agrees that “cost must be competitive”, he stressed that CWT Meetings & Events Asia Pacific is against the practice of undercutting.

To avoid a price war and the resulting detriment of the event experience, Lay said the incentive specialist must gain the client’s understanding.

He explained: “It is important to educate the client on why we proposed something with that price, and

that a lower (budget) would mean having to give up on certain things.

“Client engagement is critical for them to see how we are ensuring the quality of their event, meeting their objectives and delivering a great attendee experience. They must trust... that we are the right partners for them.”

When faced with a client decision based on the lowest price, Padraic Gilligan, chief marketing officer for the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), suggested using humour to remedy the situation.

Gilligan, who is also a managing partner at SoolNua, a Dublin-based specialist agency offering strategy, marketing and training services to destinations, hotels and venues in the business events sector, said: “This is an opportunity to elevate the conversation beyond price to value. I’d ask whether the client would take the cheapest price if they were going for an open heart surgery.

“A successful incentive programme is clearly not a matter of life and death, but it is often mission-critical for the client or the incentive house contracting on the client’s behalf. As a once-off, live event, you get one chance to get it right.”

Gilligan acknowledged that this was not a surefire remedy, but moving the conversation to quality “did work more times than not”.

“I don’t think any destination will want to portray itself as being low-cost, rather than one where organisers see value in bringing their incentives to.”



Sam Lay
Senior director,
CWT Meetings & Events Asia Pacific



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Harbour Plaza Hotels & Resorts offers elegance in comfort



Harbour Grand Kowloon

Hong Kong is ready to welcome more visitors in 2019 as the High Speed Rail Link and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge enhanced the connectivity between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Hotels in Hong Kong are well prepared for the growth in business including the leading local hotel chain – Harbour Plaza Hotels & Resorts. As a member of Cheung Kong Asset Group, Harbour Plaza provides a distinctive blend of comfortable elegance and indulgent luxury in all of its 10 hotels in Hong Kong, with more than 7,000 guest rooms, suites and serviced suites.



Harbour Grand Hong Kong

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Indulge in opulent harbourside luxury at **Harbour Grand Hong Kong** and **Harbour Grand Kowloon** – both steps away from the Victoria Harbour which showcase Hong Kong's magnificent cityscape. These stunning hotels provide exceptional service, an array of dining options along with first-class meeting and business facilities.

Both exceptional hotels are well-built to host events of all kinds. The 825-room **Harbour Grand Hong Kong** offers an elegant pillar-less Grand Ballroom which can accommodate up to 700

guests. The "Skyline Pavilion" at the rooftop is the perfect venue to sip a cocktail while enjoying the Victoria Harbour and unique Hong Kong skyline.

Harbour Grand Kowloon features meeting venues suitable for delegation sizes up to 600 persons. Following an expansion project which is due for completion this year, **Harbour Grand Kowloon** will welcome 360 new stylish rooms, boosting its current rooms and suites inventory to 915 to accommodate large groups. There is a number of outdoor spaces including the rooftop pool deck and the newly reopened Waterfront Bar & Terrace where guests can relax or be entertained after their meetings.



Kowloon Harbourfront Hotel

Harbour Plaza – Satisfies both leisure and business travellers

A host of tasteful accommodation choices awaits both leisure and business travellers under the **Harbour Plaza** brand which offers a distinctive selection of hotels. These hotels offer strategic locations that promise extravagant views across the city and harbour.

Situated in the heart of Kowloon is **Harbour Plaza Metropolis** which overlooks the spectacular world-famous Victoria Harbour, offering 821 rooms and flexible function rooms which can accommodate up to 100 guests. Another option there is **Kowloon Harbourfront Hotel** which is just minutes away from Hung Hom and Whampoa MTR Stations and the ferry pier. This 240-room hotel provides multi-functional spaces that can accommodate up to 320 delegates for a variety of events, meetings and conventions. Guests have complimentary use of the Handy smartphone for

free International (for selected countries) and local calls and access the interactive maps for local.

Meanwhile strategically located in the heart of vibrant business district of Quarry Bay is **Harbour Plaza North Point**, a 714-room hotel which provides versatile function rooms for group sizes up to 550.

The brand also holds the title to one of the largest resort hotels with **Harbour Plaza Resort City** which is in the north-west of Hong Kong New Territories, overlooking the tranquil Tin Shui Wai Central Park. It consists of two towers with 1,102 modern rooms and suites and is an ideal business and leisure retreat.

Over at **Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees**, a 704-room hotel, meeting planners will be delighted to see that there are even teambuilding activities available such as cooking classes and Latte Art workshops.



Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees

THE SOUL OF BUSINESS EVENTS

Asia's business events industry has come a long way, from being simply a component of tourism to one that can effect deep impact on the community. This is the story of the industry's past, present and future

ASIA'S EVOLUTION

As much as Asia's business events industry has changed, it has also remained stagnant, say industry veterans. By *Karen Yue* and *Mimi Hudoyo*

If there was one significant change in Asia's business events industry over numerous decades, it would be the ability to win over global gatherings.

Mike Cannon, who began his business events career in 1978 with the formation of a DMC in Australia and went on to head Sarawak Convention Bureau as CEO from 2012 to 2017, observed that Asia in the early days "lacked the creativity to entice my clients (from Australia)" in comparison to destinations in New Zealand, the UK, Europe and North America.

"It was beer, beach, some culture, and price – that's it. But how that has changed," remarked Cannon, who now runs Mike Cannon Business Events - Asia Pacific, a consultancy focused on marketing, branding, training and representation for organisations targeting business events. "Singapore, even with its rigid bureaucracy and conservative environment, has excelled in its offerings for corporate events. And Bali, despite being 'full', still offers a unique experience for corporate events – and keeps refreshing."

Susilowani Daud, president director of PACTO Convex Indonesia, who started her business in the early 1990s, confessed that she used to be annoyed by Singaporean business events leaders who saw Indonesia only as an extension for meeting programmes held in the city-state.

"At that time, the Jakarta Convention Center was still under construction to host the Non Alignment Movement Summit. The airport in Jakarta could barely handle the arrivals of 10,000 delegates across those two days," she recalled.

Susilowani's confidence in her country's ability to score on the regional business events stage has since changed.

"Today, Jakarta and Bali – to say the least – are ready to compete (as standalone destinations). We have the venues, hotels and airports that can accommodate large events," she said, adding that general infrastructure across the country, including in secondary cities, has been vastly improved over the past four years.

Adding to that, the Indonesian government kicked off in 2017 its 10 New Bali

programme to replicate the economic effects of tourism in Bali across 10 other destinations in the country.

National tourism authorities elsewhere in South-east Asia are doing the same.

Having successfully developed five MICE cities, Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau is now following through a new masterplan to grow the Kingdom's pool of quality destinations for a range of business events.

Vietnam National Administration of Tourism is calling for fresh infrastructure in Quang Ninh Province, where the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2019 will be hosted in Ha-long Bay. The event is expected to show the world that Vietnam in general has the ability to pull off large-scale events, noted Dinh Ngoc Duc, the NTO's director of marketing.

There are success stories of states and cities that have taken it upon themselves to get business events-ready too – such as Penang and Sarawak in Malaysia.

Another major, positive change in Asia's business events industry, according to Cannon, is the improved air accessibility "that has made Asia much easier to sell".

On the other hand, industry veterans are lamenting an aspect of the industry that has remained frustratingly unchanged, and that is the lack of cooperation among regional CVBs to raise Asia's competitiveness, standards and profile.

Suprabha Moleeratanond, ICCA honorary member and once chairperson of the Asian Association of Convention and Visitor

Bureaus (AACVB), said: “I have always wanted to see cooperation among Asian CVBs and have hoped that together they can help to grow the industry.

“If associations and business enterprises that lie around Asia-Pacific can be exhorted by national CVBs and brought to work together, to share their expertise and experience, one can imagine how that will generate new knowledge, social understanding, and cross border business for Asia. It would benefit all CVBs, if they can develop a database together.”

However, she acknowledged that Asia’s “diverse cultures and languages, and the competitive nature of Asians” make it hard for such a collaboration to work.

“Now that Asian governments see the impact of business events on their country and their political, social and economic agenda, together with the growth of China and India, I observe stronger competition and less cooperation among Asian CVBs,” Suprabha added.

Also dismayed by the lack of regional CVB cooperation, Can-

non said: “Done well, the AACVB has the opportunity and potential, not only to keep pace with Australia and China, but also to drive Asia as the future business events destination. But it is frustrating that it hasn’t taken off. On its website, the latest bit of news was tabled around 2011.”

Susilowani also highlighted the continued lack of “government commitment to support the industry, especially in bidding for large association events”.

When asked for their vision of Asia’s business events industry for the near future and advice on regional ad-

vancement, views are varied.

Cannon hopes industry peers will pay more attention to China as a potential rival. While the market is large enough to fill its own massive supply of business events infrastructure, he warned that soon the Chinese would want to meet elsewhere and China venues would have to look globally to fill their spaces.

Suprabha continues to urge a stronger collaboration among national CVBs in Asia, while Susilowani hopes to see Indonesian players work hand in hand with the government to “grab business”.



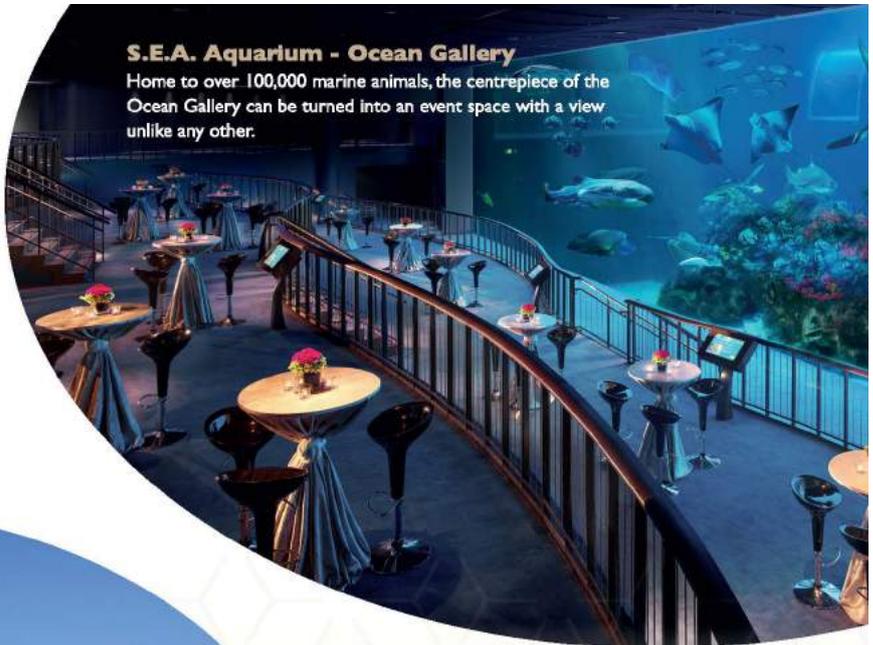
“I see better cooperation and trust among European CVBs as well as the private sector. There is competition, but it is healthy. They share information and learn from each other. The give-and-take attitude spurs learning and therefore industry standards are raised.

Suprabha Moleeratanond, Honorary member, ICCA



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ONCE UPON A TIME

Event veterans recall fond memories of their earlier days in the business. By *Caroline Boey* and *S Puvaneswary*



“I was in Bangkok one time with a VIP incentive group. We just finished our lunch and were on our way back to the hotel when our coach suddenly stopped from overheating.

We were only 10 blocks from the hotel but it was (too) hot outside (to walk). Suddenly we saw two elephants one block in front of us. I jumped out (of the coach and went) to the surprised guide and asked if the elephants could pull the coach to the hotel.

Short discussion later, money was paid and the elephants were tied the coach.

You should have seen the reaction of the group! But even more amazing was our triumphant arrival at the hotel.”

– **Jacques Arnoux, regional director, Faces of Asia, Shanghai**

“One of my first business events was a convention for 600 people at the Shangri-La Hotel Bangkok in 1988. I was the director of sales and marketing for MICE then. The theme of the event was Reach for the Stars with Neil Armstrong – the first man to

walk on the moon – as guest speaker.

We arranged for an elephant – the symbol of Thailand – as the welcoming host. The chairman of the company, Armstrong and I walked into the ballroom to open the convention.

Just before walking up the stairs to the podium, we stopped for a photo op. What did the elephant do? It began to urinate! I apologised to Armstrong who said to me: ‘Jim, if I can go to the moon and return safely, how significant is a bit of wee?’”

– **James Reed, executive chairman, Destination Asia Group**



“I first arrived in Singapore in 1979 and regularly used historic buildings like Raffles Hotel or “created” venues on the streets in Chinatown or Tanjong Pagar for an evening themed party against the backdrop of a local night market.

In 1980s Georgetown, Penang, we put together events at Khoo Kongsi, a spectacular clan house where it was possible to travel by pedicab, be welcomed by hundreds of costumed community residents and serenaded by Chinese opera-type performers.

In Bali, we set up a venue at the 500-year-old Taman Ayun Water Temple with a 500-strong procession of local villagers, costumed attendees, a night market and a



Rijsttafel-style dinner followed by a performance on the temple forecourt with beautifully adorned dancers and *gamelan* musicians.

To pull these off, we had constant battles with rain, local public officials who saw these events at traffic stoppers but usually relented, sometimes at the very last moment. That environment created the opportunity for anything-can-happen moments, but we were able to turn even power outages into a special candlelight experience.”

– **Bob Guy, managing director, Destination Asia Malaysia**

“After retiring early from Qantas at 45, I joined Franco Asian Travel in 1988.

It was quite a sight seeing a *nonya* lifting her sarong – slightly – to board the



bumboat for the cruise along the Singapore River for one of the events we organised. Bumboats then were authentic craft used to ferry goods and supplies to the ships at the pier.

Wearing my sarong *kebaya* piqued the interest of the men who got curious about Peranakan heritage and culture.

– **Eunice Chua, director, business development, SingExpress Travel DMC**

“(Back then) printing badges for medical congress with 6,000 to 10,000 delegates in Singapore involved a letter-setting machine and pulling a lever. It was messy and if you made a mistake, you had to use a pen to scribble over it. Don’t even remind me of the telex!

A year or two before Singapore hosted the 1987 Miss Universe, I remember working with PICO to redo the seating in Hall 5 of WTM into a 5,000-seat auditorium with different decks.

We also had to learn not to fly the flags of countries upside down at ASEAN meetings!

– **Jennie Chua, former division director conventions, Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (1977-1988), now non-resident Singapore ambassador to Mexico and chairman of Vanguard Healthcare**

“I started focusing on MICE in the early 1990s. In the initial years business was good. I did not foresee the Asian Financial Crisis and that it would affect my business. Luckily we had enough savings to weather the storm. A lesson I’ve learnt since is that the business events sector is cyclical and very dependent on the world economy.

KL Tan, director, Borneo Trails, Malaysia



DEEP IMPACT

The topic of legacy is hot in the associations circle, but corporates can also achieve greater good – more than just commercial goals – for the community of the destination they meet and conduct events in. By *Karen Yue and Rachel AJ Lee*

There is no doubt that when businessmen meet, be it at intimate functions where contracts are inked or at massive conferences where the latest commercial issues are discussed at length, trade is established and money is both spent and made.

But more than just making a beeline for commercial gains, for-profit corporates are also establishing valuable legacies for the communities they are involved in.

One of the clearest legacies of business events and activities is the exchange of knowledge that shape future industry developments, opined Ailynn Seah, vice president of sales – MIC and association, Marina Bay Sands (MBS) in Singapore.

Seah explained: “Many of the high profile events that were hosted at MBS have seen new projects being launched and key announcements being made, which in turn impact related industries within the city-state. For example, during the Singapore International Water Week, the Public Utilities Board launched the Singapore Water Exchange – a new devel-

opment to house water firms across the industry and further its growth.”

Business events are also an important creator of jobs, noted Didier Scaillet, CEO, Society for Incentive Excellence, who referenced the *Economic Significance of Meeting to the US Economy* study released earlier this year by the Events Industry Council.

“In terms of impact on direct employment, the business events industry ranked second to healthcare across all industries. Business events create opportunities, empower communities and enhance local livelihoods,” Scaillet said.

Through events, companies are also fulfilling corporate social responsibility (CSR) goals, pointed out both Seah and Scaillet.

Said Scaillet: “CSR plays an integral role in driving employee engagement and building a thriving corporate culture, and has therefore become a critical part of the engagement strategy of organisations. While CSR has become a formal organisational approach to giving back,

New projects benefiting the host city are often launched at business events. The Public Utilities Board, for example, moved to support and grow water firms during the Singapore International Water Week 2018

“An incentive travel experience is a diplomatic action. It’s people from one country or many countries, convening in one place and opening themselves to the culture, society, legacy and heritage of that particular place. That has huge transformative value.”

Didier Scaillet
CEO, Society for Incentive Excellence



the actual action of giving back can be very powerful, authentic and transformative for employees.”

He attributed the rise of CSR initiatives during events partially to the millennial workforce. “A survey by Cone Communications found that 65 per cent of millennial employees say an organisation’s dedication to social/environment causes is directly linked to employee loyalty. And, a Towers Watson survey made a direct link between CSR and engagement – specifically calling out CSR as a driver of engagement.”

He added: “The events industry has long supported green meetings and CSR opportunities and with the millennial population, it will likely do even more to push the CSR envelope.”

Within the sphere of corporate incentive travel, inclusion of CSR elements in programmes is on the rise.

According to the Incentive Travel Industry Index, CSR inclusion has risen in Europe (from 38 per cent to 43 per cent) and in Asia (from 17 per cent to 38 per cent).

“(Business) events see the gathering of the brightest minds from any industry within a single event venue – which leads to the creation of meaningful business connections. Through the networking opportunities, these events ultimately facilitate the generation of new ideas and the formation of critical business networks.”

Ailynn Seah

Vice President of Sales - MIC and Association, Marina Bay Sands



“Across all regions, CSR and sustainability are second only to the national economy in terms of impact of planning and implementation of incentive travel programmes,” Scaillet said.

Seah believes that event venues can be a catalyst for the achievement of CSR goals. She said: “When clients hold events at MBS, our team will first develop an understanding of their meeting objectives – including any requests to incorporate CSR-related or sustainable elements into their programme. We collaborate with the client to ensure that the right community experiences and green initiatives are curated into the meeting design process.

“Our value-add comes from our staff’s expertise and knowledge on the social landscape in Singapore, coupled with MBS’ leadership in CSR.”

Citing examples of how this was recently achieved, Seah pointed to the Schneider Electric Global Innovation Summit and the 7th Responsible Business Forum on Sustainable Development organised by Global Initiatives in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme.

For both events which took place in 2018, the MBS team created ‘Earth-friendly’ menus that featured organic, fair trade or Rainforest Alliance Certified, responsibly produced or locally sourced ingredients – a step-up from the venue’s standard green meeting Harvest Menu which offers locally sourced F&B options to reduce food miles.

At the Schneider Electric Global Innovation Summit, the MBS team also tapped on its network of charities to help the organiser channel their leftover event furniture towards a charitable cause.

Seah recalled: “We connected the organiser with the Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN) and facilitated the donation of 320 furniture items such as shelves, sofas and tables to the organisation. These furniture items were used to furnish APSN’s new Centre for Adults, a sheltered workshop and training centre space for their beneficiaries.”

Summing up the deeper, wider impact of business events, Scaillet said: “The true potential of face-to-face events extends to the heart of society. Events facilitate human encounters, help overcome barriers, build understanding, cultivate connections and promote peace. And that’s why it is more important than ever for the business events industry to embrace our responsibility to advocate for a world that is safe, open, and inclusive.”

RAISING THE

Few schools in Asia are moving to ease the talent crunch in the region’s business events industry by providing specialised courses, but ongoing public and private sector involvement in next-gen education is encouraging

Despite the business events industry boom across Asia and the growing need for talented individuals to join the workforce, few schools in the region offer dedicated degrees or diplomas in business events management.

This, coupled with the vast study choices in non-hospitality/tourism track available in universities and colleges across the region, has made the talent crunch in the business events industry even more pronounced.

Here in Asia, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University is one of the more proactive educational institutes in offering specialist courses in business events. Its School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM) offers a Bachelor of Science (Honours) degree in Tourism and Events Management and even a Master’s degree in International Tourism and Convention Management.

Kaye Chon, SHTM’s dean, said the School works closely with the industry to develop relevant programmes to groom the next generation of convention and event managers.

“We are mindful of Hong Kong’s push to strengthen its leading position in the market. With the spread of convention and event management as a specialist field, SHTM is committed to nurturing passionate and pioneering professionals to satisfy industry demand.”

Undergraduates apply what they have learnt from the classroom in a real-life work environment. They spend two semesters organising an international conference and complete internships with tourism/events organisations, such as the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The SHTM Event Society, founded by

NEXT GENERATION



students, has a mentorship programme in cooperation with various event associations, where mentors help participants gain insight into and experience in business events. Networking with event industry leaders introduces contacts for their future careers.

At the postgraduate level, students learn industry best practices, management skills and research, taking them from theory to practice for a competitive advantage. The flexible delivery and modes of study allow students to complete their studies in just one year to fast-track their careers. The programme also caters to people already in the field who wish to advance their knowledge without giving up their jobs.

Over in Malaysia and Singapore, the respective associations of convention and exhibition organisers and suppliers – MACEOS and SACEOS, respectively – collaborate with tertiary institutes offering event management courses and liaise with industry members to provide internship opportunities to students.

“SACEOS has established arrangements and forged partnerships with several local and privately-run institutes and universities on business event certification and development to grow the pool of business event talent and develop relevant, future-ready competencies of industry professionals,” said its executive director, Bita Seow.

At the School of Hospitality in Republic Polytechnic Singapore, the Diploma in Integrated Events Management (DIEM) focuses on learning by doing.

DIEM programme chair, Lynn Yue, said: “Our Industry Immersion Programme (IIP) provides students opportunities to intern with established local and international hospitality providers and pick up valuable work experience over a 24-month period. Some students even get internships overseas.

“The IIP responds directly to employers’ needs for capable hospitality employees by improving the talent pool in advance. Organisations can hire seasoned individuals who will be able to jump straight into a career (from graduation).”

Sample data from the annual Singapore Ministry of Education graduate employment survey shows that about 65 per cent of DIEM graduates move on to pursue a degree programme, some after a few years of work.

As well, the government-supported SkillsFuture study awards encourage continuing education. Events students can pursue an Earn and Learn Programme conducted by Singapore’s Temasek Polytechnic.

However, with fewer than 25 industry vacancies per year in the city-state for some 700 potential graduates from qualifying institutes, this suggests that the majority will have to seek employment in the wider hospitality sector or head overseas.

Yue estimated that about 30 per cent of DIEM graduates stay on in Singapore’s hospitality industry, though not all may be employed in business event companies.

“The local MICE sectors rely more on freelance project managers and contractors,” she explained. – **Gerardine Donough-Tan**

FUTURE LEADER INVESTMENTS

It takes a village to raise a child – as well as the next generation of business events industry leaders. These organisations lead the way by example

AOS Conventions & Events, Malaysia

AOS Conventions & Events works in collaboration with leading educational institutions by accepting three to four interns yearly – both local and international. Interns are given hands-on training on research, abstracts, registration, sponsorship, exhibition, social and on-site operational activities. Some interns return as employees after graduation because they enjoy the job’s unique challenges.

Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau

There are 106 education institutes offering business event courses in Thailand. The MICE Capabilities Development department aims to generate well-trained professionals who are capable of delivering international standards of service, while exuding traditional Thai warmth and friendliness.

The bureau’s innovative MICE Academy programmes seek to inspire students to pursue a rewarding career in Thailand’s MICE industry,

while encouraging industry professionals to enhance their management skills. Domestic and overseas education institutes give support through curriculum, education and exchange programmes and trade partners offer various career opportunities.

Suntec Singapore

Suntec Singapore, one of the main event venues in the city-state, supports Singapore Institute of Technology’s six-month industrial internship where Bachelor of Hospitality Business students learn the ropes of event management. Another scheme has students from three schools shadowing senior staff members for three to five days to see how they work.

A three-year agreement with Nanyang Polytechnic signed this year enables School of Interactive & Digital Media students to work closely with the venue’s specialist designers to curate videos and digital artwork on the world’s largest digital billboard.



Rising capital strength

Expanding tourism hardware and a pro-business innovation approach are fuelling Fukuoka's rise as a business events city. By **Kathryn Wortley**



From left: Kushida Shrine in Hakata, Fukuoka; Kyushu Railway History Museum



Fukuoka's position as a cruise port of call, start-up hub and one of only five global MICE strategic cities in Japan is helping the development of her corporate meeting and incentive offerings.

A total of 326 cruise ships called at Fukuoka in 2017, six times more than that of 2011 and the highest for any port in Japan, according to Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. The rapid rise in international visitors through cruises has facilitated the development of new dining venues, activities and experiences that are also attractive to culture-hungry incentive groups.

The popular waterfront area, incorporating Chuo and Hakata wharves, is undergoing extensive redevelopment as part of the 9th Fukuoka City Master Plan.

Highlights include a MICE vibrancy zone that will be home to new venues. Existing facilities and services will be revitalised. The goal is to have all event venues, lodgings, restaurants and other services "within walking distance," detailed the plan.

Meanwhile, Fukuoka's reputation as a city for entrepreneurs and business innovators is boosting its

appeal for corporate groups seeking learning opportunities. The city is Japan's only special economic zone, which has fuelled innovation, attracted entrepreneurs and stimulated new business opportunities.

Understanding the value of this, Fukuoka Convention and Visitors Bureau (FCVB) provides information on the city's industries and universities, and connects innovators with business event attendees.

Companies utilising these connections want their incentive winners to learn about Japanese business practices, be inspired about entrepreneurship, or gain an understanding of Japanese culture.

An agent with a nationwide Japanese travel firm told *TTGmice* that recent years have brought increased bookings from foreign companies with branch offices in Japan, particularly in the areas of finance, automotive and video game development.

The FCVB is taking an increasingly tailored approach, working to connect corporate groups with the people it needs to make business events successful in the city. It also supports teambuilding activities created by local organisations.

"We have our set menu of

incentive activities, which include experiences such as fruit picking, *taiko* drum lessons, sushi making classes, and Hakata doll painting. However, we try to meet each incentive group's needs," explained Kenny Macphie of the FCVB.

This year, the bureau connected an incentive group seeking *kendo* classes with Kyushu University's *kendo* club, and arranged a visit to a local elementary school for an incentive group eager to learn about the Japanese school system.

There has also been demand for sports matches with local baseball and rugby teams, which is expected to increase in the lead up to Japan's hosting of the Rugby World Cup in 2019. Fukuoka will host the training camps of Italy and the US, as well as tournament matches.

The travel agent also noted a growing demand for events and experiences at unique venues such as museums and shopping centres – requests that the FCVB is working to fulfil.

In November, a 200-pax incentive group visited the city's retro shopping street Nakasukawabata Shotengai for a new teambuilding activity facilitated by the FCVB. Participants were challenged to complete tasks such as hanging up a wooden wishing card at a shrine, making an origami figure, and finding a shop whose staff could dress them in yukata.

Macphie noted that 2017 brought 8,000 registered incentive pax to the city, with the largest proportion from Singapore and Taiwan.

As the North Asian markets of China, Taiwan and South Korea are mature for Fukuoka, industry players agree that South-east Asia is the next big market to watch.

Toshihiro Suzuki of Kinki Nippon Tourist expects a boom in incentive bookings from both South-east Asia.

According to Macphie, the FCVB is receiving more enquiries from Vietnam and the Philippines.

DEVELOPMENTS TO WATCH

1 Fukuoka City is redeveloping its waterfront area, a popular spot for leisure and business event visitors. Existing facilities will be revitalised, and space will be allocated for a MICE Vibrancy Zone, featuring exhibition spaces, hotels and other event venues. The goal is to make the waterfront the growth engine of Fukuoka, thereby increasing the city's international competitiveness.

2 Fukuoka International Airport is undergoing redevelopment and privatisation. As part of the move, a new 2.5km runway is scheduled to open in 2025 to accommodate more international flights and ease congestion.



3 A new 5,000m² exhibition space will be unveiled at the Fukuoka Conference Zone in 2021, in time for the city's hosting of the World Aquatics Championships. The new addition will also have two meeting rooms suitable for up to 400 pax. The space is designed to complement existing facilities totalling approximately 15,000m² as well as 20 conference rooms.

TALKING NUMBERS

5 The number of cities in Japan classified as a Global MICE Strategic City by the Japan Tourism Agency, one of which is Fukuoka

383 The number of international conferences held in Fukuoka in 2016, making it Japan's second most popular city for meetings (after Tokyo), according to the Japan National Tourism Organization

38,000 The number of attendees at the 99th Lions International Convention, an event held in Fukuoka in 2016 – the largest international gathering in Japan for that year, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization

REVIEW CENTRAL

Hilton Fukuoka Sea Hawk By Kathryn Wortley

Located in the Seaside Momochi area, the Hilton Fukuoka Sea Hawk is only three minutes' walk from the ocean, set in one of Japan's 100 most beautiful cityscapes. It is also a short walk from Fukuoka's main sights.

Rooms

There are 670 Hilton Rooms comprising double and twin options, Deluxe Rooms (250), Executive Rooms (64), Panoramic Suites (20) and Other Suites (49).

All guestrooms across the 26th and 29th floors, as well as common spaces on all floors, were renovated in April 2018. The resulting new colour palette of grey and turquoise was chosen to convey the sea surrounding the hotel, while white and green convey the sand and pines that line the local coastline.

My 20m² Hilton Room (double) boasted a stunning sea view while black-out curtains prevented any light disturbance from the twinkling city lights below. The welcome gift of a Japanese-style two-tier box filled with traditional, seasonal confections was a delightful surprise.

MICE facilities

There are 37 function rooms of various sizes, many of which offer views of the ocean or the cityscape at night.

At 2,440m², the hotel's largest conventional hall, Argos, can accommodate 3,500 people. It is equipped with audiovisual equipment and simultaneous interpretation systems, making it popular for international events or mega-sized conferences. Argos can be divided into six smaller spaces.

The Penthouse, on the 34th floor, is home to four function rooms. The Ocean Lounge, Tower Penthouse and Bay Penthouse can each accommodate 40–100 guests for dinner and 30–200 guests in theatre-style. Meanwhile, the exclusive Ocean Penthouse offers an intimate space for small group discussions or dinner while enjoying a 320-degree view of the ocean.

On the first, third and fourth floors, there are 19 banquet rooms.

Other facilities

There are seven F&B options across the hotel: Seala Brasserie & Lounge, Boukairou Chinese Restaurant, Tomozuna Sushi-Kappo, Kinyohte Teppanyaki, Clouds Bar & Dining, Kawataro Ikizukuri and Matsukoh Ryotei.

Leisure facilities include a fitness centre, pools, a Japanese stone bath and the newly redesigned shopping arcade Seahawk Galleria. Japanese cultural experiences such as kimono dressing and tea ceremony are available.

Service

Staff are knowledgeable about Fukuoka and enthusiastic about getting me to explore more of the city.

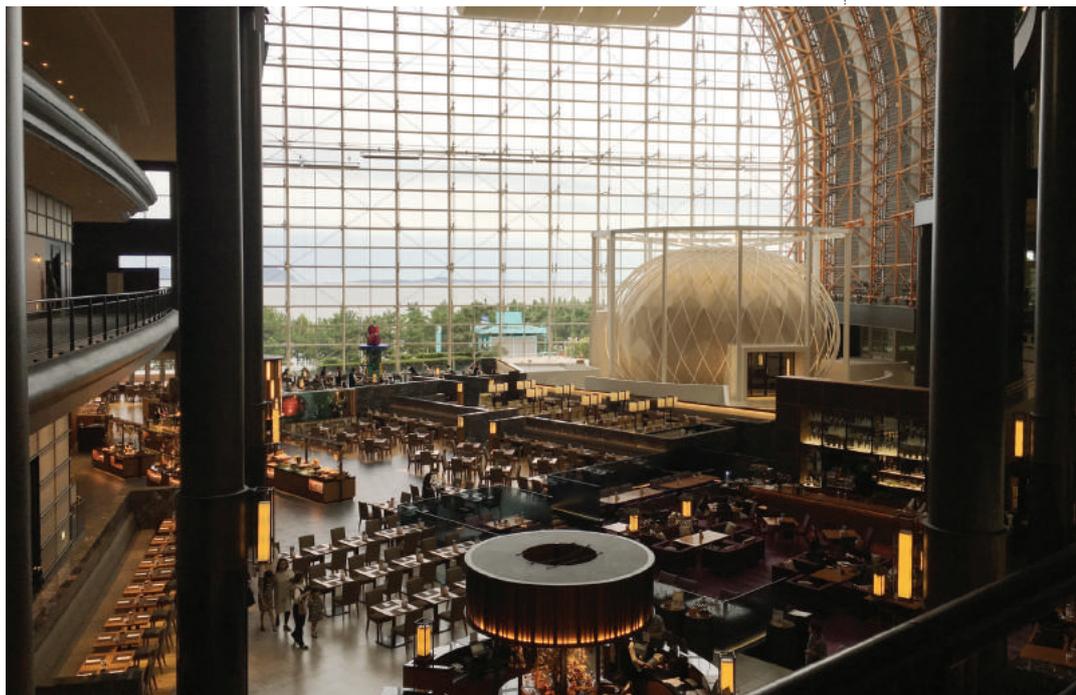
Number of rooms 1,053

Contact

Email: fukuoka.reservations@hilton.com

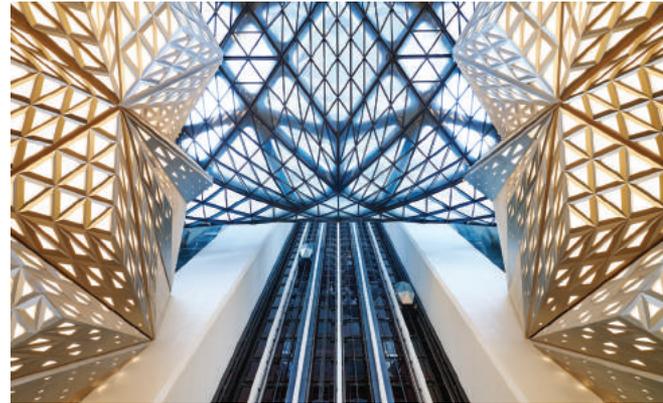
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Website: www3.hilton.com/en/hotels/japan/hilton-fukuoka-sea-hawk-FUKH-IHL/index.html





Clockwise from above: The glimmering Macau skyline; Zaha Hadid's ultra-luxe Morpheus Macau hotel; and the MGM Theater in MGM Cotai



Welcome touch of luxury

Integrated resorts and luxury hotels in Macau are constantly reinventing themselves to keep high-end incentives interested, reports **Prudence Lui**

Macau remains a popular incentive destination thanks to a slew of old and new integrated resort (IR) developments that have kept business traffic coming back over time. And to remain at the forefront, the IR market has been constantly evolving and innovating to meet the increasing demands of luxe corporate incentives.

For instance, in addition to the ultra-luxury, Zaha Hadid's Morpheus hotel (opened in June 2018), Macau welcomed MGM Cotai's (opened in February 2018) striking jewellery box-design which houses dynamic theatre and entertainment facilities.

The MGM Theater at MGM Cotai comes with a 900m² 4K LED screen – said to be the world's largest of its kind. The theatre layout can be transformed to suit a group's needs, be it for a gala dinner or a concert

where 10 different seating configurations for up to 2,000 pax are possible.

"After our roadshows, we realised that a significant number of corporate groups are interested in using our theatre for a mix of events," said Victoria Fuh, MGM's vice president of resort sales.

Aside from the latest hardware, MGM Cotai is also running several promotions, such as a meeting experience which allows one to book a meeting space as well as accommodation at a special rate. The IR also offers art tours.

Other players have also developed new ways to add value to events hosted on their premises.

At Sands Resorts Macau, for instance, an on-site activity could include sunrise yoga or traditional Chinese *taichi*, held in one of the hotel gardens. Breakfast is taken care off as well. Other experiences that can

be arranged include a Michelin-star street food experience in downtown Macau, and Portuguese cooking classes that incorporate a visit to the local market.

According to Sands China's vice president of sales, Stephanie Tanpure, high-end incentive groups are mostly from longhaul markets such as Australia, the US and Europe.

She said: "While we capture medium- and large-scale incentive groups from across China and Asia-Pacific, it is the longhaul markets that are particularly drawn to the historical and cultural uniqueness of Macau.

"These international markets are very important to our growth strategy, as Macau and Sands Resorts Macau continue to evolve as a leading incentive destination within Asia. Personalisation is everything."

That is why the Sands Resorts Macau team works closely with

DEVELOPMENTS TO WATCH

1 A slew of special events and celebrations revolving around the 20th anniversary of the establishment of Macau SAR will be rolled out in 2019.

This will help bring more attention to Macau and give more reasons to visit the destination. The anniversary will also coincide with the 30th Macao International Fireworks Display Contest, a signature event for the city. More details will be announced at a later stage.

2 There are two more integrated resorts (IR) under construction. While Grand Lisboa Palace has not shared its scheduled opening date, Lisboaeta has recently announced that it will open in 2020.

The Macau-themed Lisboaeta is located at the Macau East Games Dome, and will compete for corporate

incentive events and programmes. The IR will boast unique facilities like a zipline – first in the region – and indoor skydiving, as well as the first IMAX and MX4D theatres in Macau. There will also be a 20,000m² outdoor event space.

3 The Central Government granted Macau the administration rights to 85km² of waters surrounding the SAR in July 2018.

This allowed for the entry of new water-based tourism products, such as scheduled sightseeing cruises run by Yuet Tung Shipping company, which started running in September 2018. The cruise starts at the Inner Harbour Ferry Terminal, heads to the artificial island of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, before returning to the Inner Harbour Ferry Terminal.

event organisers to ensure multiple touch points are created throughout the incentive journey.

“Incentive groups are an important segment of our business. Understanding what our customers want to achieve by hosting an incentive for their delegates is just as important as delivering on our integrated resort offerings. Once we understand what the objectives are, we encourage our team to personalise, anticipate and deliver,” Tanpure shared.

Over the next two years, Sands China will transform the Sands Cotai Central complex into The Londoner Macao. Like its other properties, the Italian-themed Venetian Macao, and the French-themed Parisian Macao, this property will be English-themed, and feature new entertainment and dining attractions.

By doing this, Tanpure believes that it will “offer huge potential for luxe incentives as we bring some of London’s most recognisable landmarks to Macau”.

As for the 400-key St Regis Macau, a venue popular with high-end corporate incentives, its spokesman said demand is expected to grow, thanks to the

TALKING NUMBERS

65th

Macau’s international rankings rises for the second consecutive year. In 2017, Macau jumped to 65th in worldwide rankings (from 260th in 2002), and it was 16th in Asia-Pacific rankings

44.4 per cent

The percentage rise in the number of participants in 1H2018, despite the number of incentive events decreasing by 23 year-on-year. This shows that group sizes are getting bigger, reflecting Macau’s success in positioning itself as a mega event destination

630

The number of meetings and conferences Macau hosted in 1H2018, a decrease of 22 events year-on-year. However, the number of participants jumped by 71.8 per cent to 169,000

large proportion of return customers from neighbouring cities.

“With the opening of the Hong Kong-Macau-Zhuhai Bridge, we expect that to grow even more. Importantly, our efforts to push into markets including South Korea, Japan and India are beginning to show results, and we expect that growth to continue in the year ahead,” he said.

MCI Group’s director of live communications, Olinto Oliveira, told *TTGmice* that luxury incentives is “definitely on the rise”, as more

groups are willing to invest in an event if it means delivering a unique experience for their guests.

He said: “Luxury groups want something that hasn’t been done before, or isn’t easily accessible. Such groups tend to be around 150 to 250 pax, and require extreme customisation.”

This is where the IRs come in perfectly, Oliveira opined, as they possess a robust in-house entertainment team and are able to create special touches such as a private viewing of a show, or integrating a specific entertainment act into a lunch or cocktail event. All these touches allow for unique experiences available only at specific venues.

He concluded: “Two concepts our clients are looking for are personalised and authentic. Groups look for elements and experiences that will resonate personally with each individual, yet still maintain an authenticity to the central theme of the experience.”

“Understanding what our customers want to achieve by hosting an incentive for their delegates is just as important as delivering on our integrated resort offerings.”

Stephanie Tanpure
Vice president of sales, Sands China



Resort town's awakening

Siem Reap's leisure tourism boom is stimulating interest among planners of corporate meetings and incentives, writes **Marissa Carruthers**

Siem Reap's growing collection of quality tourism products, activities and services is triggering Cambodian inbound specialists to tap into the business events potential of the destination.

That, coupled with an intensifying corporate desire to seek out new destinations away from the traditional options of Thailand and Indonesia, are helping to plant Siem Reap on the corporate incentive map.

Steve Lidgley, general manager of Travel Asia a la Carte, said 2018's figures are on track to see a 20 per cent year-on-year improvement in business events performance, noting a "surprise" increase during the recent high season.

He added the majority of business comes from MNCs based out of Singapore, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur organising regional events and incentive trips for mostly Asian participants.

He believes 2019 will see a peak in interest from China as Cambodia becomes an increasingly popular destination. Said Lidgley: "I also expect to see more growth from existing Asian markets looking for new destinations."

David Baron, Angkor Golf Resort's director of golf, has seen a 15 per



"I also expect to see more growth from existing Asian markets looking for new destinations (for business events)."

Steve Lidgley,
General manager,
Travel Asia a la Carte

cent hike in corporate bookings in 2018, with the 18-hole stand-alone golf course mainly serving groups from Singapore, Hong Kong, China and Japan. An increase in enquiries is coming from Thailand.

The temples remain Siem Reap's top draw, with many planners seeking to incorporate a visit to the historic structures into their agenda.

However, more innovative temple experiences are being crafted, including boat trips on Angkorian ponds, picnics at remote jungle temples, and exclusive dining experiences overlooking ancient monuments.

Sala Kdei is an elegant traditional wooden house that sits on the banks of the Sra Srang reservoir at Angkor.

Jason Blackwell, director of marketing and sales, said the venue is increasingly catering to corporate groups of up to 150 pax seeking private dinners that feature traditional *apsara* shows, shadow puppet performances, and demonstrations of Khmer martial art *bokator*.

Siem Reap's abundance of natural beauty and increasingly improving accessibility are also driving more creative itineraries.

Examples include private classes with performers at Phare, the Cambodian Circus, Vespa tours, candlelit dinners in the middle of paddies and new venues for cookery classes, such as the top-class kitchen at Mahob Farm that caters for groups of up to 30 in the heart of rural Siem Reap.

Adrien Dennhardt, partner and managing director of Inspiration Cambodia, said the development of several five-star hotels on the coast of Sihanoukville has also helped bolster corporate incentive interest in

Below: Angkor Wat temple complex, Siem Reap



TALKING NUMBERS

1,149,336

The number of arrivals at Siem Reap International Airport, as of July 2018. This represents a 10.5 per cent year-on-year increase

225

The number of hotels Siem Reap will have by end-2018, according to the Ministry of Tourism, of which 20 are classified as five-star

15,000

The total hotel room count in Siem Reap by end-2018, according to figures from the Ministry of Tourism

By Nido Huelh/shutterstock



From top: Plan a traditional performance for events hosted at Sala Kdei; Angkor Golf Resort

Siem Reap, as he can now work on cross-country agendas.

He said: "It has helped us to work on more attractive itineraries with nice accommodation across the country because once you confirm Cambodia as a destination, visiting Angkor is the number one request."

Cambodia's competitive costs are also stimulating growth.

Pascal Tadin, general manager at Sofitel Angkor Phokeethra Golf & Spa Resort, said: "We see strong performance from the corporate incentive market due to attractive value compared with neighbouring countries. Siem Reap offers modern meeting facilities minutes from a world-heritage site. This provides delegates a truly unique experience while on corporate incentive trips."

The resort, which was the first in Siem Reap to organise exclusive dinners at the temples accompanied by *apsara* shows, is gearing up to open an additional ballroom-inspired events space for mid-size groups.

However, challenges remain if Siem Reap is to reach its full potential. Ashley Lai, general manager of Courtyard by Marriott Siem Reap Resort – which opened in January 2018 – and is actively targeting corporate groups, said more direct flights are essential for the market to grow.

Lidgley noted Siem Reap is still los-

REVIEW CENTRAL

Courtyard by Marriott Siem Reap

By Marissa Carruthers

The Courtyard by Marriott brand made its Cambodian debut with the opening of Courtyard by Marriott Siem Reap in January 2018. The 233-key property is a welcome addition to Siem Reap's mounting business event offerings, boasting a range of activities and facilities for event planners seeking a chic and contemporary setting that pays testament to its Cambodian home, coupled with excellent service.

Rooms

I stayed in a deluxe room with a balcony overlooking the resort's large swimming pool. Upgraded options include the executive room, and courtyard and presidential suites. The room was spacious and light, furnished with a corner work space with a desk and chair, and a 43-inch flatscreen TV.

MICE facilities

It is clear that Courtyard by Marriott Siem Reap has heavily invested in its business events facilities, presenting more than 850m² of meeting space spread across seven function rooms.

Its 410m² ballroom – said to be Siem Reap's only ballroom with natural light, thanks to floor-to-ceiling windows – has a five-metre high ceiling complete with stunning crystal chandeliers. It is equipped with state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment and flatscreen TVs. Planners will appreciate that use of the hotel's event spaces comes with support from a full in-house events team.

An additional five function rooms – or Think Spaces – can accommodate up to 460 guests. Boasting modern designs,

the flexible spaces can be adapted to planners' requirements.

The resort's Upper Deck rooftop bar also provides a great spot for private events, affording panoramic views that take in iconic Angkor Wat.

Other facilities

A range of F&B outlets run throughout the property, with Lok Lak being the main restaurant. A spa and fitness centre are onsite. Trips, tours and activities, including an in-house cookery class, can be organised by the resort's team.

Service

Warm and welcoming.

Number of rooms 233

Contact

Tel: (855-63) 968-888

Website: marriott.com/hotels/travel/repcy-courtyard-siem-reap-resort/



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ing out on business to other destinations, including Bangkok, because of the lack of indoor activities and restaurants with high capacity.

He said: "There are precious few restaurants with capacity for 100 pax or more with audiovisual facilities in Siem Reap."

Dennhardt called for further

improvements to roads and cleaner private and public areas, while pointing out that Siem Reap faces rising competition from emerging destinations, such as Sri Lanka and Myanmar, as well as established options like Vietnam which has waived visas for citizens of several European countries.

TTG Adspiration Awards 2018



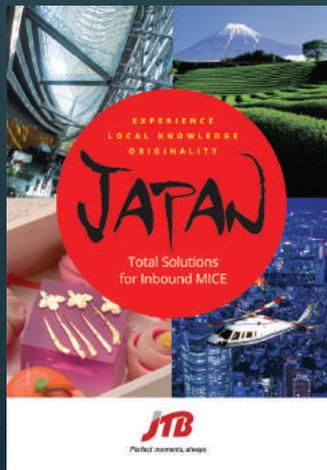
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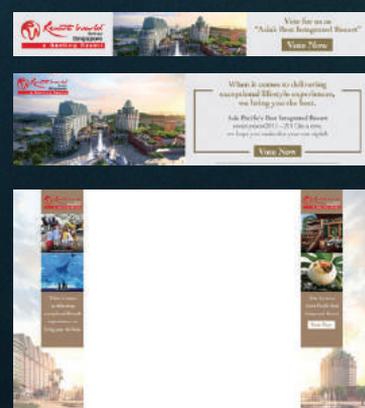
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Full on attention

A high level of attentive service is the key to impressing a delegation of experienced travel professionals from Skål International, writes **Prudence Lui**



Event brief

The Skål Asia Area Congress, which has been held every year since 1972, returned to Macau for the third time in June 2018. The event is a gathering of professionals from all sectors of the tourism industry.

Macau last hosted the Skål Asia Area Congress in 1994 and 2007.

The 47th Skål Asia Area Skal Congress adopted the theme, Gastronomy Tourism, highlighting the host city's designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy.

DOC DMC Macau was appointed the PCO and was made responsible for a wide range of tasks including project management, financial control and event promotion.

Challenges

Due to Skål International's rich history, the majority of members fall into the over-55 age group. Members are also seasoned tourism industry professionals who have seen the world and attended countless events themselves.

This presented a challenge, opined Bruno Simões, managing director of DOC DMC Macau.

Simões said: "The average span of tourism industry experience among the members is 20 years. How can you meet the expectations of

Event
The 47th Skål Asia Area Congress 2018

Organiser
DOC MMC Macau

Venue
Macau Fisherman's Wharf Convention and Exhibition Centre

Date
June 21 to 24, 2018

Number of participants
170

such seasoned professionals? The answer lies in the programme itself. It has to have quality and originality, and be flawless."

The PCO also received a variety of dietary requests from the attendees.

A third challenge emerged in the transfer requirements between Hong Kong International

Airport and Macau, as many delegates had to fly into Hong Kong from faraway lands such as Spain, Mauritius and India.

Lastly, the PCO had to take into consideration a single disabled delegate.

While Macau's tourism infrastructure for the disabled abides by international standards, Simões said the city is generally "not prepared" in terms of transportation for the mobility-challenged.

"There are no travel agencies in Macau that offer transportation for disabled visitors," he recalled.

Solution

To please and impress the experienced delegation, a butler service approach was taken in the congress programming.

Simões explained that every delegate had their own butler who took care of their registration and bookings, and who greeted them upon their arrival. The same butler also took care of their dietary needs, and was on call at the hotel throughout the event duration.

Bearing in mind the age of attendees as well as the single disabled delegate, DOC DMC Macau provided medical support at the congress venue.

While Simões declined to provide examples of how the on-site medical support was put into use, he said: "It proved to be very useful in a couple of instances."

To ensure a smooth transfer around Macau, the PCO appointed an extra staff with each vehicle to complement the mandatory tourist guide. However, little else could be done to ease the Hong Kong-Macau transfer until the new bridge between the two cities was completed, said Simões.

As for the disabled delegate, DOC DMC Macau outsourced the transportation requirement to Caritas Macau, a non-profit association that provides such services for the locals.

Key takeaways

Simões had a number of takeaways from this project. Firstly, he emphasised the need to utilise an online tool for registrations and payments.

He also acknowledged that some event owners had their own pre-arranged solutions, and the appointed PCO needs to be aware of what they are.

As well, as the PCO, Simões said a strong marketing support must be provided to the client. His team made sure the Skål Asia Area Congress was well connected with both the local media and specialised media to deliver editorial coverage before, during and after the event. As well, his team utilised social media to tell the congress story.

"The attention to detail was meticulous. A high level of consideration was extended to disabled delegate. Every future Skål congress host should follow this example, as more than 60 per cent of Skålleagues now fall into the over-65-year-old category."

Rowena Hawkins, director, Hawk Rent A Car (HK)

Appointments



André Brulhart

André Brulhart Mövenpick Resort & Spa Boracay is now led by André Brulhart who holds the position of general manager. He has three decades of hospitality management experience.

Brian Harris Brian Harris is now general manager of Grand InterContinental Seoul Parnas. He brings over 20 years of experience in luxury hotel operations to the table. His career has taken him to cities including Los Angeles, Chicago, Seoul and Jakarta.

Christopher Sommers Soon-to-open luxury hotel, K11 ARTUS, in Hong Kong has named Christopher Sommers its general manager. He brings his global expertise and 17 years of industry experience to his new role.

Derek Sharp Carlson Wagonlit Travel has appointed Derek



Christopher Sommers

Sharp as managing director of CWT Meetings & Events, based in London. He was senior vice president and managing director of Travelport's Air Commerce.

Jakob Yamac Siam Kempinski Hotel Bangkok has appointed Jakob Yamac as director of F&B. Prior to joining the hotel, Yamac was at the Address Boulevard Hotel in Dubai in the same capacity.

Justin Wermers Laguna Lang Co in Vietnam has appointed Justin Wermers as area director for F&B at Banyan Tree and Angsana Lang Co. He comes to Lang Co following stints in the Middle East with InterContinental and, most recently, at the New World Hotel in Ho Chi Minh City.

Klaus Sennik Klaus Sennik has been appointed general manager of Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Melaka.



Derek Sharp

He was last general manager at the Ramada Plaza Bangkok Menam Riverside.

Mark Samuel Bradford Mark S Bradford is now general manager of Mandarin Oriental Wangfujing, Beijing, a property scheduled to open in early 2019. He has more than 17 years of hotel management experience with the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group.

Matthew Woolford Matthew Woolford has been picked for the role of executive chef at Kerry Hotel, Hong Kong. The native Australian joins from W Shanghai - The Bund where he was director of culinary. He has over 20 years of experience in the kitchen.

Michael Melzer Michael Melzer has been appointed the general manager of Mövenpick Resort Kure-dhivaru Maldives. The German national was



Mark Samuel Bradford

most recently general manager of the Sunrise Nha Trang Beach Hotel & Spa.

Nanang Supriadi Nanang Supriadi has been appointed general manager of Wyndham Sundancer Resort Lombok in Indonesia. He was last chief executive of Arvada Hospitality.

Nick Naung Naung Nick Naung Naung is now country manager Singapore with Royal Brunei Airlines. He has over 18 years of experience in commercial and marketing, holding roles at various organisations such as Finnair, Finnish Business Council Singapore, Air France-KLM, and Jetabout-Qantas Holidays.

Radhika Dewan Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway, India has named Radhika Dewan its new director of sales. She brings with her more than a decade of



Nanang Supriadi

sales and marketing experience. She joins from Fairfield by Marriott Rajajinagar.

Shannon Creado Banyan Tree Phuket has appointed Shannon Creado as the new area director of sales and marketing. He has built a wealth of hospitality experience at companies including Marriott, Anantara and Minor.

Tony Wong JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong has promoted Tony Wong to executive chef. The veteran chef with over three decades of experience will helm the kitchens of the hotel's eight F&B outlets and banquet venues.

Ulf Bremer Seasoned hotelier Ulf Bremer is now general manager of the Island Shangri-La, Hong Kong. He joins from Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi where he was the general manager.



Nick Naung Naung



Radhika Dewan



Shannon Creado



Tony Wong



Ulf Bremer

- Advertorial -

Catch up

Anh Pham

Making the move from F&B to organising events seemed a natural progression for Anh Pham, who was thrown his greatest challenge to date upon stepping into his role as accounts director at Sheraton Grand Danang Resort – catering to 21 world leaders

How did you get into business events?

I have an F&B background, so the transition came naturally. (In my F&B roles), I occasionally engaged with event organisers. We'd chat about work and I'd find what they do interesting. I was also coached to sell, so in 2013 I started working in events and it started from there. It's still about working with people but from a different perspective and angle. I love it.

What are your favourite aspects of the job?

To be a part of every event's success is incredible. I feel like I'm helping to build something and seeing it from the initial stages, when we start planning, right through to the end event. I enjoy looking at all of the details for every aspect of the event, both internally and externally. To see guests happy at the end is always the greatest pleasure for me.

What was your best event?

It has to be the APEC gala dinner we hosted in November 2017. It is one of the most prestigious events I've had the chance to be a part of. It's also the main reason I joined Sheraton. We hosted 21 world leaders, several VVIPs and all the big corporates from across the world, so there were many special arrangements we had to pay attention to.

How was it different to other events?

There were many security and safety concerns. It was a very rare event to be involved in.

Sheraton was built to host it. When I joined in August 2017, the property was still under construction, so

everyone was racing about to make it happen by November. The preparations had started about six months before I began my role.

What are your main challenges?

On a daily basis when I communicate with clients, I have to manage their expectations with a can-do attitude. The last thing we want is to over-promise and under-deliver. To overcome this, I always try to be as realistic as possible.

I make sure we communicate well with emails and through phone conversations. If there's the possibility of them visiting, I'll ask them to come over and see the product itself, what we can realistically accommodate and give them a real vision of how it's going to be.

“To see guests happy at the end (of the event) is always the greatest pleasure for me.”

Anh Pham

Accounts director
Sheraton Grand Danang Resort

How do you see the business events industry developing in Vietnam?

Vietnam is a new destination compared with traditional ones like Thailand and Indonesia.

I think it will continue to grow significantly because there are many things to offer here. Many international hotel brands are here and starting to expand, and we have a lot of new brands opening too. We have everything it takes (to attract business events): infrastructure, great food, good technology to support international conferences, and a rich culture.

What more is needed to grow Danang's events appeal?

Accessibility and flight connectivity are the main issues. With the opening of the new international terminal at Danang International Airport last May, we are seeing more direct flights being operated, and hope for even more and increased frequency in the future.

How's your events calendar looking for 2019?

We have healthy bookings of both regional and international events.

A major event we are hosting in 2019 is an aviation conference taking place in March. For the last three years the conference has been held in Singapore with participants coming from across the world, including leading figures in the aviation industry. For 2019, organisers decided to move to a new location and selected Sheraton Grand Danang after attending an event at our resort. The contract was eventually signed 10 months (ahead of the event dates), with an estimated total of 700 guestrooms booked for the three-day event.

ONE MINUTE with

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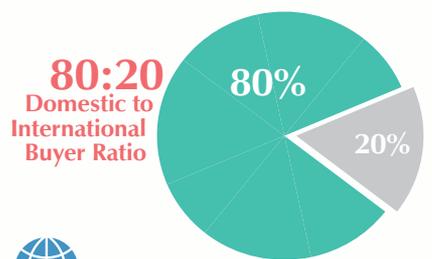


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Zulkefli Sharif

The CEO of Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau tells **S Puvaneswary** why he's reaching for business in the neighbourhood and pushing for collaboration

The Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) has a new strategy that sees it intensifying destination promotion in Asia, particularly South-east Asia. Why?

South-east Asia has a population of 622 million, a GDP of US\$2.39 billion and total trade worth US\$2.6 trillion. It is the third largest economy in Asia and the seventh largest in the world.

With such a huge potential coming from within this region and the Asian market, we believe it is important to look nearer to home when it comes to a strategic, targeted effort.

How does your action plan look like?

MyCEB's role is far from just observing and appreciating the growth of a state. Our objective includes rallying all business events players to come together as one and push Malaysia globally.

Therefore, we are targeting our key markets strategically in order to bring high-yield busi-



ness events to Malaysia.

For the incentive segment, our target sectors are direct selling companies, and the finance and insurance corporations from China and South Korea. For our convention business, we continue to focus on medical, health, and oil & gas. For our exhibition business, we see furniture, defence as well as oil & gas as key markets.

We will continue to take part in the prominent tradeshows, as well as road shows and sales missions in key markets such as China and South Korea.

Does this mean reduced attention to Europe and the US?

Definitely not. The European and North American markets remain important to us, especially for the convention segment.

We will continue to take part in key tradeshows to maintain our position as the preferred business events destination in Asia, (emphasising our) tremendous value-for-money proposition, world-class services and facilities, as well as many other unique selling propositions to planners and organisers.

Malaysia has three state convention bureaus. How does MyCEB support them?

As a national bureau, MyCEB takes on the leading role in strengthening the business events industry. We strategise on policy implementation and work on destination branding and profiling, promoting the country on a larger scale.

We hold regular meetings with our state counterparts to discuss strategic direction to secure more events. We support events at the state level as well.

We also provide industry training and other education platforms for staff of the state bureaus. These programmes give participants an opportunity to network with industry players.

The state bureaus are all different and are focused on selling their

destination and promoting their set of unique selling propositions.

For example, Sarawak concentrates on (courting) association conferences on the back of the successful hosting of the ICCA Congress in 2016, while Penang and Sabah offer appealing attractions for corporate incentive tours. They all have their own strengths and pull factors.

Does MyCEB encourage collaboration among stakeholders, particularly in lead sharing?

Yes. We work with our partners on lead generation and focused efforts on 'Team Malaysia' for future bids. This is necessary. We have to work closely to come up with a winning bid to differentiate Malaysia from other destinations that are also vying for the same meeting.

Indeed, the establishment of MyCEB outlines the country's priorities towards the development of Malaysia as a high-income nation, primarily as an economic contributor and catalyst for job creation and employment.

Hence, we continuously invite our industry stakeholders to join us for tradeshows, road shows, sales missions and any other sales and marketing activities that we take the lead on.

How do you see the business events industry evolving, and what steps are being taken to prepare players for the near future?

Public-private partnership is essential to ensure that the business events industry continues to progress dynamically and strategically.

By 2020, the industry is expected to contribute RM3.9 billion (US\$934 million) in Gross National Income to Malaysia.

For a destination to be successful (in business events), it must have a strong profile and brand, high performance and strong value offerings. And it needs a broad local commitment, understanding and support from the larger community.

To achieve our 2020 target, these initiatives need a very strong industry-government partnership and support from industry players. A collective effort of all business events industry stakeholders, including various ministries and all industry players, is needed.

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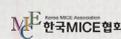
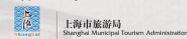
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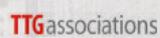
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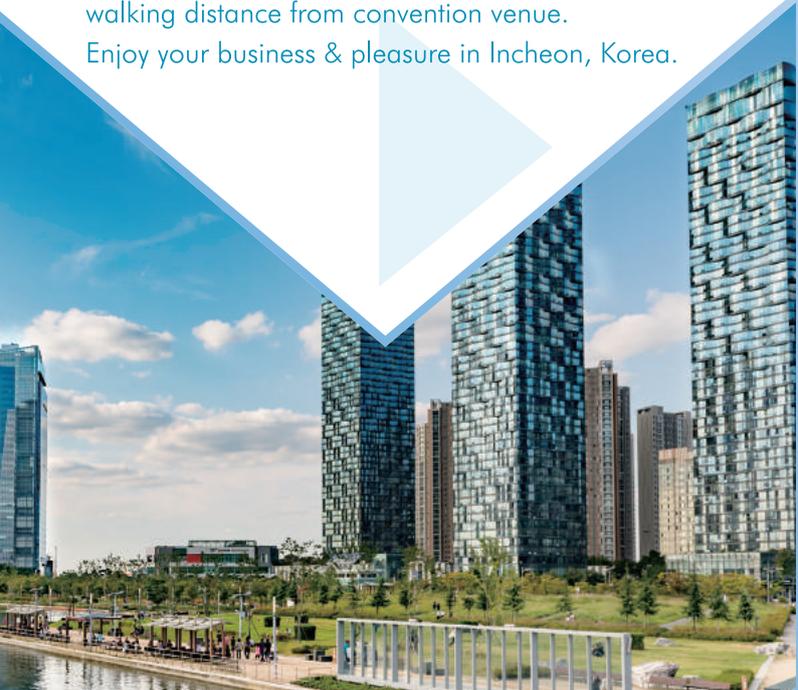




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