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TTGmice

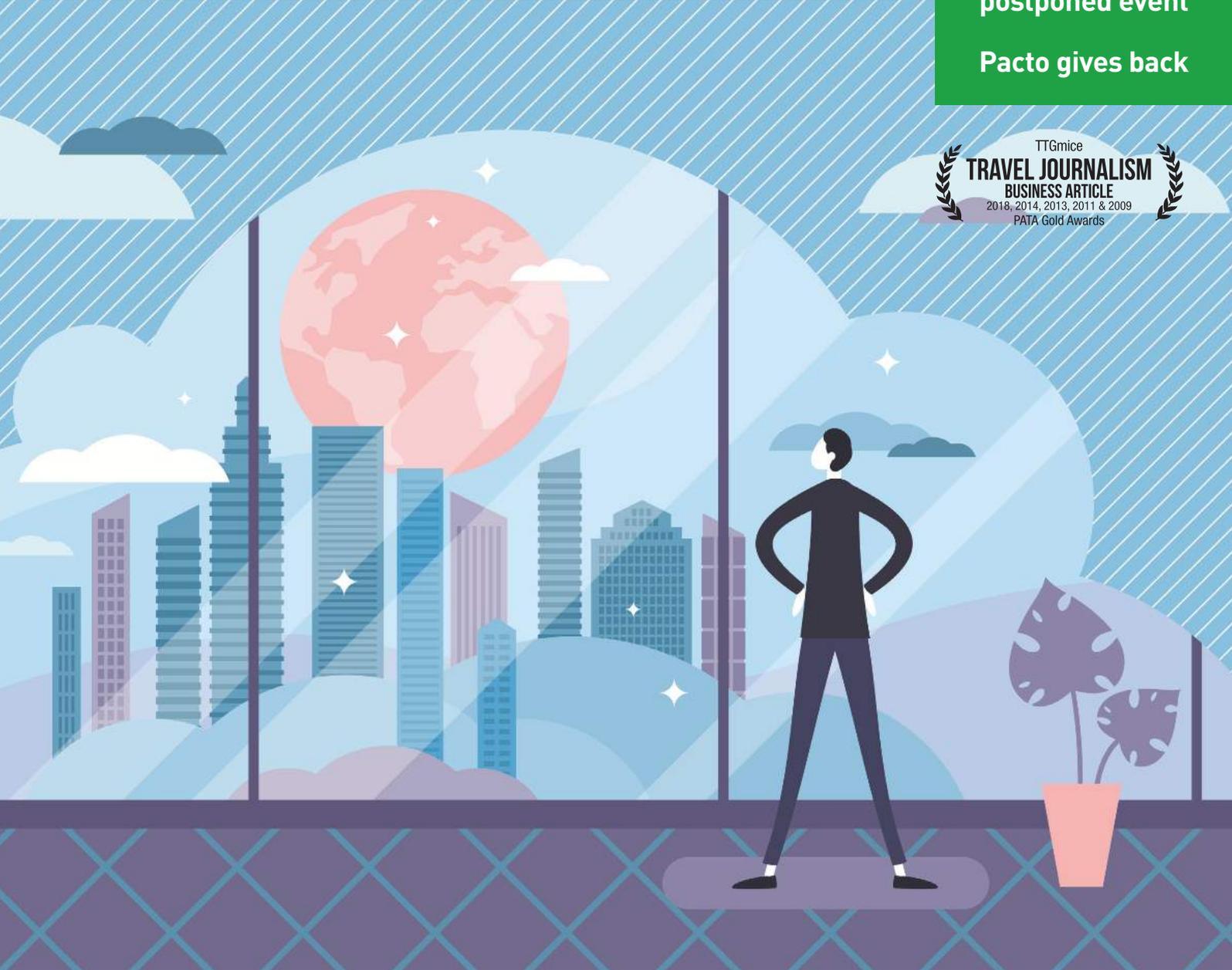
Asia-Pacific's intelligent business events resource

The new norm for corporate travel

Quang Ninh, a rising MICE star

6 tips on how to deal with a postponed event

Pacto gives back



KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

Convention venues are finding innovative solutions to stay relevant in a constantly evolving and challenging market

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Zoom in but don't zone out



Karen Yue
Group Editor

On April 29, my colleagues at TTG Events business unit and industry colleagues conducted our first TTG Conversations webinar. We spent a quick one hour discussing how programming and executing conferences and tradeshow would change as a result of the pandemic forcing physical events to be moved online.

The entire discussion and bulk of questions from the audience sought ideas and solutions for the new landscape of business events.

Later, I realised we did not tackle an equally important question: how do we avoid inflicting our audience with video call fatigue?

A *World Economic Forum* article, published on May 6, highlighted the reality of video call fatigue – which is “the feeling of being worn out by endless virtual meetings, chats and quizzes”. Psychologists suggested that video call fatigue could be caused by over-scheduling ourselves on such calls, challenges of processing non-verbal cues such as body language, and additional self-presentational efforts.

Hands up those of you who feel that you've got to make more use of your time now that you are working from home, or perhaps you've got to justify your value as a staff and team player in these challenging times, even if that wasn't demanded of you from your managers? And so, you pack on back-to-back webinars on top of daily internal virtual meetings with colleagues, while juggling deadlines and additional family responsibilities presented by lockdowns.

Toss in patchy Internet connection, mysterious non-verbal cues that threaten to break down communications, distractions as well as your pining for real human interaction and not yet another virtual social wine session, and you've got yourself a sizzling pot of mental stress.

Specialists have advised putting in regular technology breaks as well as intervals between virtual meetings to stave off video call fatigue. Event organisers who are taking their content online will need to bear this in mind, and allow for suitable intervals or vary the form of content delivery and interaction to prevent the audience from zoning out.

They also have to contend with information overload from the variety of daily webinars – more than the number of physical conferences during pre-pandemic.

The good news is, events organisers are discovering new challenges and learning new solutions as they go along with the virtual event movement, and they will perfect the formula soon enough.



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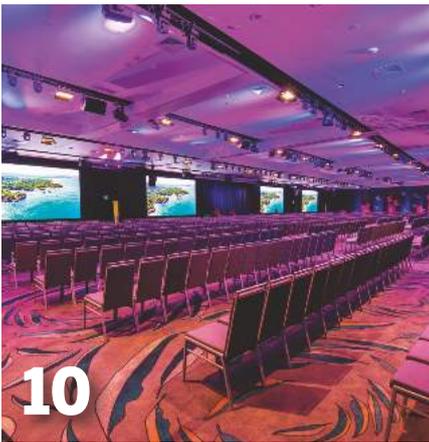
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TOP 5 HEADLINES THIS MONTH



▲ From left: ICC Sydney in Australia; venues will need to reassure visitors that their facilities will be kept even cleaner when events return

Singapore births framework for tourism recovery, development

To help tourism businesses tide through the downtime amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the Singapore Tourism Board has developed a new framework featuring new platforms for easier digitisation and potentially faster recovery.

Australian MICE sector outlines road to recovery

Business events in Australia could take place as early as July according to the three-step COVIDSafe Australia recovery plan. The Australian government has also made a distinction between mass gatherings and B2B events such as conferences and exhibitions, a positive move for the sector.

Event venues scrub up for a new normal around hygiene

Health checks and enhanced cleaning procedures imposed by event venues during the Covid-19 outbreak will likely become the new

normal when governments lift bans on public gatherings as infections come under better control.

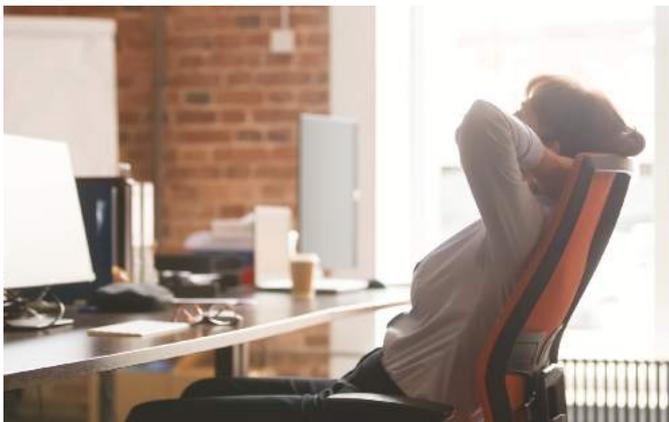
UFI asks members to lobby for exhibitions kickstart

UFI members were urged to build on the global exhibition association's newly-released global framework for hosting exhibitions and trade fairs post-Covid-19, and present their adapted framework to the authorities to lobby for a license from their governments to resume such events.

Thailand's MICE stakeholders hold out hope that 4Q2020 will be turning point

Thailand's business events stakeholders are expecting business to resume from 4Q2020, and they foresee that sustainability, alongside health and safety, will be key concerns moving forward, as well as the pick up in a physical-digital hybrid event format.

PERSPECTIVES



Make use of virtual solutions to add value to an event

The value of face-to-face interaction will never fade away in lieu of virtual events. Will Kataria, director of sales with Cvent Singapore, shares how online solutions can instead, play a supportive role.

How companies can better support employees' mental health and wellbeing during Covid-19

Low Kiang Wei, medical director at International SOS, encourages companies to focus on the wellbeing of their employees during this period of social isolation, as well as think about modifying travel policies to fit a post-Covid-19 world.



ONE MINUTE with IT&CM Events



No Change To Dates: 3 to 5 August 2020

Despite the challenges of coming together physically this year, we're committed to keeping vital industry conversations, interactions and engagements alive. Keep these dates saved in your calendar and let's meet virtually from wherever you are in the world!



Stay Tuned For New 2020 Virtual Programme and Highlights By June

The event is staying true to its value proposition of delivering business, learning and networking opportunities between international and Chinese suppliers, buyers and industry professionals at large. Meetings, peer-sharing, and collaboration are more vital than ever before in leading this industry on its road to recovery. Details on how you can be a part of doing this virtually will be released by June. Keep these dates saved in your calendar and let's meet virtually from wherever you are in the world!



Physical event in Shanghai, China deferred to 23 to 25 March 2021

Be sure to save the dates. We're looking forward to welcoming you back to our physical IT&CM China and CTW China event experience in 2021. Nothing can beat the professional camaraderie and much anticipated interaction of coming together in-person after this year-long social hiatus.

REGISTER TO BE THE FIRST TO RECEIVE UPDATES

Our team will also be in touch with confirmed and interested participants to support their transition to this year's virtual show format and the 2021 physical event.

We'll also like to hear your thoughts on what you would value in a virtual event and how we can further support your recovery efforts.



SCAN HERE TO REGISTER NOW!

www.itcmchina.com

CONNECT

Q&A

Lisa Hopkins takes control of Conventions & Incentives New Zealand as chief executive in challenging times, but she maintains an air of optimism, believing that there are pockets of opportunity the industry can leverage.



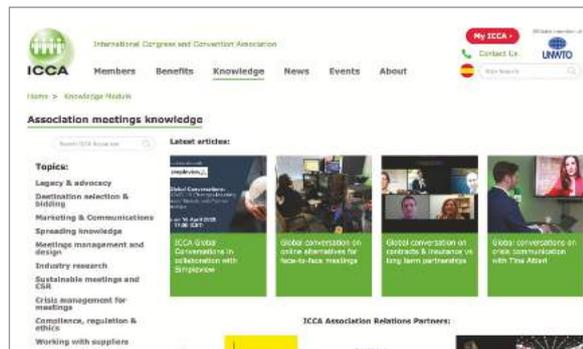
Max Boontawe Jantasuan, president of the new Society for Incentive Travel Excellence Thailand chapter and founding CEO of Events Travel Asia Group, says the pandemic is presenting his industry peers a chance to rethink and refresh their business.



WEBINARS

► TTG Asia Media debuted TTG Conversations webinar series at the end of April to connect industry peers whose ability to meet and discuss key business issues has been disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. New sessions will surface every four to six weeks to tackle the latest developments and talking points.

www.ttgmerce.com/videos



◀ ICCA regularly runs webinars on a variety of meetings topics such as impacts on planner and supplier relationships, how to virtualise meetings, crisis communication, and contracts and insurance versus long-term partnerships.

www.iccaworld.org/knowledge

► GBTA offers a series of pertinent and relevant industry-related webinars which can be applied towards career development. Recent topics include trends in virtual payments, innovative technology products that can be harnessed for this unprecedented period, and the industry's road to recovery.

www.gbta.org/professional-development/programs-by-format/upcoming-webinars-and-online-trainings#industry





Patrick Rodriguez

The Ian Potter Queen's Hall



Regal rooms

The Ian Potter Queen's Hall offers a unique event space inside Victoria's historic State Library. Both regal and glamorous, the venue is one of Melbourne's newest for events after being closed to the public for 16 years, following a redevelopment last December as part of an A\$88.1 million (US\$57.8 million) project.

The space now functions as a 1,019m² public reading room by day and is home to the library's Australian literature, chess and bridge collections. After 17.00 daily, it offers events a special space rich in heritage architecture and 19th-century design featuring Corinthian pillars, ceiling skylights and 1920s murals.

Its high ceilings and timber floor have been carefully restored to reveal the original grandeur of the hall that first opened in 1856. The overhead skylights have also been revealed after temporary measures to protect it following a dramatic thunderstorm that shattered its glass in 1901 blocked out the light.

Now hailed as the crown jewel of the State Library, the reactivated Ian Potter Queen's Hall is also connected to the stunning La Trobe Reading Room, a reopened space surrounded by a panopticon of six tiered levels topped with its famous dome. Around 220 guests can be hosted within at the long oak tables, which surround a raised platform that emcees can use. The reading room can also serve as a breakout room with wow impact on entry or a space for mingling, good for 450 in cocktail-style.



Patrick Rodriguez

La Trobe Reading Room



Cam Ranh welcomes a Mövenpick

Mövenpick Hotels and Resorts has opened the 500-key beachfront resort in central Vietnam's up-and-coming destination, Cam Ranh.

Located along Bai Dai Beach in Khánh Hòa province, six kilometres from Cam Ranh Airport, the resort offers 118 one- to three-bedroom pool villas, as well as 382 apartments. Among the apartments are 250 contemporary rooms designed by Hirsch Bedner Associates, as well as 132 studio apartments for long-stay guests, each boasting a fully-furnished kitchenette, and spacious living and dining areas.

Events can be held at one of the resort's six multifunction rooms. With a seating capacity of 800 persons, the grand ballroom also has an 850m² outdoor lawn area, where team-buildings or evening cocktails can be held.

Business travellers with their families in tow can make use of the family-friendly facilities in the resort, including an adventure rope park, two club areas for teenagers and younger children, as well as kids' pool complete with a waterslide. Other facilities include five F&B options, a tennis court, a multipurpose sports field, and a 1,100m² Serenity Spa with its 23 treatment rooms and a wellness bistro.

Oakwood opens third outpost in Jakarta



Oakwood Apartments PIK Jakarta has opened its doors in the Pantai Indah Kapuk (PIK) neighbourhood, northern Jakarta; the first service apartment under an international brand to open in PIK.

Featuring 151 fully-furnished studio to three-bedroom apartments, the serviced residence is located within a 15 minutes' drive from the Soekarno-Hatta International Airport.

All apartments from the one-bedroom deluxe tier onward feature a separate living and dining space, with the larger ones featuring more spacious areas, suitable for private dinners.

Facilities include indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a kids' swimming pool and playground, a fitness centre, the Oakwood Restaurant, and meeting rooms.



From left: A safe and healthy meeting environment will be an important consideration especially in the future; uniforms of frontline staff will be disinfected

AsiaWorld-Expo installs CLeanTech disinfection system

AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) is said to be the world's first exhibition and event venue to deploy the CLeanTech disinfection installation and advanced air purification technology, in a move as it readies itself for the eventual turn in business once Covid-19 blows over.

CLeanTech is a three-in-one disinfection installation combining a suite of technologies including BioEm Air Sanitising and Purifying technology, Aegis Intelligence and negative room pressure design.

Visitors will encounter the device prior to event halls, and the door

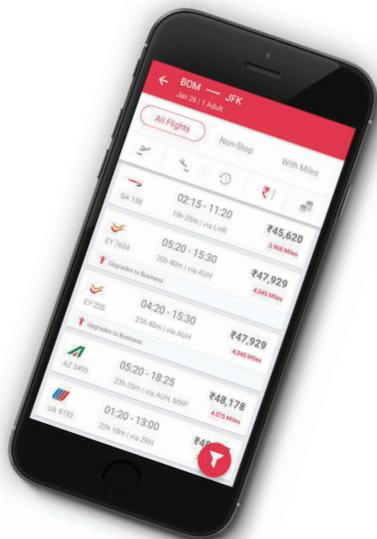
will open automatically once they pass through the built-in temperature check. The device will also help sanitise visitor's outfits and carry-on items of visitors in 12 seconds.

In addition, BioEm is a natural botanical disinfection solution that can kill a variety of viruses, while Aegis Intelligence is used to purify venue facilities such as doors and door handles at major entrances, escalator handrails, washrooms and chairs in the restaurant. The cleaning will also be done for the uniforms of frontline staff.

Sammy Tsui, founder and managing director, BioEm Air Sanitising Technology, said that he hopes this disinfection technology will "strengthen the confidence of exhibitors and visitors alike, contributing to the acceleration of the economic recovery of the Hong Kong C&E industry".

Irene Chan, CEO of AsiaWorld-Expo Management, added: "Once Covid-19 is under control, we are fully ready to bring back various large-scale exhibitions and exciting events in collaboration with our stakeholders.

"A safe and healthy environment is equally important as the state-of-the-art facilities. AsiaWorld-Expo has maintained close communication with organisers and we have high confidence in the future prospects."



Element and Zenmer partner to take booking tool global

Corporate travel systems reseller Element Travel Technology has partnered with travel technology company Zenmer to take the latter's latest advanced booking tool to TMCs and corporates across the globe.

Headquartered in India, Zenmer builds booking solutions for TMCs that connect with all GDSs, NDC, direct airline connects and hotel consolidators and aggregators.

This latest product has been developed for corporate travellers that want a leisure experience when using an enterprise corporate booking tool.

Currently, Zenmer supports business travel for more than 200 corporates, mainly in India. Its platform allows TMCs to self-manage the commercials, suppliers, back-office, and management information while corporates are able to configure the travel policies, approvals, and reporting.

Element will be consulting, advising and providing support for the tool for new and existing TMC clients across the world, especially small- and medium-sized TMCs.

Show's on against all odds

Protests and social unrest in Hong Kong fail to dampen the joint Cosmoprof Asia and Cosmopack Asia events, thanks to the team's resilience and persistence.

Caroline Boey reports

Hot idea

Offer buyer-centric incentives along with a telemarketing campaign to boost buyer count

Brief

Launched in 1996, Cosmoprof Asia is the region's leading B2B international beauty trade show. With the "1 Fair 2 Venues" formula introduced since 2016, Cosmopack Asia at AsiaWorld-Expo is home to all kinds of pack and original equipment manufacturer suppliers, while Cosmoprof Asia at Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre housed exhibitors of finished products.

The 24th edition of the show, like other Hong Kong-based events, faced the ongoing protests and social unrest which began in June 2019. But despite ongoing protests and social unrest, the 2019 edition was held as per normal. In fact, last year's tradeshow grew five per cent compared to 2018 in terms of exhibition area.

Highlights

To drive innovation and enrich the experience of attendees, Mimi Yeung, senior project manager, said the MEXME Factory showcased the development and production of a revolutionary all-in-one cosmetic tool, designed by international design agency centdegrés, in collaboration with leading companies exhibiting at Cosmopack Asia.



FAST FACTS

Event comprising
Cosmoprof Asia and
Cosmopack Asia

Organiser
BolognaFiere Group and Informa Market

Venue
Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre
(Cosmoprof Asia) and
AsiaWorld-Expo (Cosmopack Asia)

Date
November 13-15, 2019 (Cosmoprof Asia) and
November 12-14, 2019 (Cosmopack Asia)

Attendance
2,955 exhibitors from 48 countries and
40,046 visitors from 129 countries

Meanwhile, Cosmolab, the project done in partnership with Opal Cosmetics, focused on aromatherapy and fragrances, where visitors learnt how different scents can influence emotions, Yeung shared.

CosmoTalks sessions across both venues provided market updates and insights, while Cosmotrends Gallery showcased the most interesting products and the upcoming trends of the beauty community.

Lastly, the Cosmoprof and Cosmopack Asia Awards Ceremony held on November 13 celebrated the most outstanding products and industrial solutions.

Challenges

The unprecedented situation in Hong Kong made visiting for foreigners challenging in 2019 across all industries.

Yeung commented: "Still, Cosmoprof Asia is an important event for business and trading for the beauty industry and has many stakeholders counting on the show to continue in November. The challenge was how to create a safe and efficient environment for all participants.

To assure the safety and security of attendees, measures introduced included tightened access control, increasing the number of security staff, monitoring real-time protests, updating attendees on the latest situation in Hong Kong, and making special transport arrangements.

Alice Suen, event director, Cosmoprof Asia, commented: "The saying 'tide over the difficult times' best describes our mindset. With the extremely fluid situation and the unprecedented challenge, it was really tough."

Several enticing ideas were also implemented, such as offering buyer-centric incentives with 10,000 complimentary hotel room nights available to buyers nominated by exhibitors, and hotel sponsorship for some 300 VIP buyers from South-east Asia and China. A massive telemarketing campaign targeting 30,000 Asian and global buyers was also mounted.

Regardless, she attributed the show's success to the relentless momentum of the staff and the high level of dedication and professionalism of the different local and overseas planning to successfully deliver Cosmoprof Asia.

New challenges with online shift

Paradigm shifts on programming and monetising opportunities are needed to sustain virtual events. By [Rachel AJ Lee](#)



The extended reliance on online meeting technology during the ongoing pandemic has allowed business event organisers to be more attuned to virtual event formats, planting the seed for a hybrid model even after travel resumes and mass gatherings are allowed again.

This expectation was put forth by panellists who participated in the hour-long *TTG Conversations: The end of events as we know it?* webinar – the first of a series created by TTG Asia Media to help industry players stay connected during the disruptions caused by Covid-19.

Held on April 29, the webinar chaired by group editor Karen Yue featured four speakers: Iain Bitran, executive director, The International Society for Professional Innovation Management (ISPIM); Veemal Gungadin, CEO, GlobalSign.In; Joe Ciliberto, global director-sales and marketing, EventsAir; and Cheryl Tan, head of events, TTG Events.

With varied levels of border controls across the world likely to remain in the coming months, corporate restrictions on travel are not set to loosen anytime soon. As such, physical conferences and tradeshows can continue to expect challenges in terms of attracting international attendees. The panelists opined that a mix of face-to-face and virtual events will become a solution to ensure healthy participation.

Gungadin cautioned that event organisers will, however, need to rethink their event programming instead of just replicating a physical event online.

▲ Hybrid events may well be the future of the MICE industry

“It requires a whole new thought process... to build a great online attendee experience,” he remarked, adding that organisers must ensure virtual events are “seamless for attendees”. To achieve this, functions such as sign-on, live streaming, breakout features and Q&A capabilities should be available on a single platform.

Gungadin also emphasised that the content aspect of virtual events “is just going to get better and better very quickly” as organisers gain experience.

“Content quality has always been critical for any event. With physical events, you can play up the overall experience with great food, a stellar venue and (other elements at) the gathering. But online, you have only just the content (to impress the audience),” he added.

Additionally, delegates are often motivated to participate in events for networking purposes. Hence, organisers are also being challenged to create new ways to socialise online.

For the annual ISPIM Innovation Conference – which has been transformed into a virtual event from a live one in Berlin this June – Bitran shared that his team is preparing unique social activities. These include a pre-event live concert featuring bands from Portugal and Germany, and a professional DJ spinning live from Penang while delegates join in with their own cocktails remotely.

Meanwhile, Ciliberto suggested that gamification could be employed to encourage online audience engagement. He explained that delegates could earn points by joining sessions or answering trivia questions; with the points being used to redeem digital gifts like a Starbucks gift card.

One other topic brought up was a common misconception surrounding virtual events – the cost. While organising a virtual event requires just as much effort as planning a physical one, with cost savings from venue rental and F&B being channelled instead to technology and technical support, Bitran said it was common for the audience to believe that virtual events should be free to attend.

“It is critical to monetise a virtual event as you do with a physical event,” said Ciliberto, who suggested that organisers facilitate paid one-to-one engagements online, bring advertising opportunities onto the interface, and allow sponsors to facilitate or speak on webinars.

“You want your event to have good ROI, be it in terms of good engagement or financial benefits. There needs to be some (way to achieve) sustainability,” he added.

At present, Bitran’s team is implementing honour-based pricing for the virtual ISPIM Innovation Conference; delegates who can afford it can offer to pay more. “An ISPIM conference usually costs around 800 euros (US\$864) to attend, but a fair amount now would be around 300 euros,” he said.

Another group of industry players that would need to adapt to the industry’s shift to hybrid events are venues. Tan shared that Wi-Fi infrastructure, service support and technical know-how will influence her venue decision-making.

“(We are looking for) insights from the venue on how to work with their space (in delivering a hybrid event). Having that ability to help organisers conceptualise what they could achieve would make the venue more compelling,” she noted.
– Additional reporting by Karen Yue

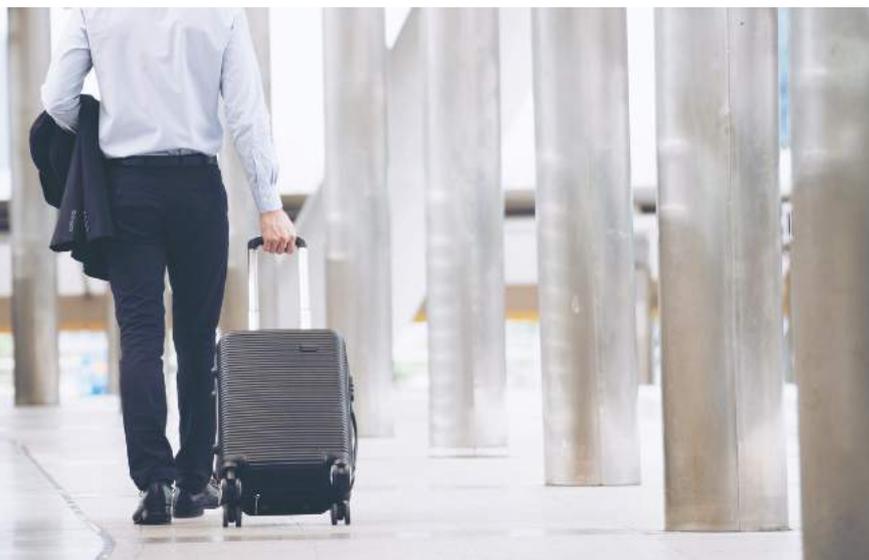
“It is critical to monetise a virtual event as you do with a physical event.”

Joe Ciliberto

Global director-sales and marketing, EventsAir

A new normal

Travel managers will have to be nimble, and ready to do more for their travellers post-Covid-19, writes **Caroline Boey**



US-based corporate travel managers are bracing for hefty price tags in the “new normal” travel programme when business trips restart, while industry observers stress that the ecosystem and standardisation of services across the entire supply chain will be critical.

These highlights were shared during the first CTC – Corporate Travel Community Online Masterclass webinar, titled Towards The New Normal Travel Programme.

Although so much about the “new normal” is still unknown, speakers were unequivocal about companies having to be dynamic and to adapt to whatever unfolds, and that there are opportunities for those who are able to meet the needs of an increasingly scrutinising consumer where safety, security and health have become even more important.

With business travel post-Covid-19 based on “paying for safety”, the discussion posited that air tickets could skyrocket to US\$10,000, but it was uncertain what the tolerance is.

Peter Harbison, chairman emeritus, CAPA - Centre for Aviation, is optimistic that beleaguered airlines operating in big domestic markets will bounce back quickly. However, it would be a more difficult environment for international carriers with grounded longhaul fleets as well as for smaller players, resulting in fewer and more expensive services, and fewer direct routes.

Keeping in mind social distancing and other Covid-19 prevention measures, which might still be in place, Harbison pointed out that air travel would require “a significant amount of standardisation” if travellers have to transfer from one airline to another, adding that “governments have a massive and important role to play in agreeing on standards that are acceptable”.

▲ Companies will need to consider differing health and economic conditions of destinations when adjusting their corporate travel policies

He commented that travel on a global basis would be “lumpy” and it would be necessary to renegotiate a multilateral agreement.

Eric Bailey, global director travel, venue source & payment, Microsoft, is expecting “some big changes at how we look at things” in the “new normal”.

Bailey commented that while the airlines could “centralise and control how people can feel safe... and airlines do better than what people think, the worry is about the in-between transition, the random driver, the random car”.

He added that having no control about their situation in the trip process is what makes travellers the most nervous.

Bailey said travel policy for “absolutely essential” trips will not change, but companies will need to “balance it out (based on economic and health considerations)” as every destination is different.

He shared that discussions for Microsoft-only hotels with no other guests apart from its employees and a touchless door-to-door experience – from home to airport to hotel and back – were being looked into.

However, the availability of a Covid-19 vaccine would create a very different “new normal”, according to Bruce Finch, newly-retired former senior director, global travel & meeting services, Autodesk.

Meanwhile, Bailey believes companies are likely to adopt a strategy where 50 per cent of meetings will still be face-to-face and the rest online, but the model will be more “personal” than what is available today.

In reply to moderator, Benson Tang, CTC’s executive director, if RFPs would become more stringent, Bailey said it was “unknown still” for July negotiations as “nobody has answered the questions”.

Microsoft would be asking for much more details, Bailey shared, but admitted that the company itself did not know what the new criteria would be post-Covid-19, if in two years social distancing and touchless experiences would continue.

With the pandemic making safety and health core principles, the panellists agreed that travel managers would have to be dynamic and adjust to changing regulations and new demands.

Suppliers that can cater to the needs of the “scrutinising consumer” have huge opportunities to make money, and Finch said new supplier contracts will see travel managers asking interesting questions.

With the rise of demanding consumers who are ultra concerned about security and health, Harbison believes companies will resolve the issue with more individual travel and the use of corporate jets and private services.

Bailey said nobody knows how the role of TMCs will change, but they must go beyond just booking the air ticket, hotel and transport.

On the positive side, Finch said the “new normal” could spur demand for NDC (New Distribution Capability) if it can perform more “progressive tasks”, with Harbison adding that if air travel is high-risk, NDC would become more important for full-service carriers in the corporate travel segment.

Harbison pointed out that the rich content of NDC would have a big leg-up and enhance a full-service airline’s competitive edge, while the role of LCCs would be redefined and serve a discretionary market.

On other issues discussed, Bailey said risk of data, personal safety and health were going to become bigger, and they were “billion-dollar issues”, adding that corporates would be willing to pay huge premiums if they find “real value” in a service that nobody else offers.

Finch opined that companies wanting to maintain a high level of duty of care would have to pick up the slack if travel insurance could not provide wider coverage in a more risky travel landscape post-Covid-19.



Keeping up with the times

Convention venues are finding innovative solutions to stay relevant in a constantly evolving and challenging market. **Adelaine Ng, Pamela Chow, S Puvaneswary, and Anne Somanas** report

Recent years have seen the meteoric rise in large industrial warehouses, museums and libraries pivoting as venues, spurring convention centres across Asia-Pacific to stand out in an increasingly competitive business events sector.

What has resulted are both hardware improvements – such as innovative modular spaces and the addition of a go-kart circuit – and software upgrades such as sustainability policies and a locally-focused menu offering.

VERSATILITY EDGE

IMPACT – a commercial complex in Bangkok, Thailand comprising

an arena, convention centre and exhibition halls – hosts over 490 events and 15 million people annually, but Loy Joon How, general manager of Impact Exhibitions Management, told *TTGmice* that sometimes creativity meant taking events outside.

“In keeping up with creative requirements from event planners and clients, we are constantly looking beyond our private function spaces, especially at outdoor or non-conventional indoor venues that we can use to support unique meetings,” said Loy.

Aside from its 140,000m² of indoor space, the complex is also home to an outdoor waterfront area, sports club, tennis academy,

and electric go-kart racing circuit. These spaces can be arranged for private use.

Over in Singapore, Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) has chosen to bring the outside in. Its junior ballroom now sports a zen garden patio.

A number of its medium-sized function rooms have also been reconfigured, and can now be combined into a junior ballroom, with a capacity of 420 guests in a round-table setup.

Such enhanced spaces will cater to an emerging style of “experiential business-leisure events”, accompanied by “more demand for inspirational ‘TED Talk’ style conferences over conventional technical content or keynote sessions”, described an RWS spokesperson.

TECHNOLOGY BOOST

As the Covid-19 pandemic forces events online and encourages hybrid online/offline events to take root, it is no surprise that venues are boosting their technology capabilities.

As part of RWS’ ongoing transformation into RWS 2.0 – a S\$4.5 billion (US\$3.2 billion) mega expansion project, the Resorts World Convention Centre has welcomed Singapore’s largest 270-degree projection screen in the Resorts World Ballroom, and state-of-the-art large venue projectors with the widest colour spectrum in the industry.

Also in Singapore, SingEx Venues – the venue operator of Singapore EXPO and MAX Atria – introduced a suite of new facilities and services in January 2020.

These include smart, sustainable and acoustically-treated modular spaces FleX; as well as high-tech plenary hall ApeX with customisable audiovisual and digital elements, telescopic seating and a 54x5m configurable screen. The venue's F&B has also been upgraded with research and development capabilities, while its central production kitchen able to cater for more than 1,000 guests concurrently.

SingEx Venues has also evolved beyond its initial function as a venue provider to provide Xpert, an in-house event planning service for event organisers.

Across the causeway in Malaysia, Angeline van den Broecke, director of global business development and marketing at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, shared that technology adoption and integration has always been a "major investment priority".

She indicated this commitment to remaining agile has been "particularly advantageous in current times", where there is a growing demand for virtual audience participation and remote access to content, event programmes and digital communication tools.

MULTISENSORY PUSH

For years, convention centres have realised that they have to be more than just venues, and intensified competition from unique spaces has made this reality even more true.

Darwin Convention Centre has chosen to find its way to delegates' heart via the belly. It

"We have been rolling out our digitalisation strategy progressively and have acquired new audiovisual equipment and upgraded our IT backbone and infrastructure."

Angeline van den Broecke

Director, global business development and marketing, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre



"In keeping up with unique and creative requirements from event planners and clients, we are constantly looking beyond our private function space offerings..."

Loy Joon How

General manager, Impact Exhibitions Management



launched its Seven Seasons menu, based on cultural practices by the traditional owners of the Darwin region. The concept moves beyond Aboriginal food to include a visual and sound experience for a sensory cultural immersion.

Similarly, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has also evolved its dining to offer EAT stations that theatrically displays food options so that charcuterie can "literally fall on your plate".

The stations are a more sophisticated version of elevated food platters that echo cafe or street food, with a goal of transporting guests to Chinatown or Melbourne's laneways.

Meanwhile, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre serves up a Malaysia on a Plate culinary experience, featuring authentic local flavours both on its events menu as well as at its F&B outlets, Parkview Cafe and Cafe88.

In addition, Van den Broecke shared that the Centre is part of the Malaysia Iconic Experience in Kuala Lumpur with KLCC Property Holdings, which "promotes the integrated precinct as a tourism destination with several attractions and recreational facilities", helping to expand the visitor experience beyond a conference programme.

RWS too, is aiming for a similar integrated precinct selling point. As part of RWS 2.0, the resort is enhancing its existing attractions such

as Universal Studios Singapore and S.E.A Aquarium, and will be introducing a new waterfront lifestyle complex with two new destination hotels and an adventure dining playhouse.

GOING EVEN GREENER

In terms of sustainability, Australia's convention centres have pushed the boundaries by having more than sustainability policies in place.

MCEC and ICC Sydney both appointed a full-time sustainability staff to demonstrate their commitment to the cause.

"Sam's brief is simple," said MCEC's CEO Peter King of his recently-appointed sustainability manager Samantha Ferrier. "To seek out best practice in green, eco-friendly options and make it easier and more cost-effective for customers to incorporate eco-friendly practices into their events."

To that end, Ferrier shared that MCEC has appointed Australia's first 100 per cent tree-to-cup carbon offset coffee company as their official supplier. "We've (also) installed 36 permanent Food Cubes on our courtyard that will become an event focal point. Each cube can grow 25kg of produce and will be used to grow herbs and other food for (our cafe)," she elaborated.

Meanwhile, ICC Sydney's commercial kitchens are being serviced by solar hot water, while event planners are given a Sustainable Event Guide checklist that helps them work towards environmental goals, such as a plastic-free event.

Adelaide Convention Centre and Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre have made their environmental credentials known by becoming joint winners of the first venues in the world to achieve the coveted EarthCheck Platinum Certification.

Choices, choices

Event planners are spoilt for choice, as Asia-Pacific is welcoming a host of new and upcoming convention centres

AUSTRALIA

Sunshine Coast Convention Centre

Located on a beach in Queensland's Sunshine Coast, Sunshine Coast Convention Centre (SCCC) offers a conferencing venue that inspires plenty of ideas and possibilities with its immediate connection to nature.

The centre is situated at the Novotel Sunshine Coast Resort, which means events can be hosted in spaces that provide more of a resort feel than a closed-in conference room.

When combined with the resort's facilities, seven areas are offered for meetings and events, including the main Minyama room which caters for 1,500 delegates in a theatre setup or 1,100 for a gala dinner.

The Minyama room itself is divisible into four rooms. A second main conference space is the Wandiny Room, designed for large scale plenary, trade and gala functions and seats up to 1,200 delegates theatre-style.

Few convention centres can rival SSCC's outdoor offerings. They include a sandy beach on a lagoon for 400 ban-

quet-style, a bush venue with a bonfire for 200 in a cocktail-setting, or a lagoon experience where 180 guests can dine floating across the water. – **Adelaine Ng**

CHINA

Shenzhen World Exhibition & Convention Center

Shenzhen World is located in the city's Baoan District, close to Shenzhen Airport, and is within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area.

With the completion of its Phase 1 at the end of last year, the venue offers 400,000m² of flexible exhibition and meeting space. Event planners can take their pick of 16 20,000m² column-free exhibition halls; three speciality halls, one of which can hold 12,500 people; and more than 130 meeting rooms.

There is also a 35,000m² outdoor exhibition space on the South Plaza.

Once Phase 2 is complete, the venue will boast a total of 500,000m² of exhibition space, making it the largest in the world.

Built with sustainable green principles – think largest rainwater collection system and efficient energy consumption – there are also four rooftop gardens with views of the city that can be booked by event organisers.

Other facilities include restaurants, convenience stores and coffee shops.

– **Caroline Boey**



◀ Clockwise from left: Sunshine Coast Convention Centre; Shenzhen World Exhibition & Convention Center; Pacifico Yokohama North





▲ Clockwise from above: Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre; Sabah International Convention Centre; Nara Prefectural Convention Center

JAPAN

Nara Prefectural Convention Center

Designed to bring tourism and exchange to the heart of Nara, this new facility is located in the centre of the city on its two main roads.

It is surrounded by UNESCO World Heritage buildings as well as popular tourism sites, including Todaji Temple and Nara Park to the east, and Heijo Palace and Yakushiji Temple to the west.

At 2,100m², the centre's Convention Hall can accommodate 2,000 pax in theatre-style, while 14 small- and medium-sized conference rooms span the first and second floors.

Tempyo Square, a roofed, multipurpose outdoor space, offers flexible, tiered seating for concerts or other performances. Nearby is the Tourism Promotion Building, which features a multipurpose hall suitable for 500 pax, as well as F&B outlets and stores.

A bus centre is located on the west side of the facility, from where it is a 90-minute ride to Kansai International Airport. – **Kathryn Wortley**

Pacifico Yokohama North

At 22km from Tokyo International Airport and 100km from Narita International Airport, Pacifico Yokohama North is highly accessible.

It is located in the popular waterside district of Yokohama, a city famed for its bustling Chinatown and cultural blend of East and West.

Pacifico Yokohama North's 6,300m² multipurpose hall is the largest of its kind in Japan. Column-free and carpeted, it can accommodate 6,000 pax in theatre-setup, or 2,000 pax for a seated banquet.

There are 42 meeting rooms totalling 6,185m², which can be separated or joined for various-sized conferences, seminars and parties. Four waiting



rooms on the first floor are also available.

The new complex is connected to the Exhibition Hall and Annex Hall of Pacifico Yokohama by a second-floor pedestrian deck. The facilities of Pacifico Yokohama North and Pacifico Yokohama can be used concurrently for large-scale events. – **Kathryn Wortley**

NEW ZEALAND

Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre

Christchurch's most anticipated new convention centre is scheduled to open in early 2021, more than nine years after the city's devastating earthquake in 2011.

Part of the ASM Global group, Te Pae sits in the heart of Christchurch CBD in the centre of New Zealand's South Island, surrounded by much of the country's famed natural beauty. It's also just 20 minutes from Christchurch International Airport.

The boutique-style centre features a 1,400-seat auditorium that can be evenly divided to offer two theatres, 24 meeting rooms and a 200 booth exhibition hall. It can accommodate up to 1,800 for banquet-style dining, and offers a 1,000-seat banquet space that overlooks the Ōtākaro Avon River.

Te Pae's architectural design was inspired by the region's natural landscape echoing the local rivers and mountains.

Initially scheduled to open in October

this year, Te Pae postponed its launch due to government-imposed lockdown restrictions on construction activity to manage the spread of Covid-19.

– **Adelaine Ng**

MALAYSIA

Sabah International Convention Centre

Located in the heart of Sabah's capital, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah International Convention Centre (SICC) is a 20-minute drive from Kota Kinabalu International Airport. It sits on a six-hectare plot, with a gross built-up area of 60,504m².

The multifunctional complex is spread over five levels and set against a backdrop that is the South China Sea.

Its floorplan comprises exhibition halls 1, 2 and 3 on the second level with 5,200m² of space, and direct access to the loading docks. VIP rooms and luxurious VVIP lounges are situated on Level 3, leading to the grand foyer of the state's first, world-class Performing Arts Hall.

On Level 4 sits an expansive column-free convention hall which is divisible into three halls. When combined, it offers 5,200m² of flexible space and can seat 4,000 people in theatre style comfortably.

Lastly, the topmost floor is dedicated to 12 state-of-the-art meeting rooms and an Executive Meeting Suite. A 7,000m² outdoor plaza is also available for hire, and that is connected to the main lobby.

– **S Puvaneswary**

Creative executions

Three convention centres, three innovative event deliveries, and some ideas for the bag

WORLD ROUTES 2019 NETWORKING EVENING & AWARDS

World Routes is the world's largest B2B aviation conference, bringing together the world's leading airlines, airports and tourism authorities for three days of meetings, industry presentations and social events. Significantly, it chose to celebrate its 25th anniversary in Adelaide last September, the first time the event had been held in the Southern Hemisphere.

▼ Guests milling about ACC's South Australian wonderland

Working with Lumino Events, Adelaide Convention Centre (ACC) played host to the outdoor welcome reception.

But its showcase function was the finale Networking Evening, where the brief was to deliver a “taste of Adelaide” with “big impact” and “lots of fun”. In response, ACC transformed their FGH Halls, a pillarless space that accommodated the conference's 1800 guests, to resemble some of South Australia's most iconic festivals and destinations.

The idea was to create a South Australian wonderland that let guests choose their own adventure at their own pace between four distinct zones.

To mark a departure from an otherwise usually structured evening, guests arrived to see a giant big top tent for a “wow” factor before moving to the Awards proceedings, which was condensed by half the usual time to

just 20 minutes and opened with a 44-piece flashmob.

The programme then seamlessly transitioned into an entertainment mode with four event zones, designed to inspire curiosity and networking. These four divided zones feature Adelaide's cabaret and fringe festivals, outback South Australia, local world-class vineyards, and a Side Show Alley with nostalgic fun games like a milk can toss.

Food was also themed for each zone, with the cabaret section featuring a giant grazing station, and the vineyard showcase offering seafood and premium wines, for example. As a grand finale, delegates enjoyed a performance by a Billy Joel Tribute band, which was chosen for its global appeal.

Following the successful event, ACC received feedback that the evening exceeded expectations for World Routes' agreed objectives and vision. – **Adelaine Ng**



Simon Casson Photography / 2019, courtesy Adelaide Convention Centre

SINGAPORE FINTECH FESTIVAL

SingEx took advantage of its resident event, Singapore Fin-Tech Festival (SFF), to parade the capabilities of its new culinary innovations.

Held in November 2019, the show was combined with the Singapore Week of Innovation and Technology (SWITCH) to form SFF x SWITCH 2019, which drew more than 60,000 participants from 140 countries.

Visitors at the festival experienced six halls packed with immersive stages and bustling exhibition booths, with each space customised to suit the event's various segments and meetings. These included the massive Plenary Stage, the SLINGSHOT Stage for start-up pitches and the SWITCH Startup Zone. The event also tapped into the culinary team's expertise and catering network to deliver tasty local fare in the style of a communal hawker centre.

A dedicated event app was also created, providing a one-stop platform for attendees to discover conference themes, understand speakers' profiles, engage in live Q&A, navigate the event floor, keep up to date with upcoming highlights through push notifications and connect with other businesses for business matching.

– Pamela Chow

ASIALAWYERS

As one of Asia's largest convention centres, IMPACT Arena and IMPACT Exhibition and Convention Center is no stranger to catering to a wide spectrum of events.

One memorable event that stood out last year was the Asian Football Cup for lawyers, bar associations and law firms.

Held in April 2019, more than 500 participants from eight Asian countries – such as Mongolia, Japan and Nepal – attended, and the 23 teams competed in over 65 football matches over four days.

Every participating team was greeted with a special welcome at the airport, and the event kicked off with a draw ceremony on the first night, to see who would square off in the first round.

Matches were staged at a foot-



▲ From above: SWITCH Startup Zone during SFF; lawyers participating in a friendly competition



ball stadium adjacent to IMPACT, and attendees were accommodated at the Novotel Bangkok Impact Hotel. The welcome cocktail reception and gala award ceremony were hosted in IMPACT's Sapphire room.

To ensure that guests would recall the experience fondly, organisers hired a professional videography and photography team to capture the event.

All the teams also got to wear their football gear to the buffet dinners and award ceremony, during which everyone enjoyed a slideshow and reel of all match highlights. The winners and runner-ups were also given trophies.

Loy Joon How, general manager of Impact Exhibitions Management, shared that planners are increasingly looking to incorporate sports and fun related-activities in their meetings.

The IMPACT Sports Club and Tennis Academy is a result of

this, and offers event organisers various ideas and ways to engage their meeting participants.

For instance, they can arrange for teambuilding activities with a wellness slant such as gym classes like Zumba or yoga, to tennis lessons, all conducted by its in-house professional trainers.

The activities can be tailored to requirements as well depending on the event's aims.

Currently, IMPACT is looking to expand its portfolio of in-house experiences.

"We are looking at establishing an international cooking school. Equipped with a fully-fledged kitchen, classrooms and living quarters, this facility will provide us the opportunity to design and incorporate cooking classes and other cooking-related activities into our meeting & event offerings as well," shared Loy.

– Anne Somanas



Fresh appeal

Changing demands of the luxury incentive segment are driving planners to suggest emerging destinations, finds **S Puvaneswary**

Ask any travel planner working with deep-pocketed incentive groups about Malaysia five years ago, and you would likely hear that capital city Kuala Lumpur is the preferred choice.

However, with greater flight connectivity, as well as a growing number of experiences and lodging catered to the niche segment today, second-tier destinations are fast becoming more popular.

Selangor, Langkawi and Penang are three such destinations that are increasingly appearing on luxury incentive itineraries. They have the culture, nature and heritage attractions the segment is looking for.

While some travel planners choose to promote

▲ Jet ski tours in Langkawi is one way to explore the archipelago's natural heritage

them as incentive destinations in their own right, others include them in a multi-destination itinerary.

One player that is tapping on the natural heritage of these emerging destinations, while still looking to capture groups that prefer to be based in the capital city, is Saini Vermeulen, executive director of B2B travel agency Within Earth Holidays.

For instance, Within Earth Holidays had a Middle Eastern incentive group choosing to be accommodated in Kuala Lumpur due to convenience, while the itinerary featured Batu Caves and Forest Research Institute in Selangor.

With incentive delegates being well-travelled individuals themselves, greater expectations of a unique destination experience is driving a growing desire for authentic cultural interactions with the local community, opined Mint Leong, managing director of Sunflower Holidays.

These changing travel demands are helping to elevate Malaysia's status as an incentive destination, and rightfully so. After all, the country is home to geological features dating back hundreds of millions of years, as well as historic, colonial towns recognised by UNESCO as living testaments to a bygone era of trade between Europe and Asia.

Accessible attractions

A short drive from Kuala Lumpur would bring incentive groups to Gombak district in the state of Selangor, home to the indigenous people or Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia.

The district's easy accessibility from the capital city – where some incentive groups choose to have their main event – has led Arokia Das, director, WL Travel, to propose its inclusion in luxury incentive itineraries.

Das shared that a day visit to Gombak is usually recommended, along with activities such as jungle trekking with local guides who point out endemic bird and animal species, as well as medicinal plants during the walk.

The company has also hosted mocktails and lunches in the Orang Asli Museum at Gombak, with approval from local authorities. The experience is an opportunity to learn about the history and traditions of the indigenous peoples through artefacts such as hunting equipment, personal garments and musical instruments.

The museum has a mini theatre hall and a library, and facilitates research into the heritage of the indigenous people.

On the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur is the Batu Caves, one of Malaysia's most popular attractions, with limestone formations that are said to be about 400 million years old. Nearby the Batu Caves is the Forest Research Institute Malaysia. Surrounded by lush greenery, the 486ha reserve presents a choice location for luxury incentive travellers to go on a jungle trek and learn about the properties of herbs and trees in its gardens and arboretums.

Arresting archipelago

Over at the state of Kedah in northern Malaysia is a charming group of 99 islands that form Langkawi. The entire archipelago was designated as a UNESCO Global Geopark back in 2007, making it another choice offbeat destination for the segment.

According to Vermeulen, taking a private cruise, exploring the islands on jet skis, or having a gala dinner on Paradise 101 – one of Langkawi day-resort islands with its own range of water activities – are some popular experiences.

Vermeulen is careful to remember that luxury incentive travellers do not simply want to experience; they also seek to be educated.

"We always include an educational element in our tours. For instance, we would introduce the concept of a Geopark to groups, as well as explain the state government's efforts to preserve the (area's) natural beauty. Guests have found such information valuable and insightful," he shared.

For Vermeulen's Within Earth Holidays, Langkawi is a premier additional destination for groups based in Kuala Lumpur, should they have more time and wish to explore more of the country.

However, Langkawi can stand as an upmarket incentive destination on its own. The archipelago has its fair share of luxury resorts, which means lodging will not be a challenge.

In fact, many of Langkawi's luxury resorts – The Datai Langkawi and The St Regis Langkawi – are located close to rainforests, making it easy to include jungle treks and nature walks in the itinerary, shared Leong.

"We have organised teambuilding activities in the forest at Langkawi... where groups have had to pitch tents, start a fire and cook their own meals. Such soft



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adventure activities are favoured by (well-heeled) incentive groups from Europe," she explained.

Cherishing Malaysia's culture

The northern Malaysian state of Penang is a popular haunt for culture vultures. Its capital George Town features restored colonial buildings and impressive Chinese clan houses, and has been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008.

It is little wonder that Penang has such colourful heritage: the city was a former port along trade routes from Great Britain and Europe through to China.

For groups to make the most of their time in Penang, Vermeulen suggested a treasure hunt incorporating two of the state's most celebrated spots.

Beginning at the Eastern & Oriental Hotel, the hunt can take travellers around George Town and end at the famed Leong San Tong Khoo Kongsi clanhouse, where guests can enjoy a sumptuous private dinner party.

The appeal of the Clan House is also apparent to Sadie Yeoh, general manager, Destination Asia Malaysia. She recommended that groups head to the building on trishaws, and learn about vanishing local trades, such as Nonya beaded shoe making, before or after dinner.

Although travel restrictions remain at the time of writing, KL Tan, president of the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents is hopeful that inbound incentive travel from Asia will rebound in early 2021.

When luxury incentive travel resumes, these emerging destinations are likely to be on planners' lists when they think of Malaysia.

"We always include an educational element in our (Langkawi) tours... Guests have found such information valuable and insightful."

Saini Vermeulen
Executive director,
Within Earth Holidays



Building a solid reputation

On track to becoming Vietnam's next major business events destination, Quang Ninh is ready to pounce once the crisis is over. By [Marissa Carruthers](#)

Slated to be Vietnam's next big business events destination, Quang Ninh is ready to make its move once the coronavirus crisis is over.

Recent years have seen a raft of developments across the province after Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) earmarked it to be developed into one of the country's MICE destinations.

Before the crisis happened, in December last year, the provincial Department of Tourism set out to boost business events tourism from 20 per cent to 35 per cent in 2020 – a figure authorities have set their eyes on once the world has been given the all-clear.

Developments helping establish the area as a choice business events destination include the opening of Van Don International Airport, Quang Ninh Exhibition of Planning and Expo Center flanked by UNESCO-listed Halong Bay

also hosted a string of international events, including ASEAN Tourism Forum 2019.

A surge in investment in Quang Ninh from major local developers, including Vingroup, SunGroup and FLC Group, as well as international hospitality brands joining the fray, such as MGallery and Wyndham, has also helped raise the destination's profile.

Ngo Tien Duc, chief operating officer at Luxury Travel Vietnam, said: "Governments are investing in upgrading the infrastructure, and tourism boards are stepping up their efforts in Quang Ninh to promote it as a MICE destination."

He added post-coronavirus, flash packages and attractive event budgets aimed at specific markets are essential to continue to promote the province.

Lan Le, managing director and co-founder of Luxperia, said the ease to organise charter flights, helicopters and private cruises in Quang Ninh will also help

▼ View of Quang Ninh Exhibition of Planning and Expo Center flanked by UNESCO-listed Halong Bay



boost its appeal with business travellers.

Noted Le: "Avoiding crowds will be an increased trend that eventually will become an expectation. Charter flights and ocean cruises can easily access Quang Ninh, so this can be promoted for the safety of VIP MICE guests."

Natural wonders

Quang Ninh's major draw is Halong Bay. The majestic natural wonder is dotted with 1,600 limestone karsts, islands and islets that form a dramatic seascape of towering pillars rising from the sea.

And Halong Bay is proving to be the perfect playground for corporate travellers, with an increasing number of cruise operators curating innovative itineraries. For example, Bhaya Group boasts a team of dedicated business events experts to arrange corporate events ranging from teambuilding activities to conferences.

In mid-2019, Bhaya Group also secured exclusive access from Halong authorities to host events at Trinh Nu Cave, which was previously off-limits to visitors. The company is currently the only cruise operator granted access to the ancient grotto, which is one of 72 that dot the UNESCO World Heritage site.

The ancient grotto provides a flexible function area that can hold events for about 200 people. Tables and chairs, stages and other arrangements can be set up on the beach or inside the cave, making it ideal for gala dinners or special gatherings.

For incentive groups, Heritage Cruises has curated a four-day, three-night itinerary that sails guests through Halong Bay and on to lesser-visited Bai Tu Long Bay and Lan Ha Bay. Activities include a tailor-made cocktail class, CSR no-plastic activities in Cat Hai village, and cultural performances.

Cultural deep dives

While Halong Bay is the province's main attraction, Quang Ninh is home to more than 620 historical and cultural attractions. A growing range of products have been developed to showcase these and also offer a glimpse into local life.

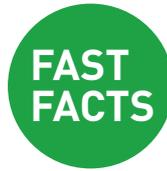
Yen Duc Village is a community-based tourism project about 60km west of Halong City. It offers a range of tours that are increasingly attracting tourists seeking authentic and immersive experiences. These range from traditional fishing and learning to cook like a local, through to water puppetry, and helping villagers farm.

Another popular attraction highly recommended is Cua Ong Temple. Standing as one of the most spiritual tourist sites in Quang Ninh, it sits on a hill and boasts stunning views across Bai Tu Long Bay.

Hop On Hop Off Vietnam also offers tours that can be curated for up to 40 pax through Halong City. Elsewhere, Northern Vietnam Helicopter Company has rolled out a series of flights offering an alternative way to view scenic Halong Bay. These can also be used for private transfer to events hosted at the bay's islands or from the airport.

Infrastructure upgrade

With VNAT having earmarked Quang Ninh, developers have also been heavily investing in accommodation to cater to the growing number of business visitors.



21

The YOY percentage increase in visitors to Quang Ninh province in the first 10 months of 2019

35

The YOY percentage increase in tourism revenue in Quang Ninh province in the first 10 months of 2019

20,000

The number of guestrooms registered across 1,400 properties, which include 214 hotels



Southeast Asia
feel the warmth

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Committee, working together to support the ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy and promote ASEAN destinations for tourism and business events.

Sun Group has opened a swathe of resorts and entertainment activities in the area, with several projects slated to open soon. This includes Yoko Onsen, a luxurious hot spring resort in Quang Hanh; Premier Village Halong Bay Resort in the heart of Ha Long city; and a three-wire cable car route on Cat Hai Island. The establishment of Van Don Economic Zone has also helped attract investment.

In line with this, FLC Group is currently carrying out several projects, including FLC Ngoc Vung Beach & Golf Resort, which will see Ngoc Vung island transformed into a high-end tourism hub by 2030. Amenities include five-star resorts and hotels, an international convention centre, golf course and safari park.

And while several major international brands have already landed on Quang Ninh's shores, Best Western is gearing up to open 13-storey Best Western Premier Sapphire Ha Long in 4Q2020. It will feature 1,008 keys and a range of facilities, including a swimming pool, fitness centre, business centre, executive lounge and retail outlets.

"Avoiding crowds will be an increased trend that eventually will become an expectation."

Lan Le

Managing director and co-founder, Luxperia



Rethinking a postponed event

Lara Burnes of Melbourne & Olympic Parks shares her thoughts on how planners can use this downtime to brainstorm about a rescheduled event and why flexibility is necessary

As we move into these unprecedented times, supporting businesses and industry has become more important than ever. With the weeks and months that lie ahead, there will be a lot of uncertainty – but what's for sure, is that we'll all be tested on how we work together and embrace opportunity.

Here are some ideas on rescheduling events to ultimately support and keep the industry afloat.

1 Contact your event partner, even if you don't know what the future holds. Venues, suppliers and partners are all doing it tough, just like you. While you might not know if you can reschedule your event, or if your event at a later date is going to be impacted, contact your partner to discuss your options.

Weigh up the possible scenarios – and begin to problem-solve together.

2 Keep moving. Detail a new timeline, even if only rough.

We must remember that venues will re-open and events will happen again soon. With this in mind, begin to map out new timelines, even if only rough. It's important to keep on top of key dates and update your event partners accordingly.

To avoid congestion when everything is back to normal again, don't be afraid to begin locking in dates. While there are still a lot of unknowns, confirming sooner than later will ensure that you have your top pick for your next event.

3 Be flexible, prepare for the what-if. Remember a lot of event organisers will be facing the same challenges.

Once life returns to normal, demand will be high for venues and event resources – this means dates and availability may be limited and you might not get your first, or second, choice on dates. Use this time to prepare for the what if, and be flexible.

Remember, dates can change. It's the experience your event offers that will be unique to your brand and the point-of-difference. Think about the busy and quieter periods of your industry and the 12-month calendar. You may even find some of your later choices in date pique interest of customers and drive a larger audience attendance.

4 Get planning. Your event might not be happening next week or month, but that doesn't mean you can't continue to refine the experience to make it the best event yet.

At Melbourne & Olympic Parks, we have five venues



▲ Margaret Court Arena is one of the multipurpose facilities under Melbourne & Olympic Parks

and all venues are busy rescheduling and planning events for when this all blows over. Our business is operating from home, and the team is available to take enquiries, plan rescheduling events or just be there for a chat over a cuppa – and a virtual hug if needed!

Ultimately, while it might not feel like business as usual, venues are here and available to continue planning as normal. Most businesses are operating remotely, with the benefit of having the time to really invest on your event. Use this 'downtime' as an opportunity to brainstorm how to make your event the best one yet.

5 Think differently and embrace change. When we emerge from this, the world will have changed and we will have adapted along the way. Embrace the changes and think about how you can incorporate them into your event.

Some of your attendees may not be able to travel due to budgets, health or simply because travel won't be a priority for their business. Work with your event partners on ways to enhance your event experience, such as working with a charity partner, local suppliers, or incorporating the digital space into your event with a live stream.

6 Be empathetic and kind. We're all in this together. People may be slower at getting back to you than usual or battling personal and professional challenges on different fronts.

Be empathetic and be kind, and remember that our actions now will shape our industry's future.

Lara Burnes is the general manager of premier events and experiences at Melbourne & Olympic Parks. Currently she is driving the newest venue Centrepiece at Melbourne Park, scheduled to open late-2021. No stranger to the events space, Burnes has over a decade's worth of experience, her most recent role a business development manager with Pan Pacific Hotels Group in Perth.

Pacto's local commitment

Tiara Maharani discovers how the travel pioneer is putting its best foot forward to give back, by leading community initiatives in the locations it is in

Having grown along with Indonesia's tourism development since the formation of Pacto in 1967, the tourism and events specialist has witnessed the impact travel and tourism has had on the environment.

What struck Raty Ning, vice president director, Pacto Convex – a division of the bigger Pacto group, in particular, was seeing waste accumulate in the ocean, rivers and landfills as the destination grew in popularity.

And Raty wanted Pacto to be part of the solution. To combat this, the group began laying out its priorities. This eventually led to the company embarking on a plastic bottle-free initiative, and setting up a conservation project this year to give back to the community.

"In the last few years, each branch office (across the Pacto group) has actively carried out activities such as cleaning up the beach and tourist destinations. This year, we want to do something bigger and more comprehensive," explained Raty.

The year's project will be centred on Rote Ndao, a regency in the emerging Indonesian destination of East Nusa Tenggara province.

To maximise the benefits of the sea for humans while maintaining healthy marine habitats, Pacto decided to collaborate with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), a global non-profit that takes a scientific approach to the conservation of sensitive ecosystems and threatened species.

"We are not experts in this area. It is better to work with institutions that have such expertise, such as TNC," Raty explained.

TNC will provide training for Rote Ndao's seaweed farmers on environmentally-friendly and sustainable methods of planting seaweed.

Following that, Pacto intends to set up a conservation kiosk. Women on the island will be trained at the kiosk to process the seaweed and make products such as soap, gelatin, lotions, syrup and candied seaweed.

Through incorporating seaweed processing innovations, it is expected that the initiative will be able to open



▲ Pacto employees are encouraged to support the company's community work

up opportunities for the women to enhance their skill set and empower them with independence.

The women will also be given training in product processing, promotion and marketing. The kiosk will then be transformed into a cooperative.

"These initiatives are just the beginning," commented Raty, who revealed that the ultimate goal is to

help the communities be independent.

Recognising that conservation is a long-term commitment which requires heavy financial investment, Raty is also considering getting the Pacto family and the tourism industry at large involved in the project.

"Currently, we are setting aside a part of the company's profits for this project. Eventually, we might raise funds from the industry to open more kiosks in other places, such as in Wakatobi (in Sulawesi Tenggara province)," shared Raty.

The company will start by encouraging Pacto's staff, friends and families to join before approaching others. In fact, Pacto's push for sustainability seems to have motivated employees to do likewise.

"I always tell my staff that when we gain our business from Indonesia, we must give back to the country, particularly to areas where visitors are drawn by natural beauty.

"A question comes to mind: how do we give back? First, we need to consider the community – the people who live there. Next, we should raise awareness of the need to preserve nature," said Raty.

To ensure the relevance of its efforts, Pacto is tailoring its sustainability projects to the conditions of the region.

For instance, one of Pacto branches has taken to planting seedlings along the coast of North Jakarta.

Besides ensuring that Pacto branches become an integral part of the local community, these projects also provide a platform to bring locals together in meaningful ways.

Raty expressed that her priority is to achieve long-term impact – sustainability efforts today must reap pay-offs down the road.

Her corporate sustainability beliefs are extended into her personal life; she takes public transportation whenever possible, carries a tumbler, and brings along a reusable bag during her grocery runs.

"Seeing what we have done to improve the lives of others is priceless. Even if we do something small, we can create a positive impact for people in the village," she concluded.

"...when we gain our business from Indonesia, we must give back to the country..."

Raty Ning
Vice president director,
Pacto Convex



Catch up: Vicki Parris

Vicki Parris, senior director of customer experience of FCM Travel Solutions Asia waxes lyrical about her love for the industry, a far cry from her circus dreams

How did you get to where you are now?

I was very green when I started in travel but was passionate about travelling and learning about peoples' experiences. It was such a compelling industry that I picked up very quickly and my career progression into leadership moved rapidly as well. The opportunities I have taken to learn from different parts of the business across multiple countries, coupled with a lot of passion, curiosity and successes have led me to where I am today.

What do you reckon is the best part of your job?

There is a lot to love when you work in travel. Experiencing new aircraft and exploring different destinations is something I will never get tired of. But the best part of my job is honestly the people I get to work with. This is an industry that works hard but has a lot of fun while doing it! Dislikes – viruses, the ensuing travel ban, the chaos caused to people's health, and stress. These are truly unprecedented times for our industry.

How do you motivate yourself daily?

I am a highly motivated person by nature, and genuinely enjoy coming to work every day. There are always challenging days, and to prepare for those, I will usually take a sunrise run or quick yoga session to clear my mind and get centred for the day ahead.

What is the highlight of your career thus far?

There have been a lot of highlights! Seeing my team members grow and achieve their own goals, stepping into leadership roles or moving into areas and positions they had worked hard towards are my biggest highlights. Also, to be recognised in the Top 40 Women in Travel globally by GBTA in 2019 was definitely in the top list!

What do your friends think you do for a living?

My family thinks I'm an international party planner as I travel a lot. They see a lot of pictures of me at work events which I love to put together for our staff to keep them motivated for doing a great job. It's not difficult to explain my role, but it almost always ends up with people wanting advice and travel tips on the next great destination.

Tell us something most people don't know about you.

I was fascinated with the circus as a child and dreamt of running away to Russia to learn the trapeze! As an adult, I have taken some classes in my spare time to learn a few tricks, and it's much harder than they make it look!

What do you do to unwind?

You can usually find me in a quirky café, drinking a great cup of coffee trying to beat my husband in a game of chess. – Rachel AJ Lee



Appointment



Hatsume Nagai



Marlon Abeyakoon



Kevin Goh



Stefan Fuchs

Anne Arrowsmith

The Brit has been promoted to corporate general manager for 137 Pillars Hotels & Resorts. She will oversee all aspects of operations for both 137 Pillars Suites & Residences Bangkok and 137 Pillars House.

Hatsume Nagai

Japan National Tourism Organization has appointed Hatsume Nagai as executive director for the Singapore market. She will lead the development and implementation of strategies to promote Japan as a preferred destination.

Herbert Laubichler-Pichler

Herbert Laubichler-Pichler has taken charge of the Alma Resort

in Vietnam's Cam Ranh peninsula. The hospitality veteran's work in Vietnam spans 14 years and includes management of properties such as The Anam.

Marlon Abeyakoon

Marlon Abeyakoon has been appointed general manager of the Avani+ Fares Maldives Resort that will open in 2021. He has spent almost two decades in hospitality with multiple international hotel brands in the UAE, the UK, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Fiji.

Kevin Goh

CapitaLand has appointed Kevin Goh as its CEO for lodging. He will concurrently serve as the CEO of the property giant's wholly owned lodging business unit, The Ascott, a role he has held since 2018.

Stefan Fuchs

Stefan Fuchs is now the general manager of Ayana Hotels in Bali. In his new role, Fuchs will be managing a trio of Ayana properties, in addition to the Ayana Resort and Spa Bali.

Stuart John Lyall

Wellness-focused hospitality group Fusion has tapped on Stuart John Lyall to manage a new Vietnam property, Fusion Suites Vung Tau, which has opened in April. He previously was in charge of the Selong Selo Resort & Residences in Lombok.

TTG TRAVEL AWARDS 2020



Cast Your Vote Now!

You Decide Who Clinches The Top Honour In The Industry

TTG Travel Awards, Asia-Pacific travel trade's most celebrated event, is back for its 31st year to honor the industry's finest and brightest. Tell us which organisation has made exemplary achievements and contributions that have raised the bar of excellence and taken the industry to greater heights.

Vote now and help your favorite travel suppliers and agencies bring home the title of being the best in the travel industry.

awards.ttgasia.com

Closing Date: 10 July 2020

An event by:



Organised by:



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TTG Travel Trade Publishing is a business group of TTG Asia Media

Award Categories

1. Travel Agency Awards

Winners in this category are decided by votes from industry suppliers.

- Best Travel Agency – Chinese Taipei
- Best Travel Agency – Hong Kong
- Best Travel Agency – India
- Best Travel Agency – Indonesia
- Best Travel Agency – Japan
- Best Travel Agency – Malaysia
- Best Travel Agency – Singapore
- Best Travel Agency – South Korea
- Best Travel Agency – Thailand
- Best Travel Agency – The Philippines
- Best Travel Agency – Vietnam
- Best Corporate Travel Agency
- Best Online Travel Agency

2. Travel Supplier Awards

Winners in this category are decided by votes from travel consultants and experts.

Airline Awards

- Best Full Service Carrier
- Best Airline – Business Class
- Best Inflight Service
- Best Boutique Airline
- Best Airline Connectivity
- Best Low-Cost Carrier

Hotels, Resorts and Serviced Residences Awards

HOTEL Chains

- Best Global Hotel Chain
- Best Regional Hotel Chain
- Best Local Hotel Chain
- Best Hotel Representation Company
- Best Luxury Hotel Brand
- Best Mid-range Hotel Brand
- Best Budget Hotel Brand

HOTELS – Individual Property

- Best Luxury Hotel
- Best Mid-range Hotel
- Best Budget Hotel
- Best Independent Hotel
- Best Boutique Hotel
- Best City Hotel – Bangkok
- Best City Hotel – Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City
- Best City Hotel – Hong Kong
- Best City Hotel – Jakarta
- Best City Hotel – Kuala Lumpur
- Best City Hotel – Macau
- Best City Hotel – Manila
- Best City Hotel – Seoul
- Best City Hotel – Singapore
- Best City Hotel – Taipei
- Best New City Hotel
- Best Airport Hotel

RESORTS – Individual Property & Serviced Residences

- Best Beach Resort
- Best Integrated Resort
- Best Serviced Residence Operator
- Best Serviced Residence (Property Level)

BT-MICE Awards

- Best Business Hotel
- Best Meetings & Conventions Hotel
- Best BT-MICE City
- Best Convention & Exhibition Centre
- Best Convention & Exhibition Bureau
- Best Events Technology Provider

Travel Services Awards

- Best Airport
- Best Airport Lounge Operator
- Best NTO (National Tourism Organisation)
- Best Tour Operator
- Best Theme Attraction
- Best Cruise Line
- Best Luxury Cruise Line
- Best River Cruise Line
- Best Car Rental Company
- Best Travel Technology Provider

3. Outstanding Achievement Awards

The winners in this category are decided by the TTG editorial team.

- Travel Personality of the Year
- Destination of the Year
- Travel Entrepreneur of the Year
- Best Travel Marketing Effort
- Most Sustainable Travel Company

4. Travel Hall of Fame

Honoring organisations that have won at least 10 consecutive years at the awards.

These special award winners will be recognised at every TTG annual awards presentation ceremony. Votes for them will not be counted.

Inducted Travel Hall of Fame honorees are:

- Singapore Airlines Limited (2002)
- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Hertz Asia Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group - The State of Exclusivity & Fascination (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Sabre Asia Pacific (2009)
- Silkair (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)
- Regal Airport Hotel (2015)
- Banyan Tree Spa (2015)
- Qatar Airways (2016)
- Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (2016)
- Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (2016)
- Royal Plaza on Scotts (2018)
- Royal Caribbean International (2018)
- Best Western International (2019)
- Travelexport (2019)
- Harbour Plaza Hotels & Resorts (2020)
- Phoenix Tours International Inc. (2020)

VOTING INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES

For Travel Agency and Travel Supplier Awards

1. Please use the correct voting form.

Voting Form A: Travel Agency Awards

For voting by hoteliers, airline staff, car rental companies, cruise operators, national tourism organisations, GDS companies and all other travel professionals (except travel consultants, tour operators and destination management companies).

Voting Form B: Travel Supplier Awards

For voting by travel consultants, tour operators and destination management companies only.

Online Voting Forms

You can also opt to vote using our online form at awards.ttgasia.com

2. Voting Criteria

Please refer to the voting criteria for each category and title to ensure that all judging is done on an equal basis.

3. Voting Rules

- Only one voting entry per person is allowed – using the voting form or online voting.
- All votes are confidential.
- Voting forms are published in selected TTG Travel Trade Publishing print titles and issues and are also available online at awards.ttgasia.com

- No responsibility will be accepted by the organisers for voting forms lost, delayed or damaged in the post.
- There are no pre-nominated contenders for any voting awards.
- The results for TTG Travel Awards 2020 are final and no correspondence will be entertained.
- Voting forms will be tabulated and evaluated by an independent auditor in Singapore.
- Voting Closes 10 July 2020.

4. Voting Form Submission

Completed voting forms are to be returned to:

SINGAPORE

Delia Ng (TTG Travel Awards 2020)
TTG Asia Media
1 Science Park Road #04-07 The Capricorn
Singapore Science Park II
Singapore 117528
Tel: (65) 6395-7575 Fax: (65) 6536-0896

HONG KONG

Ms Carol Cheng (TTG Travel Awards 2020)
TTG Asia Media
8/F, E168, 166-168 Des Voeux Road Central,
Sheung Wan, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2237-7272 Fax: (852) 2237 7227

VOTING FORM A: TRAVEL AGENCY AWARDS

For voting by • Hoteliers • Airlines staff • Car rental companies • Cruise operators • National Tourism Organisations • GDS companies • All other travel professionals (except travel consultants, tour operators and destination management companies)

VOTE ONLINE AT
awards.ttgasia.com

Criteria

Best Travel Agency in its respective category in terms of:

- Professionalism and excellence in staff.
- Best value-added services to client.
- Best use of computer technology applications towards improving efficiency and effectiveness in services provided to client.

1. Best Travel Agency– Chinese Taipei

2. Best Travel Agency – Hong Kong

3. Best Travel Agency – India

4. Best Travel Agency– Indonesia

5. Best Travel Agency – Japan

6. Best Travel Agency – Malaysia

7. Best Travel Agency – Singapore

8. Best Travel Agency – South Korea

9. Best Travel Agency – Thailand

10. Best Travel Agency – The Philippines

11. Best Travel Agency – Vietnam

12. Best Corporate Travel Agency

13. Best Online Travel Agency

VOTER INFORMATION

Name:

Job title: Company:

Address:

Country:

Telephone no.: Fax no.:

Email: Signature:

Please refer to the next page for
VOTING FORM B:
TRAVEL SUPPLIER AWARDS

VOTING CLOSES
10 JULY 2020

VOTING FORM B: TRAVEL SUPPLIER AWARDS

For voting by • Travel Consultants • Tour Operators • Destination Management Companies

Airline Awards

Criteria

Best airline in its respective category in terms of:

- Best product, services and facilities.
- Most consistent and reliable network and schedules.
- Most agent-friendly in terms of reservations, commissions, incentives, ancillary opportunities and servicing.
- Best agency outreach programmes, including trade promotions and marketing, training and relationship-building.

14. Best Full Service Carrier

15. Best Airline - Business Class

16. Best Inflight Service

17. Best Boutique Airline

18. Best Airline Connectivity

19. Best Low Cost-Carrier

Hotels, Resorts and Serviced Residences Awards

Criteria

Best Hotel Chain in its respective category in terms of:

- Most consistent in products and services.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas, incentive programmes and servicing.

Best Hotel/Resort/Serviced Residence in its respective category in terms of:

- Best services and facilities.
- Best range of value-added benefits.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.

HOTEL CHAINS

20. Best Global Hotel Chain

21. Best Regional Hotel Chain

22. Best Local Hotel Chain

23. Best Hotel Representation Company

24. Best Luxury Hotel Brand

25. Best Mid-range Hotel Brand

26. Best Budget Hotel Brand

HOTELS – Individual Property

27. Best Luxury Hotel

28. Best Mid-range Hotel

29. Best Budget Hotel

30. Best Independent Hotel

31. Best Boutique Hotel

32. Best City Hotel – Bangkok

33. Best City Hotel – Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City

34. Best City Hotel – Hong Kong

35. Best City Hotel – Jakarta

36. Best City Hotel – Kuala Lumpur

37. Best City Hotel – Macao

38. Best City Hotel – Manila

39. Best City Hotel – Seoul

40. Best City Hotel – Singapore

41. Best City Hotel – Taipei

42. Best New City Hotel

43. Best Airport Hotel

RESORTS – Individual Property

44. Best Beach Resort

45. Best Integrated Resort

SERVICED RESIDENCES

46. Best Serviced Residence Operator

47. Best Serviced Residence (Property Level)

BT-MICE Awards

Criteria

- Best services and facilities catering specifically to the BT-MICE market.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing the BT-MICE market.
- Most desirable and attractive incentives and value added services to business travellers and MICE planners.

48. Best Business Hotel

49. Best Meetings & Conventions Hotel

50. Best BT-MICE City

51. Best Convention & Exhibition Centre

52. Best Convention & Exhibition Bureau

53. Best Events Technology Provider

Travel Services Awards

Criteria

- Best product, services and facilities.
- Most consistent and reliable in delivery.
- Most innovative offerings.
- Most agent-friendly in terms of ease of booking, commissions, incentives and servicing.
- Best agency outreach programmes, including trade promotions and marketing, training and relationship-building.

54. Best Airport

55. Best Airport Lounge Operator

56. Best NTO (National Tourism Organisation)

57. Best Tour Operator

58. Best Theme Attraction

59. Best Cruise Line

60. Best Luxury Cruise Line

61. Best River Cruise Line

62. Best Car Rental Company

63. Best Travel Technology Provider

VOTER INFORMATION

Name: _____
Job title: _____ Company: _____
Address: _____
Country: _____
Telephone no.: _____ Fax no.: _____
Email: _____ Signature: _____

VOTE ONLINE AT
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VOTING CLOSES
10 JULY 2020

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