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Pivoting times for firms

Who will be the new travel players to rule the day? Dust is far from settled

By Raini Hamdi

TRAVEL companies are at a pivot point, with two industry luminaries warning the dangers for those who stay the course or are just “tweaking”.

Phocus Wright’s founder, Philip Wolf, said the need to pivot is on the rise across the industry’s value chain, affecting everyone – daring upstarts, media darlings, local players, global powerhouses, OTAs, TMCs, Asia or the Americas.



Ho: narrow the product, widen the market

“TripAdvisor and Yelp rule the day, not Frommers and Zagat. Priceline and Expedia rule travel, not American Express or Thomas Cook. Google, Yahoo, Ebay, Facebook and Twitter rule the Internet, not Microsoft.

“So I ask: Who will be the new travel players to rule the day?”

His list of pivot examples includes Priceline, which transitioned from a US, air, opaque-centric business to an international, hotel, retail-centric business; and TripAdvisor, from a B2B white label search engine to a B2C banner ad model and, again, to a CPC (cost per click) model with reviews. American Express is pivoting, spinning off its corporate travel business. Meta-search comprises many pivots in the works, said Wolf, who was keynoting ITB Asia’s opening yesterday.

“Companies should evaluate whether their current skills and assets can adequately deliver what

their new customers want. Do you still provide the products and services that matter the most?”

Quoting Eric Ries, author of *The Lean Startup*, Wolf said the litmus test for when firms should pivot is when their experiments – say, repricing – have stopped being productive.

Citing befallen Kodak, Dell and BlackBerry as examples, he warned: “The pain of embarking on a critical course correction may pale in comparison to the cost of not pivoting.”

In a related call, Ho Kwon Ping, executive chairman, Banyan Tree Holdings, keynoting National Association of Travel Agents Singapore (NATAS)/TTG Asia’s Travel Conference yesterday, addressed the issue why so many travel agencies are struggling to survive despite millions of new travellers enlarging the market.

Describing the Internet as the single most disruptive change for the travel agency business, Ho said the only way travel agencies in small markets can survive is “to specialise and globalise or regionalise at the same time”.

“In what seems to be a contradiction but is completely rational, it (the travel agency) must narrow its product focus and widen its market focus. It must become a specialised, niche player with value-add in a very large market,” Ho said.

“If you focus, for example, on cultural tours or the even more niche markets of, say, wine tours or adventure tours, you have to reach out to more than the Singapore market. The problem, of course, is that competitors exist in other national markets and they may have more local market knowledge and linguistic capabilities.

“The Singapore travel service provider in a regional market must leverage through better services and products, stronger branding and higher use of technology to create a more seamless, efficient and memorable travel

experience for consumers in the entire Asian market.”

Ram Samtani, secretary-general of NATAS and general manager of Ramesh Travel Service, agreed that the market is borderless today and the agency market should be global. But the challenge for agency owners is fear. “They are afraid of the risk, afraid it is at the expense of something else, etc. But to a certain extent, that has changed, as they realise there is no choice really. It’s not just travel agency businesses. A lot of people in the industry understand that things cannot be done the same way.”

May you cut a good deal at ITB



(From left) Singapore’s second minister for trade and industry, S Iswaran, Finland’s minister of employment and the economy, Jan Vapaavuori, and Messe Berlin’s CEO Dr Christian Goke

In brief

Matzig steps down as CEO

LUZI Matzig is handing the CEO baton of Asian Trails and Kuoni Destination Management Asia-Pacific to Laurent Kuenzle effective January 1, 2014. He will hold a strategic role as chairman. Matzig founded Asian Trails in 1999, with Kuenzle, currently group managing director, as a co-founder.

Amex in talks to spin off BT

AMERICAN EXPRESS (AMEX) is in talks to spin off its Global Business Travel (GBT) division into a separate company. It expects that GBT’s operations, business relationships and other assets would be held and operated by the joint venture entity. Smiling Tour, AMEX’s TMC in Indonesia, said: “So far, there is no impact on us.”

Preferred’s China ready

PREFERRED Hotel Group (PHG) has a new China Ready initiative designed to help its member hotels capture a larger share of the Chinese market. It will be introduced in January 2014, said Peggy Yip, PHG’s director, marketing Asia-Pacific.

She said the purpose of the programme is to manage the expectations of Chinese outbound high-end FIT travellers, while at the same time reassuring Chinese outbound agencies that their clients will be looked after at participating hotels overseas. Details of the programme are still being finalised.

PHG is also developing a simplified Chinese website, which will be launched next month.

– S Puvaneswary



India's growth slows

Rupee has stabilised but market trading down, price-sensitive

By Gracia Chiang

THE fluctuating rupee has hit Indian outbound, with some Asian sellers reporting discouraging figures this year.

The Traveller Malaysia director/general manager, Jessica Koh, has seen a 20-30 per cent dip from the market year-to-date, with trading down occurring. To avoid competing on price, the tour operator is offering differentiated products such as themed hotels and city villas.

"Malaysia is being squeezed as Indian travellers are keeping their budgets for Singapore... plus with Genting's theme park closed for renovation, they are now doing day tours or skipping us altogether," she said.

Wildlife Reserves Singapore also noted a drop of 15 per cent in tourists from India during the summer months.

However, director of its sales department, Liang Wern Ling, hopes that winter bookings would "match last year's level", given that the attractions operator had launched its River Safari product in the Indian market last



Menon: pick-up expected in 2014

week. "We hope to see a twin package combining Night Safari and River Safari, especially with our boat ride opening soon." Meanwhile, outbound market leaders like Thomas Cook and Kuoni said they are heartened that the rupee has now stabilised. Thomas Cook (India) managing director, Madhavan Menon, expects smaller growth to Asia of around 18-19 per cent this year, compared with 33 per cent growth last year.

"Once the average traveller today decides to go on holiday he will adjust his budget rather than cancel the holiday," he said.

With travellers driving a hard bargain, Menon pointed out that the challenge of popular destinations like Singapore is pricing.

While packages to the city-state now feature land as a pri-

mary component and cruise as secondary, he explained that this may be swapped in the future. Optionals are also being increased and hotels farther out of the city are being used.

Kuoni Travel (India) head, product and innovation, outbound division, Amod Thatte, said shorthaul hasn't been affected by the rupee depreciation but "it's difficult to convince the customer on product and move away from price".

On the other hand, MakeMyTrip founder and group CEO, Deep Kalra, observed that outbound to the region is growing even faster for the OTA.

He said: "There are still a lot of first-time travellers going abroad; that's why that number is growing. There is also a shift in budgets from longhaul."

"We're also taking business away from the offline people, so even if there is an overall slowdown, we're managing to buck that trend." MakeMyTrip's last fiscal quarter saw a 40 per cent rise in hotel and package transactions, besting last year's growth.

Rupiah, ringgit roil travel

By Mimi Hudoyo & SPuvaneswary

INDONESIAN and Malaysian outbound tour operators are seeing a shift in travel patterns due to their weakened currencies.

The Indonesian rupiah has dipped against the USD since end-May from 9,817 rupiah (0.90) to 11,300 to-date.

While the upper middle class travellers are unfazed by the rupiah's depreciation and continue to favour Europe, operators interviewed said the middle class is either shifting destinations or shortening their travel duration.

Travel executives expect business would be challenging next year. GTA Indonesia FIT country manager Andreas Sulaeman said: "The Lebaran holiday next year is back to back with the school holiday (July) so there will be one peak season instead of two separate ones."

"Secondly, with the general and presidential elections, travellers may want to wait-and-see; if the currency still fluctuates, they may be more cautious in spending."

To keep the business afloat,

tour operators said they will be offering attractive products by teaming up with airlines, cruise companies, overseas NTOs as well as banks in Indonesia, as they have been doing this year.

Meetings and incentives are also impacted. MICE agencies such as Panorama Tours managing director - Corporate Incentive Management, Vidya Hermanto, said: "Some of our clients actually have postponed their incentive programmes till early next year."

In Malaysia, promotional airfares to Europe are helping to mitigate the impact of the weaker ringgit on longhaul travel. Carol Sum, senior operations manager, Parlo Tours Malaysia, expects a 20 per cent increase to Central Europe and 30 per cent increase to Scandinavia and Eastern Europe in the second half of this year.

Similarly, Cooper Huang, CEO of Malaysian Harmony Tours & Travel, said packages to Central and Eastern Europe are expected to increase 25-30 per cent right up to June 2014, thanks to promotional airfares.



Vidya: incentives postponed

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'Don't alienate the silver folks'

WHILE much focus has been put on Gen Y, Asia has a rapidly growing ageing traveller base which the industry appears to be forgetting.

Kim Walker, CEO and founder of Silver Group, quoted data from Global Demographics that 30 per cent of population in the Asia-Pacific will be above 50 years old by 2018, a growth of 33 per cent between 2008 and 2018.

He also quoted various data showing they are far from 'un-cool': they make 42 per cent of all travel industry purchases online; 68 per cent use Facebook and 27 per cent use comments on TripAdvisor.

Yet, said Walker, they feel that only 20 per cent of Internet sites and 17 per cent of ads are designed for them.

"If you present to me a product that I cannot read without my glasses on, I will feel excluded. If you provide me with technology that requires me to do some instant learning on an unfamiliar platform, you are excluding me."

"We need to improve the experience for all the guests, but we have to do it in such a way that will not affect the younger users."

— Mimi Hudoyo

Cheaper Dubai soon

Incentives to build more economy is right on track, say buyers

By S Puvaneswary

TOUR operators at ITB Asia welcomed the Dubai government's initiative to bait hotel owners with financial incentives to develop more three- and four-star properties.

An outbound tour operator from Saudi Arabia, Unique Choice International CEO and managing director, Zawfir Ziard, said there is big demand for family travel from Saudi Arabia to Dubai, but the current inventory of three- and four-star hotels is lacking, especially during the peak season and when there are major events in the city.

Dubai currently has 24,406 five-star rooms, 15,659 four-star rooms and 8,825 three-star rooms.

Arabianlink Tours Sharjah director of business development, Laxman Shettigar, highlighted the vast price difference between five-star and lower-category properties.

He said five-star hotel rates in

the city range from 750-800 dirhams (US\$204-US\$218) a night; four-star, 400-450 and three-star, from 300.



Ali: great for the cash-strapped

Besides benefiting long-stay tourists, cheaper properties will also attract visitors transiting in Dubai, he said.

Sunny Augustine, executive director of White Sands Tours & Travel Dubai, said a larger inventory of mid-range hotels will give better options to visitors.

He added: "It is also in line with Emirates' network expansion plans and the government's vision of attracting 20 million international tourists by 2020."

Dubai aims to attract 20 million annual visitors by 2020, which is double the 10 million visitors registered in 2012.

Besides boosting the leisure market, Extramile Dubai assistant MICE manager, Mohamed Ali, said larger three- and four-star properties with meeting facilities and at least 200 rooms

would also help "attract MICE from price-sensitive, low-budget clientele".

Dr Ahmad Belhouli, CEO, Strategy and Tourism Sector, Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM), said: "In recent years, the number of three- and four-star establishments has increased, but it is vital that we continue to engineer the growth of this range."

"We will concentrate on ensuring we retain our reputation as a luxury destination, while also increasing the midmarket segment."

Late last month, DTCM collaborated with Dubai Municipality to give eligible hotels a concession on the standard 10 per cent Municipality Fee levied on the room rate for each night of occupancy.

Investors in new hotels will be granted a waiver on the fee for a period of four years from the date the permit to construct is granted, provided that this date is between October 1, 2013 and December 31, 2017.

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Finns up China/Japan sell

By S Puvaneswary

VISIT Finland will launch a marketing campaign next year for its top two Asian markets, China and Japan, which accounted for about 10 per cent of total foreign arrivals to Finland last year.

This is the first time the NTO will invest in an image campaign for both markets, targeting consumers in Greater Tokyo and Greater Shanghai. It will spend 600,000 euros (US\$825,240) for destination promotions in Japan and one million euros for China, said its director for trade relations, Anne Lind.

The 2014-2016 campaign will include print, online media and outdoor advertising, in addition to product campaigns which the NTO will partner with suppliers and Finnair for roadshows to China and Japan next year.

Lind added: "Through the campaign, we hope to increase the average overnight stay of Chinese travellers from 1.7 nights to three or four nights in 2016 and to have a steady 10 per cent growth per annum for Japanese visitors. We are targeting the well travelled and nature lovers from both markets."

Visit Finland also wants to promote beyond popular destinations such as Helsinki and Lapland and introduce new destinations such as Lakeland and Coastal Areas and Archipelago.

Coastal Areas and Archipelago boasts cities, old towns, historical manors and stone churches, lighthouses and national parks.

In 2012, Finland received 176,936 visitors from Japan and 100,075 visitors from China.

Nina Tahtinen, regional sales manager, international sales at Tallink Silja Line, said the company has seen a four per cent year-on-year growth from Japan and double-digit growth from China for its Baltic Sea cruises.

She added that Japanese cruise tourists tend to be a seasonal market, while the season for Chinese cruise tourists is more spread out. The company has prepared promotional materials in the local languages.

Anna-Mari Valtanen, marketing manager at City of Helsinki Tourist & Convention Bureau, said the bureau focuses on on-line campaigns for the Chinese consumers and travel trade on its Chinese website.

China hosts Royal Trophy in Guangzhou



Buyers with golf-loving clients can head straight to the Dragon Lake Golf Club in Guangzhou, China, which is hosting The Royal Trophy-Europe vs Asia Golf Championship from December 20 to 22.

The Asian team, led by captain YE Yang, includes Chinese golf legends Zhang Lian-wei and Liang Wen-chong (pictured), and Korean match-play maestro KT Kim.

The Royal Trophy is played over three days in a highly competitive team match-play format featuring 16 foursomes, four-ball and singles matches. Each continent is represented by eight players.

The only official golf championship pitting Asia and Europe, it was created in concert with the vision of the late five-time Major winner Seve Ballesteros. The trophy is a 16kg solid silver, donated by His Majesty the King of Thailand.

China is hosting the event, now the seventh, for the first time. "The first hosting of the Royal Trophy in China is a historic event. The Royal Trophy Players' Committee is looking forward to a magnificent competition between Europe and Asia and a great showcase of continental team match-play golf," said Royal Trophy Players' Committee Member and six-time Major winner Sir Nick Faldo.

Meritage seeks more Asian guests

By Hannah Koh

SAN Diego-based Pacific Hospitality Group has debuted its Meritage Collection at ITB Asia to garner more international guests for its properties.

Launched early this year, the collection comprises Trinitas Cellars winery and four AAA Four Diamond properties (equivalent to four- and four-and-a-half stars) — Balboa Bay Resort on Newport Beach, Bacara Resort & Spa in Santa Barbara, The Meritage Resort and Spa in Napa Valley and Estancia La Jolla Hotel & Spa.

David Gerdes, Pacific Hospitality Group's vice president sales and marketing, said there are no other hotel operators that offer

Four Diamond facilities in those destinations.

"There's more to California. Let's move away from the big cities and provide customers not only in the US but around the world, a chance to enjoy the activities and amenities at these four locations," said Gerdes.

With all four properties populated mostly by domestic travellers, a market that has only just begun to recover, the group engaged Miami-based Unique Hotel Solutions to help tap the global market and unveiled the Meritage Collection for the first time at International Pow Wow in Las Vegas in June.

Asked if hotels in the Meritage Collection featured amenities

specifically catering to the Asian market, Gerdes said such services will be gradually introduced as Asian visitors start coming.

"It's a catch-22 (situation) right now because we've got to see those travellers coming and we will. We're confident after ITB Asia we will have those amenities available for the different countries and their travellers."

The Meritage team sees ITB Asia as a springboard for learning more about Asian consumers, then doing further promotions in the region.

Said Gerdes: "Asia is our key market. We want to learn exactly what the Asian consumer is looking for so we can operationally work it out and serve them."

"Through the campaign, we hope to increase the average overnight stay of Chinese travellers and to have a steady 10 per cent growth per annum for Japanese visitors."

Anne Lind, director, trade relations, Visit Finland



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New frontiers in the ancillary landscape

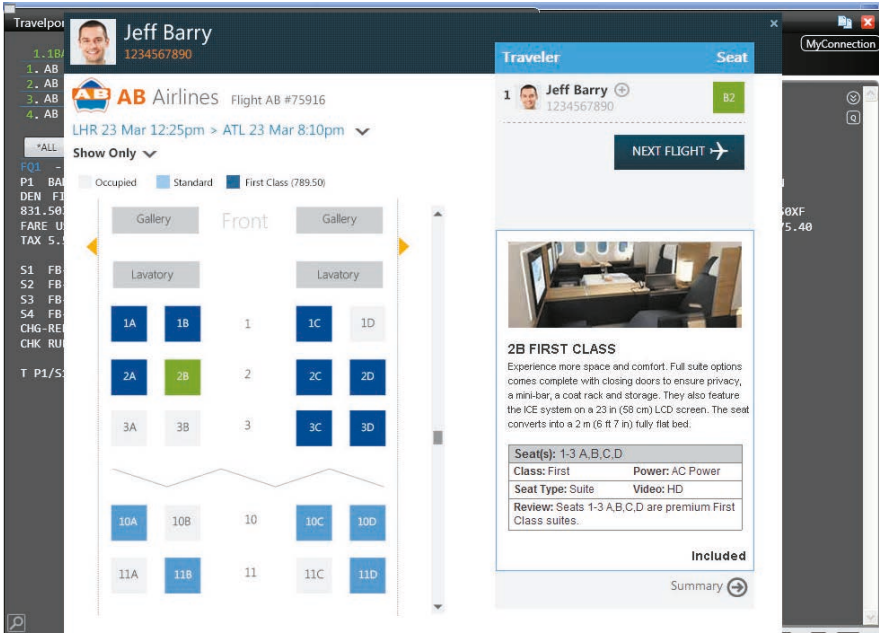
The travel distribution landscape is a-changing, as GDSs have finally started to roll out airline ancillary products. Lee Pei Qi finds out what these developments mean to travel trade stakeholders

Slowly but surely, GDSs have finally begun to make available airline ancillaries, a move that has been hailed as “revolutionary” in the current evolving GDS environment.

While GDSs traditionally serve airlines by reserving seats for travel consultants, it is becoming increasingly common among them to distribute ancillaries in their quest to bridge the divide between travel consultants, airlines and travellers.

Amadeus, which claims to be the “first GDS in the world to offer an ancillary service catalogue”, has allowed travel consultants to view airlines’ services offerings in real time since 2010.

Martin Symes, vice president, marketing, Abacus International, said likewise to keep up with global competition, the company started offering ancillaries like excess baggage, meals, premium seats and Internet access through its Abacus Air Ex-



tras function introduced in 2012.

Ian Heywood, head of global supplier strategy for Travelport, said: “Travellers today are expert shoppers and are expecting to get more from their purchase.”

Travelport has recently unveiled its new Travelport Merchandising Platform in April this year, enabling travel consultants to access the full range of airline products and ancillaries.

Apart from GDS-pioneered initiatives, IATA is also seeking to “modernise air travel distribution” with their New Distribution Capability (NDC) introduced last October.

Although still in its trial stage, this new XML-based standard will provide identical retail capabilities across all channels, enabling travel consultants to sell the same products and services that often can only be found on airlines’ brand websites.



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Unbundling trend driven by LCCs

According to Travelport, the number of LCC passengers in Asia-Pacific is expected to almost double from 171 million in 2010 to 318 million in 2016.

PST Travel Services' CEO Ngiam Foon has seen the demand for LCCs from his clients grown from a zero base to 25 per cent over the past two years.

Likewise, BCD Travel's vice president, sales & account management for Asia Pacific, Todd Arthur, commented that the demand for LCCs is "growing strongly" throughout Asia-Pacific.

He said: "We now have to offer LCCs in our proposition to our clients because we need to provide a complete package to show a full comparison of prices."

The entry of LCCs is interlinked with the provision of ancillaries because budget airlines are highly dependant on them as a source of revenue.

Evan Kruse, manager of trade distribution, Jetstar Airways, said: "Merchandising is crucial to us because as a LCC we need to have low-cost fares to be competitive in the market.

"Ancillaries are critical for us in our business model because only by making money from them can we then continue to keep our fares low," he said.

Emphasising the importance of ancillary revenue, Kaneswaran Avili, commercial director of Tiger Airways, said: "It will be a huge loss to us if we cannot distribute ancillaries through the GDSs because there is untapped demand there.

"We have observed that our customers will always make use of ancillary items be it to opt for baggage or an advanced seat selection," he said.

Travelport estimated that the airfare ancillary market will be worth US\$45 billion by 2015 to underline the rising importance of merchandising in the industry today.

"We now have to offer LCCs in our proposition to our clients because we need to provide a complete package to show a full comparison of prices."

Todd Arthur

Vice president, sales & account management for Asia Pacific
BCD Travel

Accessing ancillaries on the GDS

Will Horton, analyst at CAPA - Centre for Aviation, said: "Ancillary development was previously stymied by the lack of GDS' ability to fully support ancillaries, but now as they better support ancillaries we can see that airlines will develop more."

Horton pointed out Travelport's new merchandising platform as an example that is "better at accommodating ancillaries".

Through this platform, currently already live, travel consultants are able to sell ancillaries within their screen as well as aggregate on a single screen fares connected via ATPCO as well as an API connection.

Previously, travel consultants had to grapple with the additional workload of having to leave their workflows to find products and services from the individual airline's websites.

Travelport is due to launch on the same platform the ability for airlines to let consultants see photos and details of their products by the end of this year. With this "revolutionary platform", Heywood expects other GDSs to follow suit.

What lies in store for travel consultants?

As airline ancillaries are increasingly integrated into the travel distribution landscape, travel experts that TTG Asia spoke to acknowledged the rising demand for ancillaries from travellers but also appeared ambivalent about the unbundling trend at the same time.

Steven Ler, senior vice president and head of supplier relations, UOB Travel, expressed his concern of the extra work and time now required on the part of travel consultants.

He said: "With all these merchandising in the picture, it means (consultants) have to spend more time explaining and promoting.

"In the past, perhaps you need just seven minutes to talk to the travellers, but now it may increase to 15 minutes and this will affect our productivity," he added.

Echoing similar sentiments, Hankyu Hanshin Business Travel's assistant general manager, Satoshi Miyauchi, said: "To provide more services means more workload for us because we have to invest time."

Furthermore, there is a "lack of incentives and motivation" for consultants to put in the added work, said Miyauchi.

PST Travel's Ngiam agreed that this will take a toll on manpower resources and urged airlines to reward consultants for the extra work.

He said: "Our commissions are already limited and this is going to further reduce our profit margin, so it would be adequate if airlines can reward us accordingly."

Ler added: "We need to find a right balance and evaluate how this will impact the

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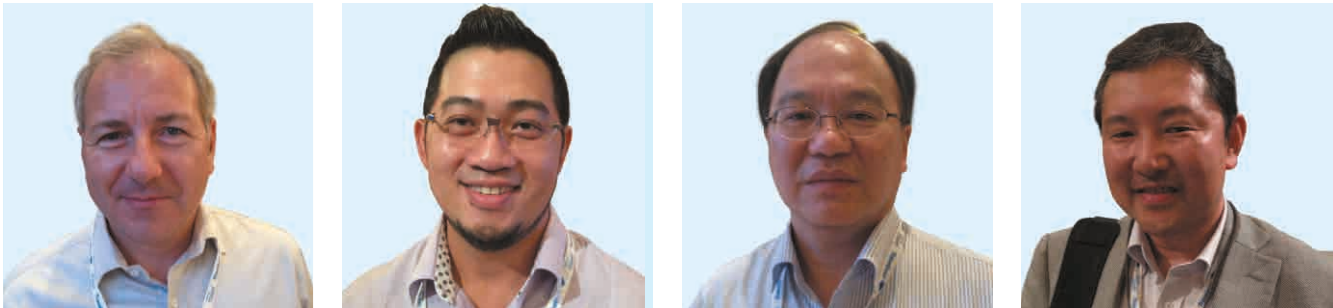
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(Clockwise from top left) Arthur, Ler, Ngiam and Miyauchi opined that travel consultants should be compensated for helping airlines sell their ancillaries.

“(Consultants) have to spend more time explaining and promoting...and this will affect our productivity.”

Steven Ler

Senior vice president and head of supplier relations, UOB Travel

(consultants’) bottom line and then look at a way to compensate us for the extra services we are providing.”

A new GDS model of the future?

As GDSs begin to distribute ancillaries, airlines seem to be the triumphant ones reaping the benefits while travel consult-

ants continue grappling with the “extra work”.

Horton said: “Travel consultants may not have a monetary incentive to sell ancillaries as this not only gives them no reward for their time, but no incentive to learn about the ancillaries.”

But nonetheless, Horton pointed that travel consultants may comply with the need to sell ancillaries to stay relevant.

PST Travel’s Ngiam said: “No one likes extra work, but we have no choice. I agree this is a good direction and we have to live with it but we have to see how we can be compensated better.”

Also applauding the model, UOB Travel’s Ler said it “looks good for now” but cautioned against hailing it as the new GDS model. “It is too early to testify its success because it is not tried and tested fully in the market yet, so we have to see how travellers will really respond to it then.”

Vacation rental sites home in on

By Lee Pei Qi

Short-term vacation rental websites are fast gaining popularity worldwide as more travellers are cosying to rental apartments or homes in place of the traditional hotel experience.

These emerging online models are founded on a simple concept – providing a platform for travellers seeking a place to stay and owners with a spare space to connect.

Based on individual requirements and preferences, whether it is to rent an entire apartment or house, a private room in somebody’s home or a shared space on the living-room couch, be it for a night, a week or a month, guests can search for a place that suits them best and connect with the host from there.

Vacation home rental websites enter Asia

Hailed as the pioneer in the holiday rental apartment scene, Airbnb introduced its online peer-to-peer concept in the US in 2008 and has since expanded to more than 33,000 cities and 192 countries.

While well-known in the western market, Airbnb has been a bit slow to foray into South-east Asia but it has since made up for lost time by expanding its operations into Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore late last year.

As this wave of short-term vacation rentals has finally caught on in Asia, Asian players are now seeking their share of the pie with their local offerings. Competition is heating up with similar online rental platforms popping up to wrestle for this emerging market in Asia.

Travelmob, a Singapore-based startup that entered the vacation rental scene last July, operates similarly to Airbnb but sets itself apart as an Asia-Pacific specialist by offering regional content to a global audience.

Travelmob co-founder Turochas Fuad said: “We are a very Asia-versed service and product. Being based in Asia (makes us) the experts here, be it with the place, culture, or people.”

According to Fuad, the number of room listings in their website has grown by 200 per cent since the start of the year to more than 14,000 properties. He said

the site has been gathering “amazing response” with several thousands of nights booked every month, ranging from corporate retreats to honeymoons and expatriates relocating to a new city.

Meanwhile, the US-based vacation rental site of HomeAway has just announced in July its acquisition of a majority stake in Travelmob to accelerate its expansion in Asia-Pacific.

Another Singapore-based player, BeMyGuest, which was launched in October 2012, offers a similar suite of services as Travelmob but provides local activities and sightseeing tours across Asia in addition.

Bhavana Gupta, marketing director of BeMyGuest, said: “Apart from accommodation, we also offer authentic activities that are less commonly known to tourists like prata-making or Chinese tea-appreciation classes to give them a taste of the local culture.

“These unique experiences will appeal especially to the second-time visitors because it is unlikely for them to have done these before,” she added.

Who are the short-term renters in Asia?

As the online rental space heats up and become more mainstream, they present a potential to lure travellers away from traditional hotels with their proposition to provide guests real connections with their hosts as well as immersive local experiences in the destinations.

Business models like BeMyGuest are especially attractive to the “new millennial customers” between 30 and 45 years old, remarked Bhavana.

She said: “This group of people are seeking a differentiated tour and cultural experience because they are no longer satisfied with the usual hotels and sightseeing.”

Similarly, Roomorama, another Singapore-based short-term rental player founded in 2009, also observed a younger demographic among its clientele. Users are “savvy travellers” between the ages of 25 and 55 and are often looking for a “value-for-money and unique experience”, said Jia En Teo, COO and co-founder of Roomorama.

And unlike hotels, they can provide guests the comforts of a regular home with a full suite of amenities like kitchen, laundry facilities and entertainment systems, she pointed out.

In addition, Roomorama provides greater cost savings, according to Teo. She said: “Roomorama offers about 30 to 40 per cent savings compared to a typical hotel in the same location with the same standards.”

Nevertheless, such social stay models are unlikely to threaten the hospitality sector, opined these travel technopreneurs.

“We offer a new type of travel experience which is different from hotels,” said Bhavana. “We want to see ourselves as an added choice for travellers and view it is a good opportunity for us and hotels to work together and learn from each others’ offerings.”

Teo agreed: “The concept of short-term rentals has a positive impact on the travel industry and we have made travel more accessible to those who may have been constrained by the lack of affordability previously.”

Opportunities ahead, but not without challenges

However the popular practice of vacation rental may still take time to permeate through the Asian market, given that Asians’ travel habits tend to be more conservative.

While Roomorama is currently more popular in cities like Beijing, Tokyo and Bangkok and Bali, Teo highlighted that one of the challenges they face is drawing awareness to this concept.

She said: “We have to convince Asian travellers that staying in a hotel-alternative can be simple, and very safe.”

Faud added that Asians do not like to host or stay in people’s homes, and “education is needed” to change that perception. But he also pointed out that there are many affluent Asians who invest in secondary homes, which then offer them the chance to monetise that property in such business models.

As for BeMyGuest, Bhavana said travellers today are more “experimental” hence they do not face much concern on this aspect.

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concept, and with that travellers can now exercise the option of seeking immersive local experiences which literally promises a “home away from home”.

Exceptional experiences

Singapore is answering discerning visitors' call for products with a difference. By **Lee Pei Qi**

As Singapore continues rolling out new attractions almost every other day, creating a pipeline of unique and innovative content is one of the priorities set for the city-state's tourism industry.

Ranita Sundramoorthy, director of attractions, dining and retail, Singapore Tourism Board (STB), said: "Singapore's tourism sector has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, and the addition of new attractions has generated renewed interest among travellers to revisit Singapore."

However, she highlighted that attractions needed to be differentiated to sell.

"Future attractions must be able to enhance Singapore's attractiveness as a leisure destination by offering unique, differentiated experiences that will appeal to more discerning travellers," she said.

Current top attractions in Singapore include Resorts World Sentosa (RWS), Marina Bay Sands and Gardens by the Bay due to their fresh appeal.

RWS' assistant communications manager, Clement Ng, said the opening of RWS in 2010 had been a "game-changer for the



New attractions are helping to create better experiences for tourists

"We would need our industry partners to work even more closely with us to drive tourism product innovation and capability development efforts to maintain Singapore as a compelling destination to discerning travellers."

Lionel Yeo, Chief executive, Singapore Tourism Board

tourism industry". He said RWS had seen over 30 million visitors to date, and the integrated resort was targeting 17 million visitors in 2013 alone.

According to Ng, RWS' competitive edge lies in its ability to present "unprecedented" offerings, with the most recent example being the Marine Life Park which opened in November last year.

To leave an impression on visitors, "immersive programmes" including scuba diving and personal interaction sessions with the park's sharks and dolphins, were launched this year.

Chan Brothers Travel marketing and communications manager, Jane Chang, said: "Such new attractions allow us to expand our offerings and cater to various segments of the market, drawing new and repeat travellers, and also to reel in higher-yield travellers."

As part of STB's strategy to develop unique and innovative content to set Singapore apart from the competition, STB's chief executive, Lionel Yeo, said the NTO was working with travel consultants to "create more itineraries that are catered to discerning travellers", meaning less of the mass-market, single-day

tour and more of those that offer "deeper immersion".

Association of Singapore Attractions chairman, Kevin Cheong, agreed with STB's strategy and said: "An attraction cannot be limited to what we want tourists to see, but it should be the lifestyle and social dwellings that we want to share with our foreign friends."

"We should not merely promote tourism, we should invite tourists to celebrate tourism with us through our everyday lives and the Singapore lifestyle," he said.

In July, STB launched a series of workshops for leading travel consultants to engage with attraction players in masterclasses to develop more in-depth products.

While a myriad of new attractions continues to be injected into the tourism landscape, there is the danger that existing attractions might be left behind.

Hence, the Association of Singapore Attractions' Cheong said: "From a product standpoint, we need to reinvent and re-engineer the experiences we are delivering because it is no longer a 'one size fits all' equation, but a 'not all can fit one size' generation."

Viewpoints

Singapore

Compiled by
Lee Pei Qi

What is your business outlook for the next six months?

What does Singapore need in order to compete well?

What is your key business concern over the next six months?



Martin Sinclair
General manager
Regent Singapore

The outlook is quite positive with continued strong occupancies. This demand for rooms should have a positive effect on hoteliers' confidence in regards to rate stability. However, the softening of rates counters this strength in terms of RevPAR.

Competition in the region is heating up. We need to promote our strengths as a destination, continue to focus on...all segments, particularly MICE, and at the same time ensure visitors needs are met, particularly in terms of Singapore being perceived as affordable.

Staffing. The lower foreign worker quota has brought about a serious shortage in areas such as house-keeping, stewarding, food service — most positions of which cannot be filled locally. Quality service levels are at risk as a consequence, particularly at the luxury level.



Antony Page
General manager
Singapore Marriott Hotel

We are anticipating a very positive outlook, with city-wide events such as the 2013 Formula 1 and Singapore Airshow in the lineup. Our guestroom refurbishment, completed in 2012, has given us more opportunities to stay competitive in the market.

Additional support is needed to attract more MICE business, and that includes enhancing the infrastructure in order to stay competitive and continuing to ensure Singapore maintains a strong presence for travellers from all around the world.

There will be quite a number of new hotels entering the market and my key concern lies in (the availability of) a large pool of talents...to ensure that we can continue to provide a consistent five-star service to all travellers visiting Singapore.



Michael Lee
Director
Luxury Tours & Travel

We are likely to experience a slight drop in business because Singapore's currency is too strong and people are going to find it expensive to come here. They may still come, but the length of stay will be shorter.

We need to sell ourselves to new markets. For example, we can start attracting travellers from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and even Africa, as there is untapped market potential. We need to spread our name to more countries to have greater reach.

Our strong currency (will push) people to pick exotic destinations in Europe instead, since the price will be the same or even lower. We need to cut down on our operation costs and plan how to make ourselves cheaper and more attractive for travellers.



Dennis Law
Managing director
Star Holiday Mart

The outlook is weak as we are facing an Asian currency crisis with the Indian rupee and Indonesian rupiah going down. It will be more expensive for travellers from India and Indonesia to come to Singapore over the next six months.

Since we are always looked upon as an expensive city, we need to offer more value-for-money packages from both hotels and attractions to buffer the weak situation. Both local agents and suppliers should work together closely to create greater buzz for Singapore.

The upcoming government elections in Indonesia and India, as well as the current crisis in South Thailand, may affect inbound traffic from these countries. However, we can count on markets such as Malaysia to continue (feeding Singapore with) weekend (arrivals).



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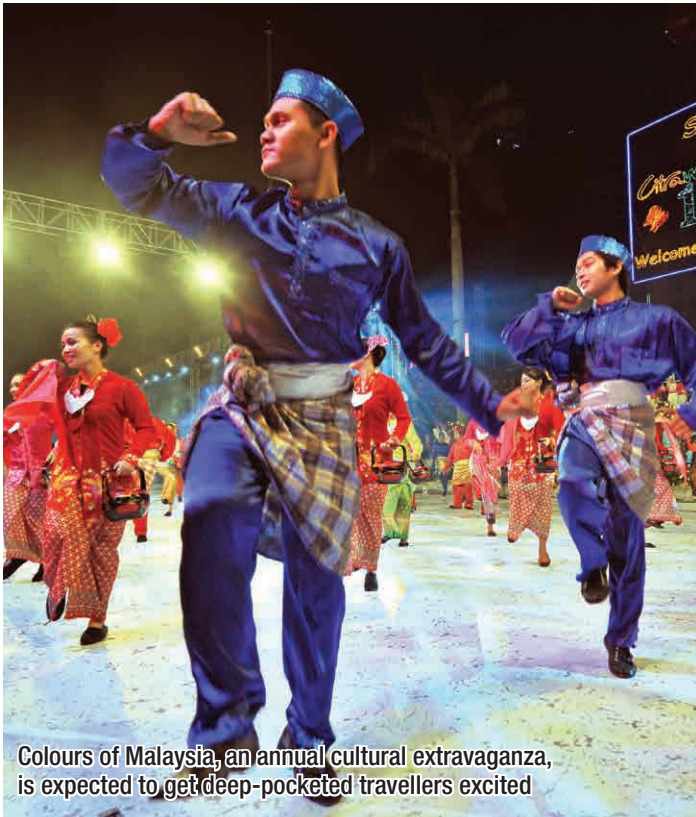
High-profile festivals will be among the products used to court high-yield travellers, writes **S Puvaneswary**

While regional markets, which make up Malaysia's top 10 source of tourists, continue to be the focus of Tourism Malaysia's destination marketing activities, the bureau will be stepping up promotional efforts in year-round markets with large populations such as China and India, as well as in the deep-pocketed Middle East market.

According to official tourism statistics, China has shown a 26.4 per cent year-on-year growth in 1Q2013. On the other hand, Indian arrivals rose only slightly – 155,484 visitors in 1Q2013 from 155,477 in the corresponding period in 2012.

Said Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, director general of Tourism Malaysia: "However, we believe this market has a huge potential for growth due to improving air accessibility. Malaysia Airlines recently announced a new daily service to Kochi beginning September 1 and earlier, on June 3, added a morning frequency on the Kuala Lumpur-Mumbai route, bringing the number of services to 12 weekly.

"AirAsia increased its frequencies from Kuala Lumpur to Trichy (Tiruchirappalli) on May 26, from 11 to 14 flights weekly. Malindo Air also announced its intentions to fly to India and is



Colours of Malaysia, an annual cultural extravaganza, is expected to get deep-pocketed travellers excited

currently awaiting regulatory approvals."

Air links between Malaysia and the Middle East – traditional markets for Malaysia, according to Mirza – are also improving. Malaysia Airlines resumed daily connections to Dubai on August 5, while the Abu Dhabi-Kuala Lumpur route gained a new daily

service since July 15, thanks to Etihad Airways. Emirates also raised frequencies on its Kuala Lumpur-Dubai route from 26 to 28 weekly flights on April 1.

Mirza said: "The additional seats and direct flights between the UAE and Malaysia have made it easier for us to promote Malaysia as a tourist and busi-

"I hope tour operators will...package (events under the *Visit Malaysia Year 2014* for) their target markets. I also hope the private sector will...rely less on Tourism Malaysia (for international promotions)."

Azizan Noordin

Deputy director-general (planning)
Tourism Malaysia

ness events destination."

On South Korea and Japan, he said: "They have become increasingly important, as AirAsia X has ramped up frequencies on existing routes and opened new ones such as Busan."

Russia, too, is drawing the NTO's attention. "We will focus on growing our share of arrivals in Vladivostok, Khabarovsk and Novosibirsk (and) work with outbound (travel specialists) on joint marketing promotions," he revealed.

Tourism Malaysia is especially keen on high-income tourists

and has set targets of RM168 billion (US\$52 billion) in tourism receipts and 36 million in tourist arrivals by 2020.

"To achieve this, we will intensify our efforts in promoting Malaysia as a luxury destination, one that is complete with good infrastructure, hotels, services, telecommunications network and highways. The *Visit Malaysia Year 2014* campaign will also give Malaysia tourism a boost," he said.

Tourism events and products that will be highlighted this year and the next to draw high-income tourists include Formula 1 Petronas Malaysia Grand Prix, Malaysia International Tourism Exchange, Colours of Malaysia and the three annual mega sale campaigns that position Malaysia as a shopping paradise.

Infrastructure developments include the new low-cost carrier terminal, klia2, which is scheduled to open in May 2014.

Adam Kamal, deputy president of the Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association, opined that good public transportation between Kuala Lumpur International Airport and klia2 would provide improved opportunities for second-tier Malaysian cities such as Penang, Johor and Sarawak to grab more leisure and MICE business.

Viewpoints Malaysia

Compiled by
S Puvaneswary

What is your business outlook for the next six months?

What does Malaysia need in order to compete well?

What is your key business concern over the next six months?



Ian Hurst
General manager
Best Western Premier Dua Sentral

It is positive. There are many events lined up in conjunction with *Visit Malaysia Year 2014* which we are confident will attract international tourists to our shores. We forecast an average room occupancy of 86 per cent.

Increase training in the service area (to equip) frontline staff (with) English (skills). Eco-tourism attractions should be upgraded and promoted more aggressively as this is Malaysia's niche.

Europe's recession, which is not helping with tourist arrivals; the general inflation, which has resulted in an overall cost increase; and competition for leisure and MICE tourists from neighbouring destinations.



Steve Woon
Vice president – sales marketing
Lexis Hotel Group

Bright. Traditionally, we have very strong domestic support. We have positive growth and are expecting more from the Asian markets, especially China, Hong Kong and Japan. Business from the GCC nations are also encouraging.

The hospitality market is now facing a manpower crunch. Authorities (need) to encourage the locals to join the industry and simultaneously structure intense training programmes to develop and create a large pool of skilled labour.

The health of the global economy – longhaul markets have yet to recover, and the Japanese yen and the Indian rupee have devalued against the ringgit. I also hope epidemics will not develop in Asia over the coming months.



Adam Kamal
Managing director
Tina Travel & Agencies

Positive, as air connectivity is improving all the time. This year we looked at new regional markets and we hope that our efforts will bear fruit over the next six months.

Focus on what it does best, i.e. affordable holidays at world-class standards (and not target) high-end tourists when there is no supporting infrastructure. Security issues such as robberies and taxi touts should also be addressed.

Business survival, especially with globalisation and (the rise in) online hotel/tour bookings which are our competitors. On the domestic front, we are competing with foreign travel agencies that have set up local offices in Malaysia.



Alex Lee
CEO
Ping Anchorage Travel & Tours

Positive because of the heavy promotions (leading up to) *Visit Malaysia Year 2014*. This is bound to result in an increase in tourist arrivals, which means more opportunities for us to sell packages.

Malaysia should focus and leverage on its unique and diverse cultures, heritage and nature-based attractions. It should have more new products to encourage tourists to stay longer and spend more.

I would like to see the European economy recover over the next six months as that would result in more longhaul arrivals. European tourists tend to stay for a longer duration and are good spenders.

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Upward climb in arrivals

Hong Kong rolls out fresh promotions to open up new sources of tourist arrivals. By **Prudence Lui**



“In the coming year, we will join hands with our travel trade partners to promote creative tours developed under the New Tour Product Development Scheme.”

Anthony Lau
Executive director
Hong Kong Tourism Board

Hong Kong’s tourism sector is set to enjoy a rosy year as visitor arrivals have showed an upward trend. In the first half of 2013, the city received 25.4 million visitor arrivals, up 13.6 per cent from the corresponding period in 2012, according to data from Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB).

The NTO’s efforts to woo more overnight visitors have also paid off as Hong Kong recorded about 12 million overnight visitor arrivals during this period, accounting for an 8.7 per cent year-on-year increase and 47.1 per cent of all visitor arrivals.

In 1H2013, China continues to lead with 7.8 million arrivals,

delivering the biggest growth of 16.2 per cent. Japanese arrivals plunged 29.1 per cent to 287,007. The longhaul market, however, still suffers from uncertain economic conditions and posted a 4.1 per cent decrease.

HKTB executive director, Anthony Lau, said: “We will maintain balanced investment in a number of markets to ensure a healthy portfolio. This year, about 71 per cent of the resources will be put into the international markets, while the remaining 29 per cent will be on the China market.

“HKTB continues to work closely with different trade part-

ners to promote Hong Kong as a hub for multi-destination travel in the region, develop new itineraries to attract more visitors and intensify consumer promotions to provide better offers,” Lau added.

In the second half of the year, the HKTB will launch a series of promotions to attract more tourist arrivals and open up new visitor sources. Initiatives include launching the first Hong Kong travel guide for the Russian market and organising a consumer fair at a large shopping mall in Dubai for the Middle Eastern market.

“(To woo) new visitor sources, dual-destination travel pack-

ages for Hong Kong and Macau should be promoted more,” said general manager, Simon Dell of OZO Wesley Hong Kong. Having opened its doors in July, the 251-room hotel has already achieved an average occupancy of 85 per cent.

Furthermore, other new hotels such as Pentahotel Hong Kong, Kowloon and Courtyard Hong Kong Sha Tin, added this year, have alleviated the city’s room shortage.

According to HKTB data, Hong Kong’s average room rates dipped 1.6 per cent to HK\$1,423 (US\$183) in 1H2013, with High Tarrif A (luxury) hotels posting the biggest drop of 2.3 per cent

to HK\$2,368.

W Travel Service managing director, Wing Wong, remarked: “Hotels have become more flexible and allow negotiation. However, we face another worrying challenge. The currencies of countries such as Thailand, Indonesia and India have depreciated. Indonesians, in particular, feel the pinch as their currency is pegged to the greenback and has so far dropped 20 per cent (against the US dollar).”

He added: “Undoubtedly, this dampens the desire of outbound travel. We had an Indonesian group postponing their trip (to Hong Kong).”

Viewpoints

Hong Kong

Compiled by
Prudence Lui

What is your business outlook for the next six months?

What does Hong Kong need in order to compete well?

What is your key business concern over the next six months?



Christina Cheng
General manager
Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees

Business will be challenging. Due to the uncertain global economy, arrivals to Hong Kong up till July have dropped from various markets, except China. Some nearby cities are also becoming popular for leisure and MICE.

More new experiences, themed activities and incentives for travelers, such as unique cultural events and exclusive shopping discounts. Enhanced promotion of multi-destination itineraries can attract more visitors to Hong Kong.

Rising hotel room inventory may create keen competition. With the possible slow-down in international arrivals and changes in market segmentation, we will focus on expanding our FIT and OTA business.



Michael Ziemer
General manager
The Excelsior, Hong Kong

We are positive about the coming six months. There may be growth within the Asia-Pacific region.

We would benefit if there were more places of interest and themed location for incentive events.

Political issues around the region (and) currency issues in countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines. (The latter) will affect inbound leisure (business, as) they may consider going to other destinations.



Ricky Tse
Managing director
Tri-Dragon Travel Services

I am optimistic. As more tourist hotels open and airlines increase their capacity and add new (routes), (it will become more) affordable... for tourists travelling in groups (to visit Hong Kong).

New attractions and tourism facilities are needed to woo visitors (away from competing destinations). With the new Kai Tak Cruise Terminal, Hong Kong should... position itself as a cruise hub.

The global economy, which is still poor. It discourages people from spending on travel. I also hope that there will be no wars, but that is not something we can control.



Wing Wong
Managing director
W Travel Service

With China's new tourism law now in place, we foresee Chinese tour group (business) to fall 50-60 per cent as zero-fare tours are stamped out and overall prices are doubled to reflect the true value of the itinerary.

Hong Kong's hotel rates should be reduced. While shopping and dining in Hong Kong offer good value for money, room rates are pretty high despite falling 10-15 per cent this year, over last year.

The impact of China's new tourism law, as 65 per cent of our arrivals is made up of the Chinese. I am also worried that the US should declare war on Syria because that would dampen longhaul travel demand.

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Open arms for Muslims

Taiwan is improving the island's facilities to welcome more Muslim travellers. **Lee Pei Qi** reports

The Taiwan Tourism Bureau (TTB) is ramping up Muslim-friendly facilities across the island in an attempt to attract more Muslim visitors and boost tourism performance.

To address a pertinent worry for Muslim travellers, 16 more eateries were bestowed halal certifications in March this year, which identifies them as trustworthy establishments providing food in compliance with Islamic dietary law.

This brings the total count of Muslim-friendly restaurants in Taiwan to 31, all of which are spread across cities including Taipei, Taoyuan, Taichung, Tai-nan, Hualien and Taitung. These reaturants offer Muslim travellers a wide selection of cuisine, such as Indian, Thai, Turkish and Egyptian fare.

In order to further support halal-certified eateries in Taiwan, the inaugural Taiwan International Halal Expo was held in June this year, bringing together 14 Muslim buyers and 28 local businesses to give local food manufacturers a better understanding of Muslim markets and halal certification.

TTB has been working with the Chinese Muslim Association to educate the local tourism industry on the needs of Muslim visitors, while the association has also been training tour guides and producing travel brochures specifically for Muslims.

In an interview with Indonesia news agency *Antara* earlier this year, Liu Hsi-lin, deputy director-general of TTB, said: "Muslim tourists are an important part of the global travel market as Muslims make up 20 per cent of the world's population."

With Taiwan aiming to attract more Muslim travellers from countries such as Malaysia,

Indonesia and Singapore, it was important to "make them feel at home", he said.

According to TTB statistics, tourist arrivals from these three countries have been rising.

Some 341,032 tourists from Malaysia, 327,253 from Singapore, and 163,598 from Indonesia came to Taiwan in 2012, registering year-on-year increases of 10.8 per cent, 9.2 per cent, and 4.7 per cent respectively.

CTC Travel, one of Singapore's top outbound agencies and a specialist in tours to Taiwan, has been rolling out tour packages targeted at Muslims since 2010.

Alicia Seah, senior vice president of marketing and PR, CTC Travel, told the *Daily*: "We see growing interest from the Muslim market, with a year-on-year increase of 10 to 15 per cent."

Such packages bundle either halal-certified or pure vegetarian meals, visits to local mosques and accommodation at Muslim-friendly facilities.

One such Muslim-friendly accommodation is the Shangrila Leisure Farm in Yilan, which received halal certification in 2011. The property also provides bathing facilities and prayer spaces.

Tammy Chien, assistant vice president of Shangrila Leisure Farm, said: "These facilities make it more convenient for Muslims (to adhere to religious requirements) and will help attract more Muslim tourists to Taiwan."

She added that the leisure farm had hosted more than 500 Muslim guests this year, up from 300 in 2012.

Arthur Hsieh, director of the TTB office in Singapore, said: "Muslims do not have to worry so much about travelling to Taiwan with more facilities coming up to ensure they can travel with ease and have a good time."



Taipei City

Taiwan Tourism Bureau

Viewpoints

Taiwan

Compiled by
Lee Pei Qi

What is your business outlook for the next six months?

What does Taiwan need in order to compete well?

What is your key business concern over the next six months?



Morton Johnston
General manager
Regent Taipei

Our business outlook is encouraging, with continued success and new opportunities in corporate and leisure markets locally and internationally. We are also doing well in the domestic and Chinese markets. So, we are quite optimistic.

Taiwan needs to continue (pursuing) excellence and keep up to date with innovations in technology and culture in order to maintain a competitive edge in the future.

Competition for the MICE market is strong with Bangkok and Singapore, as these destinations offer reasonable prices and more direct flights.



Charlie Dang
Regional vice president, operations,
Greater China
Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide

Our forecast is looking very positive for our hotels in Taiwan, with Le Meridien Taipei and W Taipei both being among the top hotels in the destination and enjoying healthy occupancy and rates.

Taiwan needs to be ready for an unprecedented demand for new hotels and travel, as more people join the ranks of middle-class globally.

The overall tourism market in Taiwan has been slowing slightly since the first quarter. This can be attributed to China's weaker economic performance and the slight downturn in Taiwan's domestic economy.



Peter Kuo
President
Edison Travel Service

I am quite optimistic about the future of Taiwan's tourism sector since our government has made it its policy to promote Taiwan.

Taiwan needs to emphasise its specialties and prove that it is a destination that can offer quality service. With good feedback from travellers, Taiwan will enjoy better prospects.

The current conflict between Syria and the US will have an adverse impact on oil prices. That is bad news for tour operators, as everything, from tour buses to airplanes, relies on oil. It will mean higher costs for us.



Jacky Lin
Inbound tour department manager
Richmond Tours

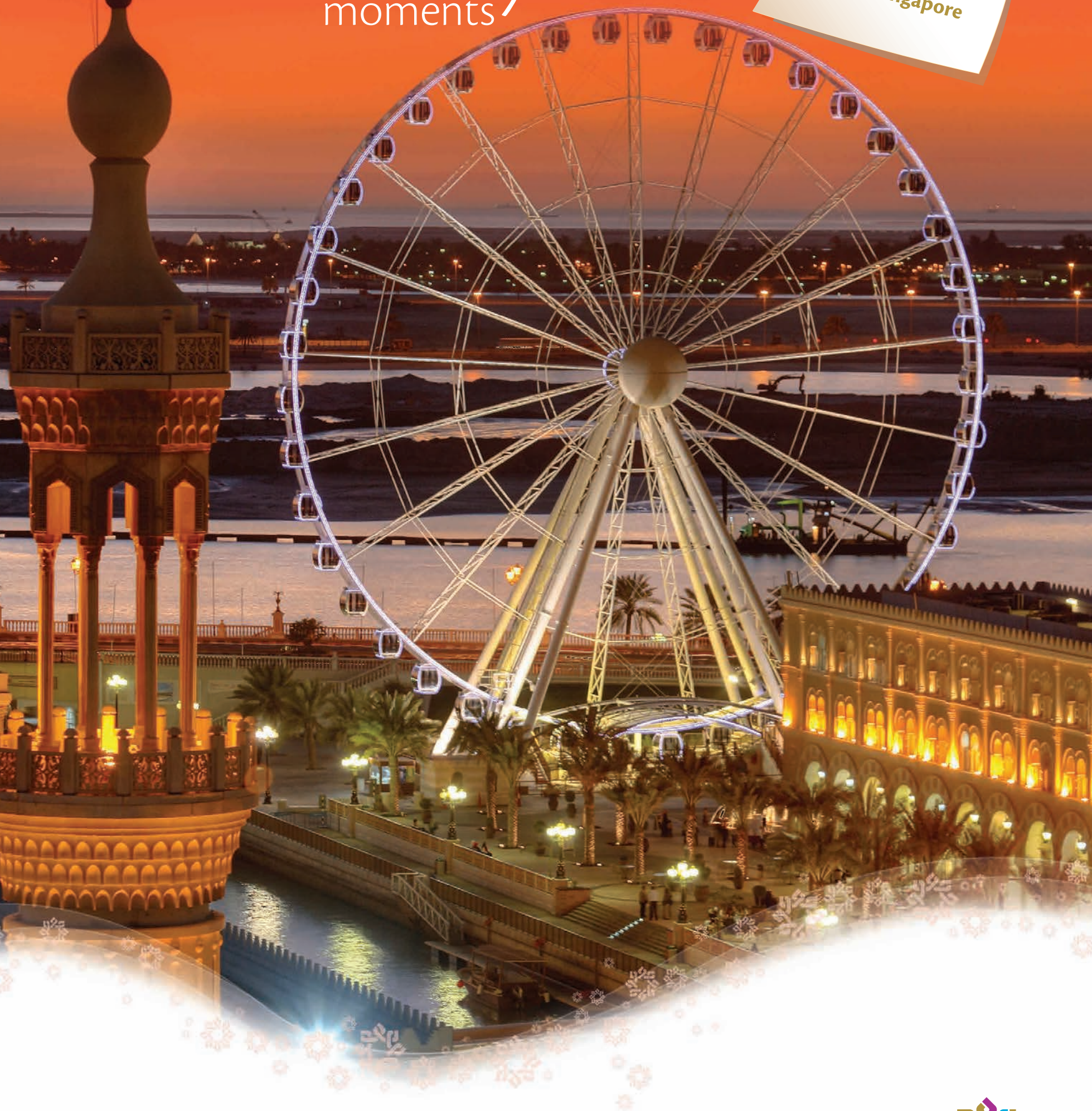
There is increasing interest in other cities such as Taichung, Tainan and Kaohsiung, so I predict greater demand in the next six months.

We need to participate in more tradeshow to increase the awareness of Taiwan and market its lesser known cities. Thankfully, the government has been giving us good support (in this aspect).

A large bulk of our business comes from China, so the implementation of the new tourism law is quite worrying. I think it will have a negative impact on (Taiwan's arrivals from China) and we are assessing its implications.

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A quest for confidence

Backed by more funds, the tourism recovery campaign will promote new draws. By **Mimi Hudoyo**

Egypt, whose tourism trade has suffered in the hands of political instability in 2010 and again in August this year, is stepping up destination promotions to regain the confidence and interest of travellers and tour operators.

Egypt Tourism office director for Asia, Adel El Masry, told the *Daily* that the situation in the historical destination had stabilised and more budget would be set aside for upcoming promotions. He has, however, declined to reveal the amount of funds allotted to campaigns in Asia.

According to Masry, arrivals to Egypt had improved after the 2010 revolution, although it was a shadow of pre-crisis tourism performance. Prior to the revolution, the country welcomed 14.7 million tourists annually. In 2012, arrivals was around 11 million.

Widely reported riots in August that followed the crack-



Egypt Tourism wants to draw attention beyond the pyramids

down on supporters of ousted president Mohammed Morsi had caused arrivals to dip by some 20 per cent.

"Tourism contributes to Egypt's economy in a big way, providing direct and indirect employment to 12.6 per cent of the workforce and it is the country's second largest source of foreign revenue.

"Therefore, it is critical that our tourism offices around the world gear up to address the concerns of prospective travellers to the country," said Masry.

Commenting on Egypt's tourism recovery efforts, Masry said: "We are planning media campaigns, familiarisation trips for the media and tour operators, as well as working with tour opera-

"Asia is still a very small market compared to Europe, which contributes 70 per cent of our arrivals, but it is a region that is becoming increasingly important to us."

Adel El Masry
Office director for Asia
Egypt Tourism

tors to produce brochures.

"(Our efforts) will start in the next couple of weeks until the end of the year, and we will increase our budget for 2014 too. Our goal is not only to (restore) confidence but also to increase the number and (demographic) profile of travellers from Asia."

Through its participation at the recent PATA Travel Mart

in Chengdu and IT&CMA in Bangkok, Egypt Tourism hoped to broaden its network of tour operator partners. The NTO is also exhibiting at the ongoing ITB Asia in Singapore.

Meanwhile, Egypt Tourism has started raising the awareness of attractions beyond the pyramids and Nile cruises, which are traditional favourites. "We are introducing new products such as golf, adventures and religious tours. We are also trying to attract MICE groups," said Masry, adding that the mass market would be targeted.

India, China, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore have been identified as key Asian source markets. "Asia is still a very small market compared to Europe, which contributes 70 per cent of our arrivals, but it is a region that is becoming increasingly important to us. We have recently facilitated visa-on-arrival for some Asian nationalities," he added.

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Bigger appetite

Armed with more funds, New Zealand expands its markets. By Karen Yue

New Zealand welcomed 2.6 million visitors in the year ending June 2013, with Australia (1.2 million), China (222,700) and the US (189,500) being the top three source markets.

According to Mischa Mannix-Opie, regional manager South and South-east Asia of Tourism New Zealand, China is a market to watch. It is now New Zealand's fastest growing market for international visitors and the second largest market in terms of visitor arrivals and expenditure, over-

taking the US, the UK and Japan. She attributed China's "rapid growth" to the country's economic expansion and corresponding rise in Chinese citizens' buying power, as well as the destination promotion efforts of New Zealand's tourism players.



Railway Station, Dunedin

Although Tourism New Zealand's key focus has always been on the leisure market, more attention is now being paid to growing the international business events segment. "Emphasis will be significantly increased in the business events sector, particularly in the key markets of China, South-east Asia and North America," revealed Mannix-Opie. "Significant new business event facilities have been announced, such as the New Zealand International Convention Centre in Auckland. Plans are also underway for similar facilities to be constructed in Christchurch and Queenstown." Tourism New Zealand's plans to grow business event arrivals are supported by the country's recent move to inject some NZ\$158 million (US\$133 million) into the tourism sector. To be disbursed over four years, the fund would be used to at-

tract "more visitors, especially the high-spending ones", noted Mannix-Opie. She told the *Daily* that NZ\$123 million would be channelled to Tourism New Zealand. Of that amount, NZ\$44.4 million will be set aside for the emerging markets of Indonesia, India and Latin America; NZ\$24.5 million for existing markets; NZ\$34 million for business events; and NZ\$20 million for high value visitors. The NTO will leverage on hit movies filmed in the country, such as *The Hobbit* series and *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, to charm travellers. It will also promote opportunities to experience Maori culture in Asian markets and highlight special interest activities such as skiing and hiking within core markets and sectors. In addition, partnerships with airlines are being forged to raise air capacity to and from New Zealand and to establish new routes.

"Tourism New Zealand will weight-up its focus on the international business events sector as a means of attracting higher-value visitors."

Mischa Mannix-Opie
Regional manager South and South-east Asia
Tourism New Zealand

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Asian warriors of the skies

Sim Kok Chwee looks at three successful Asian carriers that have carved their own niche

Snugly wedged between the highly acclaimed longhaul full-service carriers and the very aggressive low-cost carriers are three successful regional airlines – Dragonair, SilkAir and Bangkok Airways – who are by no means miniscule. Each of these three is bigger than some of the flag carriers in the region and are equally at home competing against or cooperating with much larger airlines. At a time when full-service longhaul carriers struggle to maintain market share and yield, these airlines ride on the vibrant regional economies and are performing robustly with better yields.

Although the circumstances leading to

the birth of these three regional airlines are vastly different, their success is founded on a very similar formula – being based in a key aviation hub, being affiliated to a highly successful parent airline (with the exception of Bangkok Airways) and having a whole menu of interesting destinations to operate to within five hours' flying time.

Over time, each airline's network of destinations began to gain strength in specific markets – China for Dragonair, Indonesia for SilkAir and the Indochina region for Bangkok Airways.

The presence of small capacity aircraft in their fleets has allowed these carriers to be more adventurous and nimble in open-

ing up services to destinations that larger carriers cannot profitably serve. And it is here that well-run regional airlines are desirable partners for hub-to-hub full-service carriers.

DRAGONAIR

Dragonair in its current form is a wholly owned subsidiary of Cathay Pacific Airways and provides onward carriage for many of its passengers arriving in Hong Kong. Back in 1985, the gulf between the two could not have been greater as Dragonair was privately owned and aimed to challenge Cathay Pacific's monster grip on Hong Kong. At a time when the Chinese

market was a mere flicker of a very distant candle, Dragonair saw the potential of a market that Cathay Pacific missed. Fast forward to 2006, the incumbent and the challenger became one as Dragonair was fully acquired by Cathay Pacific in a strategic move that has proven to be valuable to both carriers and to Hong Kong.

Today, Dragonair operates its own aircraft to 22 Chinese cities, operating alongside Cathay Pacific on two Chinese routes – Beijing and Shanghai. Both airlines collectively operate about 400 weekly services to 22 cities in China.

Dragonair's CEO, Patrick Yeung, said: "With the hub synergy, Dragonair is able to provide extensive connections for regional and international passengers via the extensive international network of sister airline Cathay Pacific."



Yeung: better products

Recognising the value of Hong Kong as a gateway from and into the Pearl River Delta region, Dragonair provides a cross-border upstream check-in facility from six ports in five cities, namely Shenzhen Shekou, Shenzhen Fuyong, Dongguan Human, Zhongshan, Zhuhai Jiuzhou and Guangzhou Nansha. It also offers the same convenience at three locations in Shenzhen for those travelling overland to Hong Kong and travelling with Dragonair and Cathay Pacific.

Dragonair is no stranger to competition and faces 17 low-cost carriers at its home base, mostly from South-east Asia, China, Japan and South Korea. Together with Cathay Pacific, it is vehemently opposing the establishment of Jetstar Hong Kong, which only has a 33.3 per cent local shareholding and is seen by both as a franchise operation controlled from Australia. Indeed with slots at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) becoming increasingly scarce, the slots that are needed for organic growth will quickly fizzle out.

Cautioned Yeung: "HKIA is already very close to maximum capacity. Given that the lead time to construct the third runway is about 10 years, this means our home airport – so crucial to Hong Kong's economic success – will reach saturation point even before the third runway is completed."

Meanwhile, Dragonair continues to improve its value proposition, and in January 2013 it rolled out a major product enhancement, which includes its New Business Class and New Economy Class cabins together with a new inflight entertainment system named StudioKA.

SILKAIR

SilkAir's birth was unconventional and it took the form of Tradewinds, a tours and travel arm for Singapore Airlines (SIA). In February 1989, it finally emerged as an airline – unsurprisingly named Tradewinds the Airline. At the time, there was another British airline by the same name and in April 1992, the SilkAir branding was born and the travel and tour operating arm became a wholly owned subsidiary.

SilkAir's CEO, Leslie Thng, said: "We play a role to extend the Singapore Airlines Group network by seeding and developing new and exciting destinations in the Asia-Pacific region."

The strength of regional markets has allowed SilkAir to outperform even SIA in terms of yield. Today, China, Indonesia and India are the key markets that SilkAir continues to bet on. It currently operates to 11 cities in Indonesia, and by Novem-

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ber 2013 it will reach a dozen with the addition of Jogjakarta to its network. It also serves eight cities in India and another seven in China.

In recent months, the load factor on SilkAir may have dropped but this is the result of a strategic move by the airline to grow its frequencies and capacities in these key markets at a pace that is slightly ahead of demand. It considers this to be medium- and long-term growth with the prospect of short-term bumps.



Thng: good results

And often, the seeding function leads to both SilkAir and SIA operating parallel to one another to the same destinations – such as Surabaya and Yangon – to cater to different segments but more importantly, to hand over the already-developed higher-yield

corporate market to SIA.

SIA and SilkAir provide strong cross-feeding into each other's network and according to Thng, "the proportion of passengers from Singapore Airlines connecting on to SilkAir has been seeing a healthy year-on-year increase". Currently, about half of its passengers are connecting from SIA flights. This allows SIA's long-haul passengers to travel from London to Lombok on one fare and ticket with a single stop in Singapore.

SilkAir has also been extremely adapt at sniffing out city pairs where it does not face any competitor, and it currently enjoys this exclusivity on services to Changsha, Chiang Mai, Chongqing, Coimbatore, Danang, Davao, Kathmandu, Lombok, Manado, Palembang, Solo and Visakhapatnam.

In an order that underscores SilkAir's confidence in the future, it ordered 23 Boeing 737-800s and the first of these will be delivered in February 2014. A parallel order for 31 Boeing 737-8Max will be delivered starting end-2017 or 2018.

Main Base	Fleet	Destinations
Dragonair		
Hong Kong International Airport, Hong Kong	19 x Airbus A330-300 15 x Airbus A320 6 x Airbus A321 On order: 20 x Airbus A330-300 15 x Airbus A320 6 x Airbus A321	44 destinations from Hong Kong, of which 22 are in China and 10 in South-east Asia
SilkAir		
Changi Airport, Singapore	6 x Airbus A319 17 x Airbus A320 On order: 23 x Boeing 737-800 31 x Boeing 737 MAX 8	42 destinations from Singapore, of which 11 are in Indonesia, 7 in China, 8 in India
Bangkok Airways		
Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok	9 x Airbus A319 5 x Airbus A320 8 x ATR72-500	8 domestic destinations in Thailand and 12 international destinations

Thng remarked: "Our new Boeing aircraft presents us with many exciting opportunities, one of which is the longer range on the B737Max compared to our existing aircraft. The new planes will allow us to fly farther, giving us the opportunity to look at expanding to destinations within a six-hour radius, compared to five hours now."

BANGKOK AIRWAYS

Bangkok Airways' existence dates back to 1968 when it was established under the Sahakol Air branding. At that time, it was purely aimed at supporting the booming oil exploration and mining industries in the region. In 1986, it was designated as Thailand's first privately owned airline and in 1989, it took on its current name, Bangkok Airways.

To overcome its disadvantage of not

having a parent airline with an extensive international network, Bangkok Airways has inked codeshares (with Etihad Airways, Malaysia Airlines, SilkAir and Japan Airlines) and prorate interlining agreements with many international airlines serving Thailand.

Bangkok Airways has yet another trump card – it built, owns and operates three airports at Koh Samui, Sukhothai and Trat. This offers comprehensive long-term spin-offs in the form of reduced user charges, aeronautical revenue (gained from other airlines wishing to serve Koh Samui) and non-aeronautical revenue from commercial space rentals at these airports. For some time, it successfully kept other airlines from serving Koh Samui but eventually relented.

The airline markets itself as Asia's Boutique Airline, a branding that allows it to maintain healthy yields. The opening up of Myanmar has also brought a windfall. The carrier has been quick to ramp up capacity and frequencies to Yangon, and in September 2013 it added services to Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw. It consequently holds the distinction of being the only international airline to serve Nay Pyi Taw.

Today, Bangkok Airways' network comprises eight domestic cities (including its home base Bangkok) and 12 interna-

tional destinations. Its coverage of China and India – markets that are of great importance to Dragonair and SilkAir – is extremely thin with only one destination in India (Mumbai) and none in China.

Although Bangkok Airways does not hold any orders for aircraft, it has in the last year acquired several previously owned Airbus A320s and A319s.

Back at its home base Suvarnabhumi Airport, congestion has resulted in the relocation of most domestic services by LCCs to the re-opened Don Mueang Airport. This is a move that Bangkok Airways cannot consider in view of its valuable codeshare and interline arrangements with various airlines. In addition, the relief from moving LCCs away from Suvarnabhumi Airport was temporary and congestion is once again beginning to set in.

The future

The three regional carriers have very successfully maintained and stamped their position on the greater aviation landscape, embracing the nimbleness and ability to quickly pounce on potential new destinations yet consistently deliver a brand of service that more closely matches those expected of large full-service carriers – perhaps even with a dash of informality and casualness.





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Western USA

Home to USA's most dynamic communities, Western USA is electrifying. Watch its streets of San Francisco come alive with the exotic festivals of its many ethnic groups, experience Native American culture in the hamlet of Mexican Hat or celebrity-watch from a cafe in Vegas.

Fine art connoisseurs will delight in the extensive arts scene they'll discover. Walk among historic works by the masters in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, or sample edgy, fresh new works from the up-and-coming artists in Utah. Hungry for more than just visual arts? There's still ballet, orchestras, and theatre, so you'll be able to take your pick.

If you prefer the contemporary sounds of pop, rock, or indie bands, look out for concerts of international stars touring the region in the cities' extensive calendars of events. Alternatively, just chill out in a bar and enjoy great live music of a variety of styles from the local talent. Prefer glitzy cabaret, magic, and comedy? Get all three at Las Vegas.

There's so much to discover in the vast volume of history and culture Western USA holds. The best way to start? Its amazing museums. The region holds historical museums like San Francisco's Contemporary Jewish Museum and Blanding's Edge of the Cedars Park Museum, and science museums like the spanking new Exploratorium or the Dinosaur Museum.

Take some time to enjoy the region's natural splendor and diversity - from the dramatic red rock deserts of the Grand Canyon, just five hours out of Las Vegas, to the alpine meadows of the upper reaches of the La Sal Mountains. The Giant Sequoia groves of the Yosemite National Park and beautiful coasts of Carmel and Conerey are just day trips away from San Francisco. Journey along San Francisco's 49-mile drive for amazing panoramic views of the city and its coastal scenery.

Visitors should always leave some time to indulge themselves in the best. If the exquisite spread of international cuisines isn't nearly enough, there's

always San Francisco's artisan chocolate, and the top-notch spa experiences in Las Vegas, to leave you refreshed and in great spirits.

Some key facts

- About 15,000 miles of **neon tubing** are used on Las Vegas's Strip and downtown areas.
- The West holds the largest number of **minorities** in the USA.
- **Bugsy Siegel**, the famous mobster who created the **Fabulous Flamingo**, named the casino after his girlfriend's long legs.
- Arizona's **Hopi village, Oraibi**, built in 1100 and discovered in 1540, is the oldest Native American settlement in the US.
- The **hippy movement** of the 1960's actually started in **San Francisco**.



What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas



The Strip in Las Vegas

That's what the **Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA)** promises visitors to the world's glittery entertainment capital. It's the result of an emotional bond of freedom between Las Vegas and its visitors. Freedom on two levels: first, to do, see, eat, wear, feel whatever you want - to basically be whoever you want to be. Also, freedom from whatever you want to leave behind in your daily life. It's freedom that everyone craves, and Vegas offers just that. It's no wonder the city received a record **39.7 million visitors in 2012**.

All that glitters is gold

Las Vegas boasts an impressive portfolio of luxury offerings. Out of its **150,000 hotel rooms**, visitors will find some of the world's best hotels and resorts, such as casino resorts **The Venetian, Planet Hollywood**, and **Wynn Las Vegas and Encore Resort**. Those who prefer non-gaming hotels will still be able to indulge in stays at **Vdara**, and the newly-opened **Nobu Hotel Suites at Caesars Palace**.

To find a handful of the celebrities Las Vegas is so famous for, one need only head to the restaurants. Las Vegas is peppered with celebrity chef restaurants with an exquisite dining experience – like **Aureole Las Vegas by Charlie Palmer**, which serves ‘American progressive cuisine with the show-stopping theatricality of Las Vegas’, and **CUT by Wolfgang Puck**, which was awarded the AAA Four Diamond Award – highest in the AAA Diamond Ratings System.

More than just gaming

Las Vegas is far more than a gaming city – it’s becoming one of the top lifestyle destinations of the world. In fact, Las Vegas’s non-gaming revenue was estimated at US\$11 billion, actually overtaking profits earned from gaming activities.

Entertainment has always been Las Vegas’s specialty – the more flamboyant, the better! From shows and acrobatics like the **Cirque du Soleil** to comedy featuring names like **Whoopi Goldberg** and **George Wallace**, the city has it all.

Visitors may also be interested in catching sporting events or concerts held by artists like **Celine Dion** and **Elton John**. Golfers will thoroughly enjoy the city’s top-rated golf courses with their world-class layouts: **Bali Hai Golf Club** on the south, and the **Wynn Golf Course** on the north.

Shopping is a pleasure with plenty of **designer boutiques**, the **major high street fashion** and **outlet stores**. Visitors who prefer to take it easy on their wallets can simply experience the city’s splendor from the **free light and sound extravaganzas** by resort hotels, like the **Bellagio Fountains**.

Indulgence is definitely in the itinerary, with Las Vegas’s more than 45 luxury destination spa facilities spread out within the city’s resort hotels. Visitors can rejuvenate in the **Ritz-Carlton Las Vegas’** spa – ranked seventh best in the USA, or swim in beach-themed resort pools.



MICE in Las Vegas

Facts & Figures

- More than 10.6 million square feet of meeting and exhibit space
- 2,000 MICE groups annually
- 21,615 meetings, tradeshow and conventions
- 4.9 million delegates attending a convention, tradeshow, or meeting.

Why Vegas?

- Convenient location of the McCarran International Airport
- Plentiful transport solutions – taxi and limousine services, and the Las Vegas Monorail connecting resorts and the LVCC
- Entertainment – day or night.
- Vast supply of hotel rooms, mostly located within four miles of the Convention Center

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Featured Shows

Michael Jackson ONE Cirque du Soleil
Mandalay Bay Theatre
Constantly seeking to ‘evoke the imagination, invoke the senses, and provoke the emotions of people around the world’, Cirque du Soleil is recognised for its high-quality, artistic entertainment, and has 8 resident shows in the major resort hotels. Its new offering, *Michael Jackson ONE Cirque du Soleil* depicts the journey of four misfits to find courage, artistry and love under the guidance of Michael Jackson’s music.

Rock of Ages
The Venetian
A feel-good love story set on the Los Angeles

Sunset Strip in 1987, this musical show promises to have its audiences singing along to their favorite 80’s rock songs by bands like Styx, Journey, Bon Jovi, and Poison as its main characters find their way to Hollywood stardom.

Pin Up
The Stratosphere
In this blast to the past, an era of wartime rations, pin curls, and the jitterbug, is brought to life by a cast of dancers, singers, and musicians. The bombshell Claire Sinclair raises the temperature at the Stratosphere Theatre – perfect for the musical with its old Vegas showroom style.

VÉRONIC Voices
Bally’s Las Vegas
Vocal powerhouse Veronic DiCaire pays tribute to the world’s most popular female artists. In one mind-blowing performance, she replicates the amazing voices of divas like Celine Dion, Lady Gaga, Barbara Streisand, Katy Perry, and Christina Aguilera.

Le Rêve - The Dream
Wynn Las Vegas
Leave reality behind and explore the depths of the subconscious with this show, inspired by Picasso’s painting. The flamboyant water-based show involves synchronised swimmers, scuba divers, aerialists and acrobats.

Shopping
Entertainment,
and exquisite
dining!



Nobu Hotel at Caesars Palace
A ‘luxury infused, celebrity-driven’ exhibition, this brand new hotel experience designed by David Rockwell fuses Japanese and Asian traditions with Western ones, using simple natural materials and textures that contrast with outsized elements for Vegas flair. Rooms display custom art by up-and-coming Japanese artists, including ‘shodo’ style calligraphy. Chef Nobu Matsuhisa’s unrivalled cuisine features in a mouth-watering in-suite menu. www.nobucaesarspalace.com

Wynn Las Vegas and Encore Resort
The 50-story luxury interconnecting resorts offer a whole range of activities, restaurants, and boutiques alongside its 2,716 rooms. Wynn’s Tower Suites have been awarded the Forbes Five Star and AAA Five Diamond award, while its spa has been awarded a Forbes Five Star. Its dining experience has been recognised by Forbes Travel Guide, AAA, and the Michelin Guide, while the 90-foot waterfall is a must-see in Tryst, its nightclub. www.wynnlasvegas.com

The Venetian and The Palazzo
The world’s largest five-diamond, four-star, all-suite destinations - The Venetian and The Palazzo - offer guests the perfect stay. Start with breakfast at Morels French Steakhouse & Bistro, a Canyon Ranch SpaClub session, a romantic gondola ride and shopping in the Grand Canal Shoppes. For the evening, enjoy a Broadway-style show, followed by dinner at one of thirty mouth-watering restaurants. The after-hours programme can be danced away at the world-famous TAO nightclub. www.venetian.com

Coming Soon...
The LINQ, the soon to open 300,000 square foot retail and entertainment complex at the heart of the Strip with over 30 shops and restaurants. It will also feature “High Roller” the world’s largest observation wheel that will eclipse the London Eye and Singapore Flyer. www.caesars.com/thelinq

Featured Tour Operators

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Papillon flies 600,000 passengers a year on its daily helicopter tours to the Grand Canyon. 40 unique excursions, including views of the Hoover Dam, Lake Mead, Monument Valley, Lake Powell, and of course, the magnificent Grand Canyon. Out of the helicopter, Papillon also offers guided tours on horseback, hiking, picnics, and river rafting. Papillon is a member of The Tour Operators Program of Safety, ensuring visitors will be safe at all times. www.papillon.com

Chinese Hosts, Inc.
Chinese Hosts, Inc. is a Destination/ Convention Management Organisation that specializes in hosting major Asian conventions and events, handling the experience from start to finish – staffing, model/ entertainer hire, booth space and decor provider, wholesale supplier of show tickets, event and conference coordination, room reservation, and transportation, through its impressive fleet of buses. www.chinesehosts.com

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Grand Canyon Fascination

One of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World and a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Grand Canyon is absolutely spectacular. Every year, about five million visitors flock to this natural attraction situated in Arizona, five hours east from casino city Las Vegas.

The expert craftsman of this amazing gorge is none other than the **Colorado River**, which, along with its tributaries, has been eroding away at the rock for at least 17 million years to date. At a depth of only one mile, it's hardly the deepest gorge in the world, but its **immense size** at 277 miles long by 18 miles wide, and the **beautiful colors of its steep, terraced walls** definitely make it the world's most magnificent.

Wildlife is bountiful in the canyon too, including signature American West creatures like the desert big horn sheep, mule deer, coyotes, mountain lions, bobcats, burros, bald eagles, and Californian condors.

Along the walls of the canyon, visitors can still find the **cliff dwellings of the Ancient Puebloans** who had inhabited the area for thousands of years. The Native American communities regarded the Grand Canyon as a holy site, and would make pilgrimages there.

Excursions at the Grand Canyon range from a three to four hour trip to a multiday hiking/camping adventure.

Today, there are four basic access points to the Grand Canyon - a popular route from the Grand Canyon National Park's **South Rim**, the relatively lesser-used **North Rim**, or through **Havasupai**, 'heart of the Grand Canyon', which is managed by the Havasupai Tribe.

The final way is through Grand Canyon West within the **Hualapai Native American Reservation**, which lines 108 miles of southwestern Grand Canyon - West Rim. The Grand Canyon West tours, led by the Hualapai tribe, offer comprehensive experiences for visitors keen not only on sight-seeing, but also in learning about **authentic Native American culture**. The Hualapai Nation uses its tourism revenue for schools, roads and social services for its community.

The expert craftsman of this amazing gorge is none other than the Colorado River, which, along with its tributaries, has been eroding away at the rock for at least 17 million years to date.

Grand Canyon West: Key Experiences

Natural wonders, adventure and culture!



- A trip to **Eagle Point**, named for the rock formation resembling an eagle in flight
- The **Hualapai Market**, for more opportunities to interact with tribal members, and for authentic jewelry and craft shopping
- **Hualapai Ranch**, an old western recreation town where visitors can be a cowboy for a day, doing roping, the quick draw, the tomahawk toss, and taking horse-drawn wagon rides
- **Guided horseback tours** along the Canyon rim
- Adrenaline-pumping **whitewater rafting** over the Colorado River's white water rapids
- Hikes led by local Hualapai to the **Travertine Falls**
- More sedate **rafting** along smooth waters to take in the Canyon's sights from the water
- Breathtaking bird's-eye views of the Canyon from a **helicopter flight** to the top of the Grand Canyon West
- Exciting views of the Canyon and the Colorado River from the **Grand Canyon Skywalk** - a glass bridge built 4,000 feet above the Floor, and 70 feet over the edge
- A variety of authentic Native American dwellings, and traditional dance performances at the **Native American Village**. Multiple tribes bring in materials from their reservations to build their traditional dwellings in the village
- Ruins of a bat dropping mine, its pulley system, and the leftovers of a historic tram stretching across the Canyon at **Guano Point**
- The **Highpoint Hike** - a chance for visitors to enjoy amazing views and the natural peace of the Grand Canyon

Grand Canyon West
www.grandcanyonwest.com
Robert Mendez

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Booth Number 5

Utah's Canyon Country

The World's Greatest Outdoor Museum

History and myth aren't tucked away in a museum in San Juan County but literally etched into its desert and mountain landscape. Visit in **spring, fall, and winter for its desert**, and **fall and summer for its mountains**.

Northern Region

Utah's largest park, **Canyonlands National Park**, with its red-rock desert and rivers, is the main attraction of the Northern Region. For a contrast, the forested **La Sal Mountains** are equally beautiful, while the **Newspaper Rock State Historic Monument**, the largest accessible petroglyph panel, allows a glimpse of lives for the past 2,000 years. **The Pioneer Park and Frontier Museum** in **Monticello** reveal more about the region's settlers.

Central Region

Lake Powell's lake canyons can be explored via sea kayak, or from a bird's-eye view on a scenic flight. The region's amazing natural bridges, such as the sacred **Rainbow Bridge National**

Monument and the **Natural Bridges National Monument** are a must-see, while the **Grand Gulch Primitive Area**, **Abajo Mountains**, and **Dark Canyon Wilderness Area** all showcase Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings, rock art, and pottery amidst breathtaking scenery.

Southern Region

Driving through the **Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park** provides the best view of the valley's captivating sandstone formations. The **Hovenweep National Monument's** historical ruins and **Bluff's** Victorian pioneer homes give a taste of the olden-day frontiers, while the **Bluff Museum**, **Historic Fort**, and **Sand Island** will delight history buffs. Native American communities nearby include **Mexican Hat** and **Halchita**.

Utah's Canyon Country
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Booth Number 9

Mountains, deserts, lakes and Native American heritage!



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For: River expeditions
Sacred Monument Tours www.monumentvalley.net
For: Monument Valley, Jeep, Horseback tours

Only in San Francisco

165 years ago, the Gold Rush ignited a population boom in San Francisco, drawing people of all cultures to its port. History has clearly made its mark on this cosmopolitan city and its vibrant neighbourhoods - from **North Beach - Little Italy of the West** - to the **largest Chinatown out of Asia**. **Japantown** is neighbour to **Fillmore Jazz District** with its African-American heritage. Meanwhile, party animals flock to **Mission District** for eclectic nightlife with a Latino spice, and **South of Market (SoMa)** for its lively club scene. Shoppers are spoiled for choice between the **Haight Street** hippie counterculture styles and **Union Square** mainstream.

San Francisco has plenty of options for those keen on art, culture, and discovery - the **de Young Museum**, **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art**, **Contemporary Jewish Museum** and brand-new **Exploratorium** are examples of its wide variety of world-class museums.

Outdoors, San Francisco's sunny climate and beautiful scenery won't

disappoint. Visitors love the panoramic views from the **historic cable cars**, which reveal iconic landmarks like the **Golden Gate Bridge** and the **Transamerica Pyramid**.

If walking uphill on San Francisco's sloping streets isn't enough to take your breath away, the rest of the vibrant city surely will.

Art, culture, shopping and stunning vistas!



San Francisco Travel Association
www.sanfrancisco.travel
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Booth Number 10

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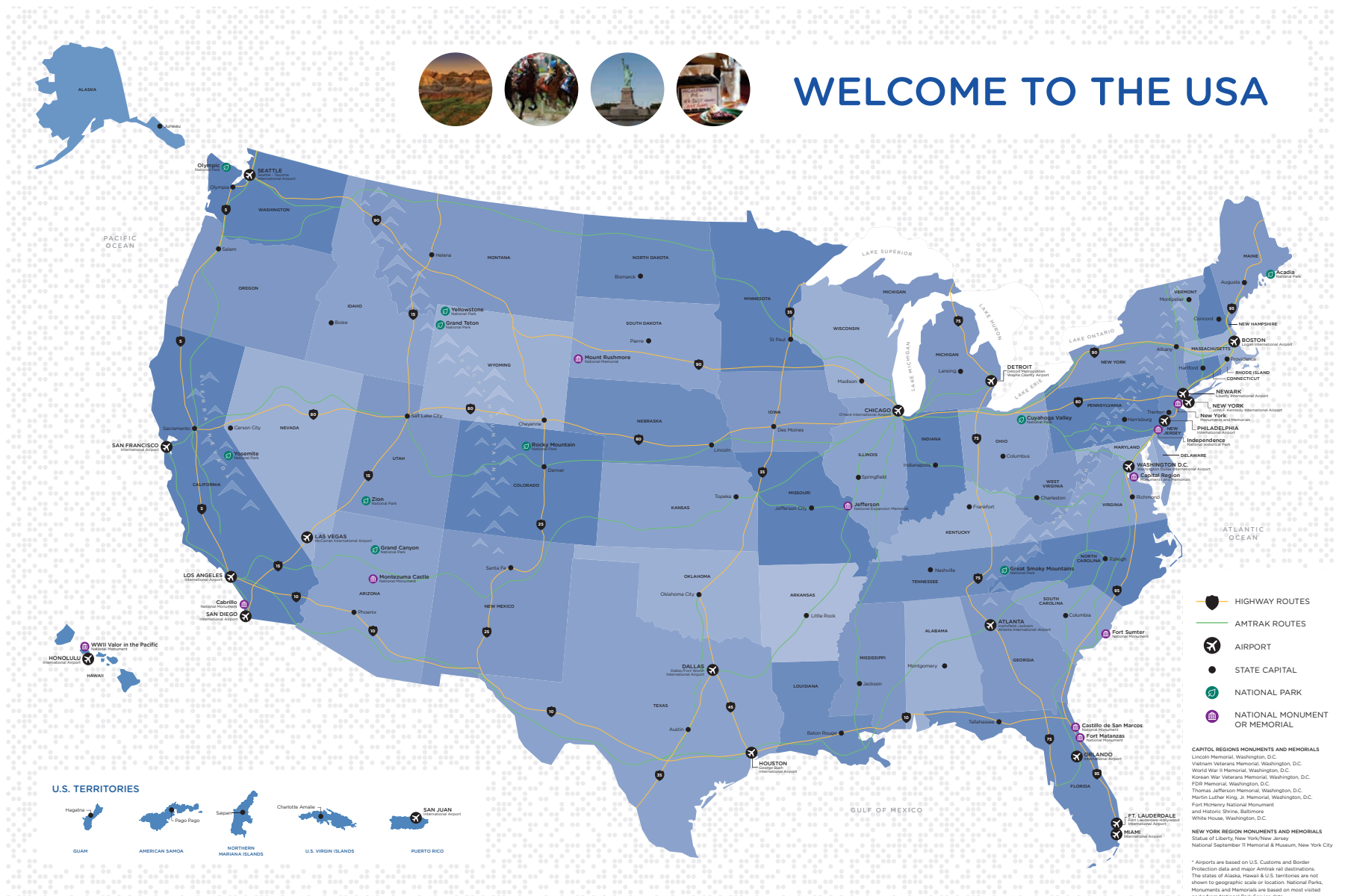
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Booth Number 6



ENTRY INFORMATION

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Before entering the country, make sure you know what items you must declare. Educate yourself on U.S. travel regulations for a quicker, simpler entry process, whether you're coming home or taking a holiday with family and friends.

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- Gifts and purchases valued at a maximum of \$100 total

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A close-up photograph of a glass filled with a golden, bubbly beverage, likely a cocktail or sparkling juice. A thin slice of orange is perched on the rim of the glass. The background is dark, making the glass and its contents stand out.

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By Patrick Tan



Millennium Indonesia's Selviana Z, Copthorne Singapore's Angelina Koay, Millennium China's Glen Cook, Millennium & Copthorne Singapore's Cecilia Lim, Millennium China's Raymond Tang and Millennium Thailand's Juthamat Plengratsamee



Indiatourism Singapore's Y Neelakantham, Indiatourism Australia's Madhu Dubey, Asia Travel & Tours' Rajesh Verma and Air India Singapore's Dinesh



Miki Travel UK's Darach O Ciobhain and Meritus Hotels & Resorts' Guy Fotherby (UK) and Paul Stocker (Singapore)



(Front) Travelport Singapore's James Chew, Nemesis Singapore's Stephen Young, Travelport Singapore's Michael Yates and Travelport Singapore's Loh Yuet Cheng. (Back) Travelport Hong Kong's Tim Lei, Antavaya Group Indonesia's Nicolas Pierret and Nemesis Singapore's Harris Vertlieb



Constance Hotels and Resorts China's Vivienne Su, TLX Travel Hong Kong's Ken Liu, MytraLifestyles' Indrani Mohan Kumar, Constance Hotels and Resorts Mauritius' Armand Guyano Amadis



Outrigger On The Lagoon - Fiji Australia's Andrew A Gee, STA Travel Australia's Andy Bennett, Outrigger Hotels and Resorts Asia Pacific Thailand's Mark Simmons



Grand Park Orchard Singapore's Darren Ware, Park Hotel Singapore's Angeline Tan, Park Hotel Group Singapore's Allen Law, Mohd K Rafin and Pauline Cheung, and Grand Park City Hall Singapore's Kenneth Low



(Seated) Furama Singapore's Vione Tan, Furama Malaysia's Azlan Azwan Tahir, Furama Thailand's Sawanya Pongpamorn and Asia Escape Holidays Australia's Marilyn Milner. (Back) JS Marketing Japan's James Shimada, Furama Singapore's Francis Tan and FuramaXclusive Villas & Spa Indonesia's I Wayan Sumandia



Best Western International Thailand's Paul Suvodip and Vick Sriprapat, Best Western Korea's Kaori Yokoo, Best Western France's Mareva Maiti, Best Western Premier Indochine Palace Vietnam's Patrick Fernandez and Best Western Asia & Middle East Thailand's Glenn de Souza

Cheers,
no tears

By Patrick Tan

(Eighth from right)
Brand USA' Jay Gray,
based in Washington



Government of Dubai's Ann Lau, Jessie Ling, Mohammed Essa AL Shaikh and Meiling Chan



Worldhotels Argentina's Oscar A Gómez and Airport Hotel Basel's Dimitris Argirakis



Environment and Protected Areas Authority Sharjah's Hana Saif and Asma Saifa Al Suwaidi



(Seated) Manila Bulletin Philippines' Irene V Fernando, Inquirer Group Philippines' Juliet Labog-Javellana, Philippine Department of Tourism Singapore & Indonesia's Charles Leong and Tourism Promotions Board Philippines' Tess H Mauricio. (Standing) Philippine Department of Tourism Singapore's Hazel Tan, Fullerton Hotel Singapore's Joan Abugan, Paradise Garden Resort Hotel & Convention Center Philippines' Sheilla M Bautista and Hannah Paula B Yulo, and Ang's Tour Philippines' Antonio Tony Ang



(Left) Worldhotels Singapore's Christina Spykerman, Miki Travel Hong Kong's Evon Ler, Carlton City Singapore's Cecilia Wong and Jacqueline Ho



Far East Hospitality Management Singapore's Alex Chan, Jessica Chan and Jeffrey Ong, Toga Hotels Austraila's Jennifer Bruce, and Far East Hospitality Management Singapore's Rebecca Wee, Ericia Li and Shanice Chen



(Front) Santika dyandra Medan's Dewi Sartika, Santika Indonesia's Hera Adiwikarta, The Kayanna Indonesia's Arief Ali, Hotel Santika Indonesia's Sang N Gunarta and Santika Indonesia's Faizal Firmansyah (Back) Santika dyandra Medan's Cita K Dewantoro and Hotel Santika Indonesia's Dhaniel H Prabowo

Niche or all-in?

Developers share views on the better way to create a destination

By Hannah Koh

THE merits of whether a destination should go niche or be all-encompassing were debated at Tuesday's Asia Pacific Destination Investment Conference, with an audience poll at the end indicating an overwhelming preference for specialisation.

Majority of respondents (92 per cent) felt that destinations stood to benefit more by going niche, while a mere eight per cent supported casting a wider net to attract arrivals.

Panelists on the topic however were divided.

Ong Chih Ching, chairman of KOP Properties Singapore, said: "Niche gives you branding, but all-encompassing gives you money."

"When you go niche, you are filling a gap, so inevitably you succeed with becoming unique and specific in your marketing. After that, you start to think how to capitalise on the branding you have achieved."

Going niche could allow for more streamlined marketing and promotions. Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, director of Macau Government Tourist Office, said: "Macau is still niche, because we are a very small place.

Hence, you have to make your choices intelligently on what and how you want to develop.

"But we don't advertise so much on gaming, because everyone knows (that Macau's niche is gaming). Instead, we tell them about what else Macau has to

"Niche gives you branding, but all-encompassing gives you money."

Ong Chih Ching
Chairman
KOP Properties Singapore

offer. We promote very heavily on culture and events because events get people to come back. You can't go to the same cultural attractions every time."

John Mims, senior vice president worldwide sales and resort marketing Asia of Las Vegas Sands, concurred on promoting "the other things we have in Macau", but added: "I don't agree that Macau is niche; there are wonderful historic elements and many developments coming,

so the journey will continue for Macau not as a niche but as an overall resort destination."

Nevertheless, whatever the approach, Mims highlighted the importance of government support and developed infrastructure, citing the availability of both factors in Macau and Singapore, where the company runs integrated resorts.

Similarly, Craig Douglas, director, hospitality group of VinaCapital Vietnam, said: "Vietnam has a few challenges with infrastructure and is now actively focusing on them, with Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi growing (their) networks. Infrastructure enables volume to come through."

Additionally, Samie Lim, vice president for tourism/franchising of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, cited a country's natural geography and resources as signposts to what it can leverage.

"The 10 ASEAN countries can be divided into land-based and sea-based countries," he opined, adding that land-locked countries could focus on selling shopping and culture while sea-based nations could offer beach holidays and cruises.

Hotels tune in to mobile and other technology

By S Puvaneswary

HOTELS are paying more attention to the use of mobile devices to enable them to offer better customer experiences through more efficient operations.

Douglas Rice, executive vice president and CEO of Hotel Technology Next Generation, anticipated 'untethering' will become a new trend in a decade.

Untethering is where guests use mobile devices and are not dependent on computers in fixed locations. Guests will bring their content with them, and television sets will increasingly become dumb devices where content is pushed onto television screens.

He said the availability of smartphones and other mobile devices may render point-of-sales stations redundant. Hotels may also use more social media to create conversations and develop personal relationships with guests for areas like room service and housekeeping, and in the hotel restaurants.

He also anticipates WiFi will become more pervasive and will one day be the preferred choice over cellular phones for making calls.

Ian Aitken, director of solutions, Samsung Asia, said reservation experiences will become

increasingly web-based and smartphones will function as hotel room keys.

Smartphones will also have the ability to notify the hotel of guests' arrival, thus there will be no necessity to check-in the traditional way, according to Aitken.

On benefits to guests, Aitken said: "After a long flight, they will want to go straight to their rooms."

In the banqueting rooms, he foresees increased use of synchronised screens where themes can be changed at will to create the mood in the room, or a message for attendees.

Avery Palos, management - gaming vice president for IT, Marina Bay Sands Singapore, said the company has improved its WiFi capabilities to include end-to-end solutions.

He said in the near future, the company will develop means to drive content to mobile devices, such as coming up with targeted ads like shopping discounts.

Michael Lee, CIO of Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts, acknowledged that while guests will stay increasingly connected over time, the challenge will be to provide a comfortable level of connectivity "without burning a hole in our profits".

The early bird catches the worm By Patrick Tan



Messe Berlin Singapore's Nino Gruettke and Nicolas Tours Egypt's Milad Naguib



Vacation Planner US' Maria M Khoe and Adrianus H Khoe



Globe Travel Italy's Milanese's Sergio Broccardo



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