

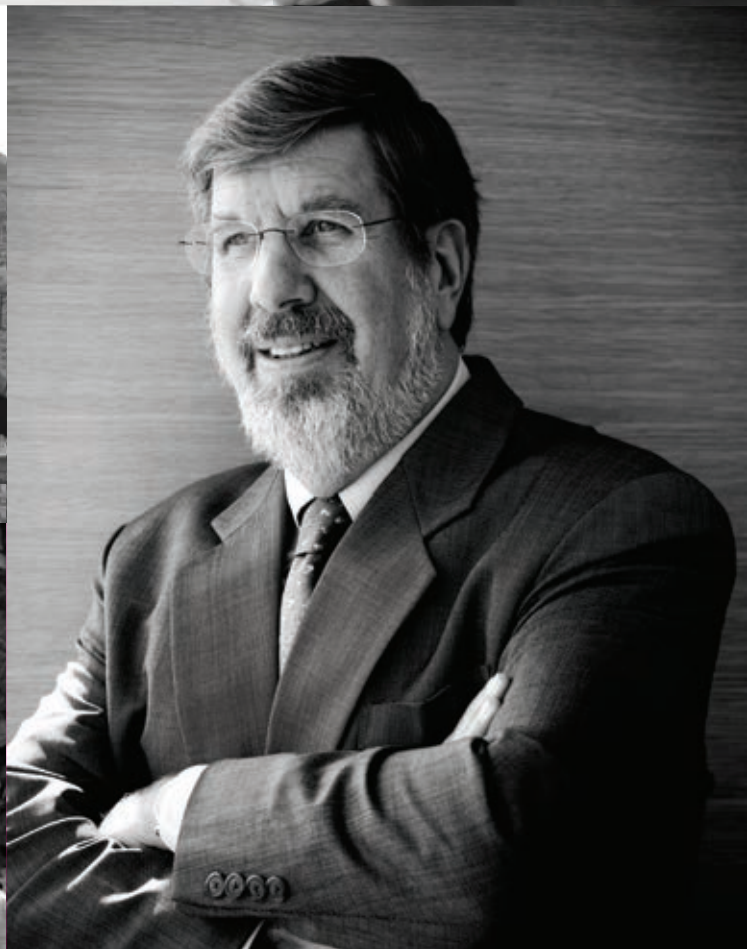


People

MAKE TRAVEL GO ROUND



Amid all the talk on how technology is transforming the travel sector, it's easy to forget that people are the main driving force of the business. We put people at the heart of *TTG Asia's* year-end issue and seek to discover the faces and human touch in the industry



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EDITORIAL

Karen Yue Group Editor
karen.yue@ttgasia.com
Xinyi Liang-Pholsena
Deputy Editor, TTG Asia & TTG India
liang.xinyi@ttgasia.com
Dannon Har Assistant Editor, TTG Asia Online
dannon.har@ttgasia.com
Paige Lee Pei Qi Assistant Editor, Singapore
lee.peiqi@ttgasia.com
S Puvaneswary Editor, Malaysia/Brunei
puvanes@ttgasia.com
Mimi Hudoyo Editor, Indonesia
idmfasia@cbn.net.id
Rachel AJ Lee Sub Editor
rachel.lee@ttgasia.com
Sim Kok Chwee Correspondent-at-large
aviasian.images@gmail.com
Rebecca Elliot Correspondent, Australia
rebeccaelliott@hotmail.com

Rosa Ocampo Correspondent, The Philippines
rosa.ocampo@gmail.com
Prudence Lui Correspondent, Hong Kong
prului@yahoo.com
Caroline Boey Senior Correspondent,
China & Special Projects
caroline.boey@ttgasia.com
Julian Ryall Correspondent, Japan
jryall2@hotmail.com
Rohit Kaul Correspondent, New Delhi
rohit.kaul@ttgasia.com
Feizal Samath Correspondent, Sri Lanka/Maldives
feizalsam@gmail.com
Redmond Sia, Goh Meng Yong
Creative Designers
Nadra Iwani Editorial Intern
lina.tan@ttgasia.com
SALES & MARKETING
Michael Chow Group Publisher
michael.chow@ttgasia.com
Shirley Tan Senior Business Manager
shirley.tan@ttgasia.com
Jonathan Yap Senior Business Manager
jonathan.yap@ttgasia.com

Ingrid Chung Business Manager
ingrid.chung@ttgasia.com
Cheryl Tan Corporate Marketing Manager
cheryl.tan@ttgasia.com
Stephanie Toh Senior Marketing Executive
stephanie.toh@ttgasia.com
Cheryl Lim Advertisement
Administration Manager
cheryl.lim@ttgasia.com
Carol Cheng
Assistant Manager
Administration and Marketing
carol.cheng@ttgasia.com
PUBLISHING SERVICES
Tony Yeo Division Manager
Kristy Lim Publishing Services Executive
Lynn Lim Web Executive
Katherine Leong Circulation Executive
TTG ASIA MEDIA
Darren Ng Managing Director
darren.ng@ttgasia.com
Raini Hamdi Senior Editor
raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com

OFFICES

SINGAPORE 1 Science Park Road #04-07
The Capricorn, Singapore Science Park II,
Singapore 117528
Tel: (65) 6395-7575
Fax: (65) 6536-0896
contact@ttgasia.com; www.ttgasia.com
HONG KONG Unit 3003, 30/F Office Tower
Convention Plaza, 1 Harbour Road,
Wanchai, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2237-7174
Fax: (852)2237-7227

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Travel Hall of Fame

Since 2002, TTG Asia Media has honoured luminaries that have won the prestigious TTG Travel Award for at least 10 consecutive times for the same award title in the Travel Hall of Fame.

At present, these exceptional organisations and their years of induction are:

- Singapore Airlines (2002)
- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Hertz Asia Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Sabre Travel Network Asia-Pacific (2009)
- SilkAir (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)
- Regal Airport Hotel (2015)
- Banyan Tree Spa (2015)

TTG Asia Media is pleased to announce that it has set up a virtual TTG Travel Hall of Fame (www.tttravelhof.com), which will enable us to showcase the accolades, artefacts and memorabilia of the region's most exceptional travel organisations in a far more effective way and to a global audience.







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FINNAIR

CELEBRATING TRAVEL PEOPLE



People, not companies, disrupters, technology or behemoths, make travel go round.

What makes the world go round? For many, love makes the world go round. For the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), travel makes the world go round, a point it is at pains to get governments of the world to understand. I'd go with *The Stylistics – People Make the World Go Round* – a song it debuted in 1972. Better yet, I'd change that to *People Make Travel Go Round*, the theme and constant refrain of this issue.

In a year where the travel industry was whirling faster than ever, it's easy to lose sight of the people who made it go round. The last thing we want is for people to feel they have been spun in a washer that ran at 1,000 revolutions per minute. People have feelings, unlike a pair of old jeans in the dryer, and their feelings matter more than ever.

Which is why central to our theme in this year-end edition is the issue of personalisation:

How do we win over people, i.e. clients, so that they remain loyal to us? How do we take care of our own people, i.e. our staff, so that we don't lose them to our competitors or worse to another industry?

How else if not by personalisation? This has become even more critical at each passing year, thanks to new disrupters such as Airbnb, lots more disruption to business (everything from the economy, currency, climate, to terrorism, health disasters, etc), consolidation of businesses, you name it. The more these occur, the greater the need for personalisation in order for companies to survive. Just think of Marriott International's acquisition of Starwood Hotels & Resorts, which will result in a behemoth with 1.1 million rooms, 5,500 hotels and 30 – yes, 30 – brands. As we go to print, the SPGs (Starwood Preferred Guests) are pouring their hearts out to the

mainstream press over concerns of losing the recognition they've enjoyed, with many reportedly feeling that Starwood does a better job at lavishing attention on them than Marriott. Owners are concerned it will take longer – perhaps even impossible – to reach the leadership and that they'll just be a number in the portfolio of 5,500 hotels. Staff are worried what this might mean for their livelihoods – for only the most positive of people will think consolidation is not about cost savings.

It just goes to show that people could get lost in all this.

Thus, for your year-end reading, we thought we could inspire you to reflect on people and the power of personalisation. Hear from industry CEOs what it really means to be 'bespoke', or look at how Asian outbound agencies have upped their service levels this year and the rewards they received in return, to name

two sections. In keeping with the people theme, we've also tried to put a 'face' to a person – the millennial who has views on how to make the industry better; the women of the industry whom we all know have harder choices to make than men as they juggle both family and career commitments; the achiever who has finally risen to the top of his or her profession in the industry, even us, the whole editorial team at *TTG Asia* – get to know us better, especially our newcomers!

People, not companies, disruptors, technology or behemoths, make travel go round.

Let's celebrate, people. On that note, happy holidays and a peaceful and prosperous 2016 from us happy people at *TTG*.

Raini Hamdi
Senior Editor
raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com
twitter.com/rainihamdi

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MANDARIN ORCHARD SINGAPORE

- * Asia Pacific Hotel Awards 2013/2014, *Best Hotel - Singapore*
- * Asia Pacific Hotel Awards 2013/2014, *Best Hotel - Asia Pacific*
- * TTG Travel Awards 2010, 2013, 2014 & 2015, *Best City Hotel - Singapore*

MARINA MANDARIN SINGAPORE

- * World Luxury Hotel Awards 2013, 2014 & 2015, *Country Winner (Singapore) - Luxury Business Hotel*
- * TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence 2013, 2014 & 2015
- * NOW Travel Asia Awards 2014, *Asia's Top Family Hotel*

MERITUS PELANGI BEACH RESORT & SPA, LANGKAWI

- * TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Hotel Awards 2013
- * TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence 2013 & 2014



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2015

DEAL OF THE YEAR

Marriott International puts Starwood Hotels & Resorts out of its misery – and an end to months of speculation as to who would buy Starwood – by emerging the successful suitor. The deal, expected to be completed by mid-2016, will result in 1.1 million rooms, 5,500 hotels and 30 brands in the stable, probably enough to stand

up to Airbnb's claim of over 2 million accommodation listings and to break OTAs' dominance, which pundits said was a reason for the merger. As we go to print, the industry is holding its breath as to who would emerge the buyer of Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, with AccorHotels currently at the top of the guesses. Hotel brokers and consultants, including Jones Lang LaSalle, expect further consolidation of the industry in the coming year.

DISRUPTER OF THE YEAR

Without a doubt, it's Airbnb this year. From Madrid (WTTC Global Summit) to Hong Kong (HICAP), no travel industry talkshop this year was complete without a discussion on Airbnb's disruption to the way consumers buy accommodation. Its impact was starting to be felt by hotel chains and travel agencies in Asia. The CEO panel discussion at HICAP, for example, described Airbnb as "the Uber of the hotel industry", pointing out it was not a generational thing and it was a threat that extended to luxury and business travel. The panel also contemplated how to compete or even embrace Airbnb – with no concrete solutions in sight.

company and was profitable. For many in the Far East to whom Kuoni had filled thousands of coach seats and roomnights, it was hard to imagine Kuoni no longer being a source but a B2B provider. The fact Kuoni was able to sell the units quickly (the European businesses went to Germany's Der Touristik, while India/Hong Kong went to Thomas Cook India) showed there's still a future for tour operating.

UNPOPULAR FEE OF THE YEAR

Lufthansa Group's move to slap a 16 euro (US\$18) surcharge on all bookings for its airlines – Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, Lufthansa and SWISS – made through intermediaries, was unpopular.

GDSs were up in arms over the fee, saying the move was not in the interest of either the end-traveller or the airline group and penalised both travel agencies and consumers.

Implemented in September, it hasn't sent a flurry of copycat moves by other airlines.

EXIT OF THE YEAR

Kuoni Group shocked the industry with its announcement to exit the tour operating business, which was a key revenue earner for the



FITUR 2016

FITUR BOOSTS ITS PROFILE AS A BUSINESS FORUM

20 - 24 January 2016
Feria de Madrid, Madrid, Spain

Networking will be the Trade Show's focal point through initiatives and programmes aimed at favouring trade meetings between the exhibition offering and the most highly qualified international demand.

From 20 to 24 January 2016, IFEMA is organising the 36th International Tourism Trade Show, FITUR, which at this staging again puts the focus on its capability as a meeting point for the worldwide tourism industry and as a platform for generating commercial opportunities. Its focus on business makes this an indispensable appointment in the agendas of international tourism professionals, one in which they can exchange experiences and knowledge, learn about new strategies for their business and keep abreast of the latest tools for gaining competitiveness and presence in the marketplace.

Once again, the drive and promotion of tourism development will be the hallmark and added value of FITUR as a forum for the international tourism industry; hence the staging of events with a consolidated trajectory such as INVESTOUR Africa, organised jointly by FITUR, the UNWTO and Casa

África. This investment and cooperation programme, which is in its seventh edition, has the goal of bringing together on the same stage the businesspeople and investments from the 165 countries represented at the Trade Show and both public and private bodies from the African continent, with each year resulting in new proposals for tourism projects that promote a sustainable model for the economic development of Africa, a region that last year welcomed 56 million tourists and generated income amounting to 36.5 billion dollars.

This same format of previously scheduled personal interviews and work meetings will be held in a new staging of FITUR B2B Workshop Hosted Buyer, which last year registered 5,000 pre-scheduled business meetings in B2B encounters between exhibitors and more than 200 international buyers. This is why the Trade Show is already working on an intense agenda of appointments between the companies and destinations that participate in FITUR and an important group of international hosted buyers.

Equally, the FITUR SHOPPING and FITUR HEALTH sections

will have their own B2B programmes that ensure the attendance of international prescribers, both for shopping tourism and for health tourism. Exhibitors in both monographic sections will thus be able to organise work meetings with the most relevant international buyers to promote their offering, create synergies, establish alliances, etc. The interest of these meetings is thus ensured and consequently increases the business potential of these appointments.

The last staging of FITUR attracted 9,419 companies from 165 countries. It was attended by 222,551 participants both professionals from the tourism industry and the wider public.



For more information:
Jesús González
Head of Press | Tel. (0034) 91 722 50 95
Email: jesusg@ifema.es

Helena Valera
IFEMA International Press | Tel. (0034) 91 722 51 74
Email: evalera@ifema.es

Beatriz Zamorano
Editor | Tel. (0034) 91 722 58 43
Email: beatriz.zamorano@ifema.es

www.fituronline.com

Raini Hamdi picks some of the highlights of the year, as duly and diligently reported by *TTG Asia* and *TTG Online* network of reporters in the region

But these are early days; no doubt other carriers, eager to lower distribution fees and charging on with their direct-is-best policies, are watching closely.

WELCOME OF THE YEAR

Overall, 2015 was a boon year for visa relaxation by Asian countries. Japan did it and reaped huge windfalls, so much so it now has the happy problem of not having enough rooms, especially in Tokyo, to accommodate arrivals – although of course a huge part of its success was not just because of visa easing but because the yen devaluation made the country cheaper to visit. Indonesia rolled out visa-free entry, and Thailand introduced a multiple-entry tourist visa that allows foreign travellers unlimited border crossings for up to 60 days per stay within the visa validity. The year also saw Malaysia relaxing visa rulings.

TRAVEL AGENCY OF THE YEAR

Hats off to Asia’s travel agencies that kept innovating through the year. You just have to turn to *TTG Asia*’s Innovators column to see that the Asian travel trade is thriving.

Among the ideas we love include Triip.me, a sharing economy space for tours and activities, the brainchild of Vietnam’s entrepreneur, Ha Lam, and travel agency on wheels, started by Asiatravel.com, which brings the retail shop to the doorsteps of people in the heartlands.

Even established companies such as Chan Brothers, which turned 50 years, kept innovating. Group managing director Anthony Chan said: “Many successful companies last for a long time because they were able to create new growth curve or the second curve. So we must look for this second curve to bring us forward to the next 50 years.”

LOSS OF THE YEAR

We’re still mourning the loss of our beloved photographer, Patrick Tan, who died on August 27 after a year-long battle with cancer. He was 53 years old.

This year also saw the passing away of Pakir Singh, father of Singapore’s hospitality training and a strong proponent of ASEAN regional tourism cooperation, on July 2 after battling Parkinson’s disease for many years.

And Susan Teng, a veteran who helped nurture the Singapore outbound and wellness market, died in April from cancer.



BRIGHT SPOT OF THE YEAR

What could be brighter than the Asian cruise industry which not only grew bigger this year in size but saw the announcement of initiatives that sealed its future growth.

Among the initiatives: Genting’s launch of a brand, Dream Cruises, specifically to cater to Asia’s premium cruise market. Then, a slew of international cruise lines also announced they were building new, made-for-Chinese ships. These include Carnival Corporation’s Carnival Cruise Lines, Aida Cruises and Princess Cruises, and Norwegian Cruise Line. And most recently,

Indonesia’s lifting of sea cabotage – Christmas came early for the ASEAN cruise market.

CREEP OF THE YEAR

This goes to all the disasters and crises that happened this year: Hong Kong’s umbrella revolution, MERS in South Korea, earthquakes in Nepal and Sabah, bombing at Bangkok’s Erawan Shrine and, at the time of writing this, the Paris attacks and the Brussels lockdown. Everything from politics, economy and currency to Mother Nature, health disasters and terrorism – travel and tourism felt the brunt of it all this year.



10th Anniversary of Hong Kong Disneyland

To celebrate Hong Kong Disneyland 10th Anniversary, we are presenting our most spectacular live show ever this Christmas! The biggest musical numbers performed live by the greatest Disney stars and countless heart-warming moments, will deliver a truly “Happily Ever After” celebration.

Relive the greatest Disney stories of all time at the brand new, stage performance of **“Mickey and the Wondrous Book”** - an epic journey through an enchanted storybook where you’ll discover endless adventures and happily-ever-afters, with the turn of every page. Act two: the whimsical and enchanting new **Fairy Tale Forest** where you can step into a garden realm of your most cherished Disney fairytales, charmingly reimagined in miniature. Providing an extra layer of glitz and glamour to the show, Queen Elsa will make a star appearance to cast her “Frozen” magic over Main Street, U.S.A. and bring to life the **“Frozen” Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony!** For the grand finale, the star of the show becomes Sleeping Beauty Castle - completely enhanced with spectacular new castle projections that are sure to take the sparkling **“Disney in the Stars”** fireworks display to all-new heights.

Give you and your guests the perfect excuse to celebrate the holidays in style, with a “Happily Ever After” at Hong Kong Disneyland!

Travel Trade Salute Offers

To express our gratitude towards our valued trade partners, employees across designated travel trade industry sectors are welcome to enjoy exclusive early bird discount, up to 40% off, at Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel and Disney’s Hollywood Hotel. There is also a 10% off on the published price of 1-Day or 2-Day Tickets from now till December 31, 2015.

Please email reservations@hongkongdisneyland.com for enquiries and room reservations.

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Operating Hours: Daily from 9am-8pm (Hong Kong Time)

WHAT PERSONAL

CHANGING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR, REALLY?

HANS LERCH

A partner at Abercrombie & Kent, Lerch is himself a demanding customer – and has always been and always will be. The customer, says Lerch, has not changed, and therefore there will always be space for companies that provide personalised service

WHEN was it that consumers changed? When did it come to people's mind that buying a US\$9,000 Hermès handbag in the morning and a pair of Levis for 30 bucks in the afternoon was perfectly fine? That etiquette did not matter that much or do not matter at all. Was it 30 years ago, 40 years ago? And what else has changed with customers, i.e. with us people, since?

Nothing! And I mean: Nothing!

I often eat in the same restaurants. The waiters know me and they call me by my name when I walk in. I drink expensive wines, I tip them well, they give me outstanding, personalised service and I love it. Swiss (International Air Lines, SWISS) does the same thing. I'm a Black cardholder, in the top 100 of 17 million clients, and

they call me by my name 20 times before I'm seated. It's embarrassing but it feels good.

I live in Zurich, so what do I do if I want to spend my weekend in Vienna? I book my flight on the Internet, like everybody else. I call the GM of the Sacher hotel to book me a room and I call the Steirereck to reserve my table. It's among the 10 best restaurants in the world and they know me there. Do I need a travel agent? Would that enhance the experience? No. Do I get personalised service? Yes. The last link in the chain provides that, although since I'm an experienced traveller I use other channels to book my trip.

Why is Abercrombie & Kent successful in luxury travel? It's because of the brand and personalised service, as almost everything else can be copied. FIT clients are treated like royalty when they book, when they travel and after they have returned.

I know of another company in the UK which specialises in city breaks, a product which almost everybody book online. This company has many knowledgeable travel consultants who know the destinations well. Clients book the good old-fashioned way, by phone, and the consultant quotes the good old-fashioned way, by hand, whilst on the phone! After a sale is made, the company concierge calls up the client and helps with booking opera tickets, good restaurant seats and whatever else that could enhance the experience. And what is the result? Thirty

million pounds (US\$45.5 million) turnover, a gross margin of close to 40 per cent and an EBIT margin of 15 per cent. Prices are high and operational costs too but it's a very good business because of its highly competent and personalised service!

What has changed are the channels, opportunities to buy, information load, competition, the knowledge each individual today possesses, thanks to the societies we live in and thanks to the changes the Internet has created over the years. But has the individual, the person, the client, the consumer, you and me, really changed that much? I seriously don't believe that. We mortals still look for what we have been looking for all along. Appreciation. Recognition.

Because we are clients, whether we buy luxury or anything else.

makes her ponder what personalisation is not. In this inspiring essay, she pens the true meaning and acts of personalised service

I TRAVEL approximately 150 days a year, logging hundreds of hours on airplanes. I recently boarded a flight and was unceremoniously handed an index card by the flight attendant stating that I had just passed the one million mile threshold on that airline. There were no words of congratulation, no glass of champagne, or any attempt to make me feel special. What should have been a momentous occasion honouring my loyalty to this airline only brought a sense of depression and disappointment, and made me reflect on the importance and power of personalisation.

Personalisation is taking the extra time to understand what matters to someone and showing them you care. There is a fine line between personalisation and personal intrusion, but when done right, tailored approaches create a desire to come back, to commit, and to care – key sentiments that are incredibly important to me when I think about our hotel partners, associates and guests.

Preferred Hotels & Resorts has built a culture around celebrating our associates' successes to show them that we appreciate their dedication to helping our business succeed, and to create a work environment that fosters trust, loyalty and emotion beyond a pay check. I personally recognise

HAVE A HEART, NOT A CRM SYSTEM

LINDSEY UEBERROTH

The president & CEO of Preferred Hotels & Resorts encounters an experience that



From left: Lindsey Ueberroth, Hans Lerch and William Heinecke

Kicking off our year-end issue themed *People Make Travel Go Round*, **Raini Hamdi** invites three leaders to pen their thoughts on winning people through personalised acts

PERSONALISATION MEANS

every associate's birthday or milestone anniversary with the company and reach out to celebrate major life events like a long-awaited marriage proposal. Marking these occasions that are happening inside and outside of the office makes the difference in having associates feel like Preferred Hotels & Resorts is a company they enjoy working with, not just a "job."

We dedicate the same level of personalisation to our hotel partners by celebrating every contract renewal with a bottle of champagne and a note of thanks for their continuous trust and partnership. More importantly are the random acts of thoughtfulness that show we value them as so much more than a client, which could be mailing a copy of a great book to the client who is an avid reader, to sending an Uber credit to someone who recently undertook a two-hour commute as a respite from the daily drive.

These same small acts of recognition go a long way with guests staying in our hotels. I have countless stories of little touches that have made me feel at home when I am literally thousands of miles away. One of my favourite examples is when The Jefferson Hotel in Washington, D.C. placed a framed picture of my dog in the room along with homemade biscuits that I could take back home because they knew how much I missed her and how much she would appreciate the treats. And when Wequasset Resort in Cape Cod gave me a room amenity of Bumble & Bumble

shampoo and conditioner because it noticed I travel with my own and was running out of them.

These memorable experiences had nothing to do with a fancy high-tech CRM system. At the end of the day, authentic personalisation comes down to a person taking the time to notice and to execute on the little things that are important to someone.

While I won't hold my breathe that the next flight attendant I encounter will somehow know I never want the peanuts, I will be forever appreciative of all the little efforts when it comes to personalisation.

LIPSTICK AND WHATSAPP MESSAGES GO TOGETHER

WILLIAM HEINECKE

The founder, CEO and chairman of Minor Group still gets a lipstick message on the mirror (it's not what you think) and this simple, old-fashioned act – along with today's technology – gives him a lot to hope for in the industry's continued capability to deliver personalised service

PERSONALISATION has always been a fundamental aspect of the luxury hospitality industry but never more so than today.

As technology has advanced and made the world much more instant, so has the need for hoteliers to make use of it to fully personalise their guests' experiences. Whether it is allowing all of our hotels to know that a guest's favourite drink is a Tanqueray gin and tonic because he orders it every evening at sunset when staying in one of our hotels, or giving guests the ability to contact one of our hotel GMs directly through email or WhatsApp, today's world allows for more personalisation and helps us to know and understand our customers better.

We all have our own needs and wants, our own desire for personalisation, but these needs and wants are exactly that – personal. How we recognise that, allow it to flourish and remember it, will continue to set us apart from what other organisations are doing. Personalisation is the key to making a luxury hotel successful. We all have good beds, loyalty programmes, spas and restaurants but it is the emotional connection with the people that makes the difference.

I was recently on a trip to the Maldives and the team at the hotel had taken the time to write 'welcome back' to Cathy and I in lipstick on the bathroom mirror

in our room. Not only does this make me feel good but I know that the team has taken the time (the rarest commodity we have) to do something that we will appreciate and make us feel special.

Personalisation is also important for our team members. The more the teams feel like they are part of a big family and that we know what is important to them, the more they will be inspired to deliver great experiences for our guests. The Heinecke Foundation scholarships were born out of us wanting to understand and support our most important assets – our people and the most important part of their lives, their children and their education.

In the coming months, Anantara will celebrate its 15th birthday. The brand has come from a very humble beginning on the beaches of Hua Hin in Thailand, and has since expanded into deserts, jungles and cities, growing into a collection of 34 luxury hotels and resorts in 10 coun-

tries – with two new countries to be added soon with Anantara resorts opening in Sri Lanka and Oman. Anantara was born in response to the emergence of discerning travellers seeking luxury with a sense of indigenous discovery. During the last 15 years the way people travel and experience the world has changed but Anantara continues to satisfy guest desires to connect deeply and personally with their travel destinations.

Have the demands of our guests changed over the last 15 years? Not necessarily. Travel trends have changed but the hospitality industry is still effectively the same – people still want incredible experiences. Technology has helped improve the guest experience but our people are still the most important part of the success of our brands and our company, and it's our people who consistently ensure that our guests enjoy a fully personalised experience every time they stay at our hotels and resorts.



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Outbound Travel

In the face of an increasingly discerning clientele, Asian outbound agencies reveal how they have upped their service levels this year and the rewards they received in return

RAISING THE STAKES



GULDEEP SINGH SAHNI
MANAGING
DIRECTOR,
WELDON TOURS &
TRAVELS

How have you improved service levels this year?

We made it mandatory for staff to undergo training by completing various specialisation programs.

Next, we have a new system in place where we designated a specific person to handle a specific job based on their expertise. This way, every service is taken care of by a specialist who will maintain a high standard of customer satisfaction for that particular service.

We have also raised the service levels with our overseas handling agents. We are now dealing with their transportation departments and reservations directly. We have also made it point to call our clients regularly while they are on tour to check how things are going for them.

What has been the biggest reward as a result?

One of our clients came to our office with his family, with a large bouquet and a bottle of champagne to thank us for the initial suggestions that we made and the level of service that he received during the tour. He also made sure to specially thank one of the staff who directly handled his booking.

An account of a client's unreasonable expectation of personalised service

A client staying in a private villa shared that he is fond of Harley bikes and wanted us to arrange one for him during his stay. We managed to provide a brand-new Harley which obviously excited him to the hilt. – **Rohit Kaul**

How have you improved service levels this year?

The company provided a lot of in-house training to frontline staff on personal conduct, how to treat and pamper guests, and how to communicate.

What has been the biggest reward as a result?

Positive feedback from clients. Some who have been impressed by our services have also recommended us to their friends, and this has resulted in increased sales.

It is very noticeable this year as the outbound market is soft, yet Malaysians are still willing to spend on travel. They came to us because they wanted to be served by consultants with good product knowledge.



DESMOND LEE
GROUP MANAGING
DIRECTOR,
APPLE VACATIONS &
CONVENTIONS

An account of a client's unreasonable expectation of personalised service

A client who told us he didn't eat beef insisted he wanted to try Kobe beef in Japan. He changed his mind all of a sudden at the restaurant, after the guide described the meat as "the best beef" in the world.

On top of this, the client wanted the beef to be complimentary. This client was earlier made aware by the guide that Kobe beef had to be pre-ordered and clients had to pay for the dish. – **S Puvaneswary**

How have you improved service levels this year?

We have developed a unique CRM programme which highlights clients' requirements, and their visa and passport expiry date in advance. With this new tool, we are able to remind and assist our clientele in obtaining the necessary travel documents without creating any inconvenience to them at the last moment. In addition, we do online check-in for all clients so that they are aware of the seating and meal preferences in advance.



SURESH MENDIS
CEO,
CLASSIC TRAVEL

What has been the biggest reward as a result?

As a company that specialises in corporate and leisure travel, our commitment in continuously improving our products and services has made us a leader in the travel arena.

An account of a client's unreasonable expectation of personalised service

Customers expect almost the impossible from travel agents when it comes to visa assistance. We encounter this mostly when it handling incentive tour groups to varied destinations.

We are first put under immense pressure by the airlines who want us to ticket the clients before the deadline for seat cancellation. Depending on the group size, some ticketing time limits are set one month before the group departure. Simultaneously, we struggle with the corresponding embassy to get visas issued on time.

When these two overlap, which happens pretty often, we are left with no choice but to issue the tickets and pay for ground arrangements, without any guarantee of the visas being granted.

In such instances, we tend to incur huge losses when visas are delayed or rejected due to various reasons beyond our control. – **Feizal Samath**

How have you improved service levels this year?

Last year, we introduced six promises within our Ace JTB brand, which is aimed at higher-end customers, and we're seeing the pay-off now.

Some promises we make to our clients include putting them in accommodation with a satisfaction rate higher than 80 per cent from previous guests and that they will have plenty of relaxation space; ensuring that the room they stay in will have a good view; and making sure that the photos of the meals in our brochures are identical to the ones served. Not all travel companies make that type of commitment.

What has been the biggest reward as a result?

(Customers) who have gone on our Super View of the World trips telling us that they want to go on another one.

We have selected 100 destinations – such as the Italian island of Lampedusa, Machu Picchu or Victoria Falls – that are not easy to get to but have great views. Not all these places are famous, so we are also trying to introduce new destinations to Japanese travellers and generate new demand.

An account of a client's unreasonable expectation of personalised service

I can't think of anything for outbound tourist, but we do have misunderstandings sometimes with visitors coming to Japan from abroad.

For example, when we have pictures of women in onsens, they have a towel around them. We have to do that because we can't use pictures of naked women. But sometimes, our foreign guests think that is how they are meant to bathe. It causes confusion, especially if they are sharing a bath with Japanese people who consider it to be bad manners. – **Julian Ryall**



YUSUKE ASAMI
MANAGER, TRAVEL
MARKETING &
STRATEGY
DEPARTMENT,
JTB CORP



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Outbound Travel

How have you improved service levels this year?

Continuously improving our customer experience is a key driver of long-term customer loyalty, and our travel consultants can now provide travel consultancy at the customer's place of convenience – be it at their home, café or golf course by using Dynasty Travel's sole proprietary software iPad mini Tourix booking system.



CLIFFORD NEO
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
DYNASTY TRAVEL

What has been the biggest reward as a result?

A group of VIP guests joined us on our inaugural Signature Series tour programme in Greece, which included luxurious hotel stays and visits to Michelin-star restaurants.

Their valuable feedback said it all: "The tour itineraries were well-planned and the pace allowed us to cover many places of interest without feeling rushed; all we needed to do was to focus on enjoying ourselves because the details were all well taken care of."

An account of a client's unreasonable expectation of personalised service

A female traveller who expected our tour manager to provide freshly squeezed orange juice every morning. However, we had tried to provide whenever possible and thus she is still a strong supporter of Dynasty Travel. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

How have you improved service levels this year?

We have structured a Service Level Agreement with our clients and the implementation is monitored monthly by a third-party auditor. The feedback is taken seriously and implemented immediately.

What has been the biggest reward as a result?

We have managed to achieve a very good client retention level of more than 90 per cent.

An account of a client's unreasonable expectation of personalised service

Nothing in particular. Each client is unique and they have different needs and expectations. We have a pre-engagement meeting before bringing clients on board. This meeting is to understand the scope of work, expectations, and terms and conditions. From there, we decide on the team structure, business process and monitoring system to avoid complaints and unreasonable expectations. – **Mimi Hudoyo**



ANTHONY AKILI
CEO,
SMAILING TOUR



RONNIE HO
CHAIRMAN,
JETOUR HOLDING

How have you improved service levels this year?

We provide individual headsets to customers and free Wi-Fi service for specific tours. We have launched new products like overseas wedding trips and a new South America tour themed The Sky of Mirror at Bolivia. We have also set up a new event and travel management team, and also collaborated with local artists to adapt their art pieces into Jetour gift items.

What has been the biggest reward as a result?

The South America tour was a key success – our bookings achieved a record high after the tour was launched in June. Moreover, our brand received massive media coverage in magazines and newspapers. We won two categories – My Favourite Tour of Europe and My Favourite Tour of South America – at the U Magazine Travel Awards 2015.

An account of a client's unreasonable expectation of personalised service

Customers are more demanding but not unreasonable. We adopt a proactive approach to enhance our service in anticipation of the consumer's needs. So far, customer feedback is very positive and shows that it can definitely enrich the travel experience. – **Prudence Lui**

How have you improved service levels this year?

As an adventure travel company, we have to be responsive to changing conditions in the regions we travel to, but this was taken to a whole new level following the Nepal earthquake. We have responded to an overwhelming number of calls and emails from past clients who wanted to provide practical help by releasing a new suite of Rebuild trips within months of the disaster.

What has been the biggest reward as a result?

The success of the Nepal Rebuild projects is the achievement we're proudest of this year. Besides a family trip and a trekking trip, we also have a number of confirmed school groups participating in the rebuilding effort.



SUE BADIYARI
CEO,
WORLD EXPEDITIONS

An account of a client's unreasonable expectation of personalised service

We had 170 people travelling with us in Nepal at the time of the earthquakes, and almost all were understanding and sympathetic to the situation as we worked to minimise disruptions for everyone. We had one client, however, who demanded to be airlifted out of the country immediately. – **Rebecca Elliot**





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GETTING PERSONAL



JUDY LUM
GROUP VICE
PRESIDENT FOR
SALES AND
MARKETING,
TOUR EAST
GROUP

How do you rate the level of personalised service in Singapore?

On a scale from one to 10, it is at four.

What does Singapore need to improve its level of personalised service?

A national campaign to focus on social grace – how good it feels to be nice and thoughtful to others. Once this message gets through, good personal service will come naturally from the heart and customers will be able to feel the warmth and sincerity from us.

An example of best personalised service by a partner or supplier

My most memorable experience of service beyond one's expectation was a staycation at a five-star hotel in Singapore.

My daughter was about 10 years old then, and when we entered the room we saw the hotel's signature teddy bear and a jar of jelly beans waiting for her. She never stopped talking about the hotel stay for months after. It was the little thoughtful things that really impressed me.

Also, about three hours after checking in, my husband and I went down to the lobby and were greeted by our name (my husband's family name) by the staff. I can't tell you how good it made us feel. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

How do you rate the level of personalised service in Hong Kong?

The level of personalised service is average. The market is very competitive nowadays with the ease of booking tours and packages online. Customers generally prefer instant confirmation and automated processes which minimises the personalised element in the services provided.



SILVANA LEUNG
OPERATIONS
MANAGER,
HONG KONG
FOODIE

What does Hong Kong need to improve its level of personalised service?

Inbound agencies could learn more about customers from different countries to find out more about their characteristics and general interests to provide tailor-made tour services.

An example of best personalised service by a partner or supplier

Hotel concierge teams are travel agencies' best partners. When guests are on the road, they may not have Internet access or have trouble booking local tours. This is where hotel concierge staff come in to help liaise between guests and travel agencies, ensuring tours are booked and paid for. – **Prudence Lui**

How do you rate the level of personalised service in Indonesia?

Indonesia currently offers a remarkable level of personalisation, not only when compared to western countries, but also when compared to other Asian countries. Indonesians are traditionally committed to personalised service.

What does Indonesia need to improve its level of personalised service?

There is always room for improvement, and I think we need to understand the importance of customer profiling prior to providing services.

An example of best personalised service by a partner or supplier

At Le Méridien in New Delhi, you don't need to compile a laundry list, you just hand over your clothes. The staff know perfectly well which clothes belong to which customer despite the size of the hotel. And they greet you by name too. – **Mimi Hudoyo**



RATNA NING
PRESIDENT
DIRECTOR,
PACTO



JOANNA ALTOMONTE ABRERA
DIRECTOR,
INTAS
DESTINATIONS

How do you rate the level of personalised service in the Philippines?

For the high-end resort and people who deal with high-end clients, I think it's quite personalised. It's in our nature to do so. We're personable, and go out of our way to be pleasant and solicitous, and that adds up to personalisation.

What does the Philippines need to improve its level of personalised service?

Suppliers can try to find out as much as they can about their clients. They can also improve the background research on their clients.

An example of best personalised service by a partner or supplier

Discovery Shores Boracay is among our partners that's the most consistent in providing the best personalised service.

They make the extra effort to reach out and obtain as much information as possible about guests – such as preferences or allergies – and provide the extra service touch by offering perks like a foot spa upon arrival. – **Rosa Ocampo**

How do you rate the level of personalised service in Japan?

Japan has a highly evolved and deep-rooted culture of service and this is very clearly visible in the hospitality sector. Many high-end travellers really like the excellent service culture.

I would go as far as to say that Japan has a unique service culture that is above and beyond any other country in the world.

What does Japan need to improve its level of personalised service?

The only criticism I would have is that Japan is less globally minded than other destinations. Staff may want to help but they do not always understand what a foreign customer wants or expects of them in a given situation. From the industry point of view, I feel that more employees in the hospitality sector need to go abroad, see what is happening in other parts of the world and learn from that.



MICKY GAN
MANAGING
DIRECTOR,
ALPHA
INTERNATIONAL
SERVICE CORP

An example of best personalised service by a partner or supplier

I think you only have to look at the initial encounters that you get at Tokyo's top hotels, like ANA InterContinental, Four Seasons, and Imperial Hotel, for an example of excellent service. The doormen and bellboys at those places really know their stuff. – **Julian Ryall**

Amid a growing preference for tailored experiences, Asian inbound travel agencies appraise the level of personalised service in their markets and share how that can be enhanced



ARUN ANAND
MANAGING
DIRECTOR,
MIDTOWN TRAVEL

How do you rate the level of personalised service in India?

The level of personalised service in India is quite high, which is important for a diverse country like ours. The industry here is a matured one and it understands that different guests look for dif-

ferent experiences. From tours to hotels, tourists can expect that their standard for a particular service will be fulfilled.

What does India need to improve its level of personalised service?

If we can have more trained guides who are also well versed in another language, it will help to ensure that the level of personalised service is further improved.

An example of best personalised service by a partner or supplier

Chomu Palace in Rajasthan. One of our groups was staying there and during a camel ride, two clients fell off. Our guide took them to the hospital, and they were admitted. The tour leader, a lady, stayed at the hospital with them but she felt uncomfortable staying alone with the two patients.

Chomu Palace went out of the way and sent two of their female staff to stay in the same room as the tour leader. They also sent breakfast for the three of them from the hotel. When they were transferred to Delhi by ambulance, the hotel – on their own accord – packed lunch, some fruits and mineral water for them which they never charged us for. – **Rohit Kaul**



ANTHONY HAYES
GLOBAL MANAGING
DIRECTOR,
AAT KINGS

How do you rate the level of personalised service in Australia?

Offering a high level of personalised service is something that Australia is getting better at, but we still have a long way to go. There are still a number of

industries that are stuck in the one-size-fits-all mindset, which is neither realistic nor sustainable.

What does Australia need to improve its level of personalised service?

Whatever the industry, understanding and listening to your customers first and foremost is the key to offering a personalised level of service.

From a tour operator's perspective, we try and find out as much about our travellers before they join us to give us an idea of who they are.

On the road, our incredible "travel directors" endeavour to know each and every guest so they are able to provide them with personalised service, helping them to achieve their individual idea of a dream holiday in Australia.

An example of best personalised service by a partner or supplier

We only work with the best of the best in the industry who also embodies these values. It would be impossible to pick just one of the incredible suppliers we work with. – **Rebecca Elliot**

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Inbound Travel



**SHAFRAZ
FAZLEY**
MANAGING
DIRECTOR,
VILUXOR HOLIDAYS

How do you rate the level of personalised service in Sri Lanka?

There are many types of agencies; some cater specifically to the budget or luxury clienteles, and certain segments like ad-

venture or wellness. These agencies have a deep understanding of their target market and are able to provide a high level of personalised service to their guests. There are also agencies that specialise by country or region and are mostly geared towards fulfilling the needs of that market.

Sri Lanka has a good repeat rate from Europeans. The challenge now is how to handle a large emerging market such as China which is developing at a very fast pace. Their travel patterns, likes and behaviours were only revealed recently and the influx is already overwhelming.

What does Sri Lanka need to improve its level of personalised service?

What we need to further develop is the follow-through service from hotels, other suppliers, national guides and improve the country's infrastructure.

Basically, inbound agencies can bring in tourists, but consistency from booking to after sales and everything in between, such as providing above and beyond service whenever possible, will advance the tourism industry in Sri Lanka.

An encounter of best personalised service by a partner or supplier

None. – Feizal Samath



ALLY BHOONEE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
WORLD AVENUES

How do you rate the level of personalised service in Malaysia?

Malaysia is known and blessed to have hospitable people and by nature Malaysians are courteous and helpful. This is the best quality that we possess – the human touch. We always treat our clients like our own family.

What does Malaysia need to improve its level of personalised service?

Clients usually have very personal requests when it comes to personalised service. They also seek acknowledgement, appreciation, and want to know that they are cared about and valued.

This is where we have to keep training and educating our frontline about what is expected from them in order to fulfil the needs of clients. Not every client is the same and they do not want to be served in a robotic manner. Knowing the client's name alone is not enough.

An example of best personalised service by a partner or supplier

The best personalised service that I have encountered is at Club Med Cherating Beach. There, I witnessed the general manager accompanying guests to their rooms and welcoming guests to the restaurant for their meals. The management-level staff are always with the clients and they are very attentive. This builds loyalty and retention of clients. –

S Puvaneswary



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Technology solutions providers rate how well agencies in the region have gained the high-touch factor through the use of technology in the past year

KEEPING HIGH TOUCH THROUGH HIGH TECH



ALBERT POZO
PRESIDENT,
AMADEUS ASIA-
PACIFIC

The online space in Asia, particularly China, South Korea and India, is where you see the most advanced usage of mobility and mobile devices compared to anywhere else in the world.

The amount of traffic that stems from mobile devices in Asia is over 50 per cent. There is leapfrogging – many companies move from having the majority of their business in traditional (modes) to mobile directly, not necessarily going through the web phrase.

In the more traditional space, some travel agencies have learnt to stay specialised and a few companies have managed to keep the high touch with their clients and keep the knowledge pertinent for those type of customers. Through that, they are able to take a higher share of wallet than if they purely serve clients on the online mode.

Agencies should adopt new technologies and follow the way consumers want to buy. More consumers want to buy via mobile, but also mobile devices allow the delivery of services in different places in different ways.



MARTIN HERBERT
GENERAL
MANAGER - ASIA,
TRAVELPORT

Consumers in Asia are very advanced and open to personalised services. However not too many agencies are meeting that demand. They are not investing in that space as sufficiently as they should.

To increase their game in offering personalised service, agencies need to first invest in building up data on their customers and to mine that data for business intelligence insights. They should also be online and mobile-ready because personalised service would most definitely require a fusion of offline, online and mobile touchpoints with the customer.

Travelport has identified these critical needs of our agency partners and have been working on developing the necessary solutions.



ANDHIE SAAD
VICE PRESIDENT,
MARKETING AND
SALES,
GALILEO
INDONESIA

There are two kinds of travel agents, offline and online.

To compete with OTAs, offline travel agents are seeking ways to serve clients better. Many have created their own online sites but as travellers are getting smarter, they need to raise their service standards to be more personalised. (So they use technology such as) Galileo's Travel Profile, which records a client's profile and preferences. This way, their clients do not need to depend on a specific travel consultant in the company to get personalised service.

Agents need to continue to step up their services by maximising existing facilities.

For example, airlines today offer travellers to choose meals, seat preferences and additional baggage. Travellers usually go to the airline's website or contact airline's office themselves to request for these choice after the tickets have been issued by their travel agent.

Agents need to keep up with the latest airline offerings without continually having to check the airlines' websites. They need to be able to instantly compare fares, see pictures of the cabins and seats in a single window. This will enable them to suggest options their customers might not have previously considered and offer the best deal for them.



AMBI MOORTHY
PRODUCT
MANAGER FOR
SALES IQ,
ZOHU, INDIA

On a scale of 1-5, I would rate travel agencies 2.5 on the use of technology to increase personalised service.

In the past decade, agencies have moved from printed brochures to artistically-crafted websites, containing a portfolio of pictures of exotic locations. But the website is just the beginning; the real challenge is converting travel enthusiasts to sign up for an actual trip.

For example, website visitors interested in a backpacking trip to the Himalayas should be shown nearby attractions, fun events and offers that would fuel their curiosity. Sadly, it's not the case right now; they have to dig through multiple pages of information to make their travel plans.

Travel agencies should realise they need to collect useful data like a contact information, geolocation, website and buying behaviour while a customer is on their website.

All this data should be sliced and diced by a software, creating profiles of their customers. Profiling will also enable agencies to send targeted/personalised messaging based on a website visitors' interests.

Visitors can also make quicker and informed trip decisions. A platform like Zoho SalesIQ can give you this edge.



KEVIN O'SULLIVAN
CEO,
OPEN
DESTINATIONS,
SINGAPORE

We have noticed growth in the number of enquiries from Asian travel companies over the last few years to upgrade to more advanced software. They want to replace their old legacy systems with new technology that will aid them in providing more personalised service and customise their product offering towards their customers.

The consumer is booking more and more last minute, therefore agencies need to have technology that allows them to service this trend. This can be achieved through increasing integrations with suppliers such as flights, hotels and other ground services.

*By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena,
Paige Lee Pei Qi, Mimi
Hudoyo, S Puvaneswary
and Rohit Kaul*

An Official
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Late Night Function

Singapore, 22 October 2015

Over 600 ITB delegates and invited guests had the privilege of experiencing the first event held in The South Beach's Grand Ballroom. Co-hosted by TTG Asia Media and The South Beach, the event marks the official opening of the Lifestyle & Luxury Hotel of Design's Grand Ballroom. To complete the welcome ceremony, the hotel's General Manager Jan Büttgen, South Beach Development's former CEO Aloysius Lee and TTG Asia Media's Managing Director Darren Ng delivered an opening address and inaugurated the Grand Ballroom. With gourmet food and drinks, music and entertainment by celebrated artists under the Forest of Lights, the night was one of the main highlights for many ITB Asia delegates and guests as they seamlessly blend work and play together in this Imaginative Social Space that integrates heritage buildings with ultra-modern ecological architecture.



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The party's co-hosts Jan Büttgen of The South Beach, Darren Ng, Xinyi Liang-Pholsena, Raini Hamdi, Michael Chow of TTG Asia Media and Aloysius Lee of Millennium & Copthorne Hotels and Resorts.



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Opening Speech by Jan Büttgen, General Manager of The South Beach as he unveiled the Grand Ballroom.



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CHANGING FACE OF THE PROFESSION



Lim Hui-Juan



Jakub
Lewandowski



Hans Tjandra



Bronwyn Towers



Atul Prabhu



Noor Ismail

They are ambitious, tech-savvy and keen to seek out new ideas. Find out how millennials in the travel industry think and what makes them tick in the workplace

HATTA TEO
EVENTS REVENUE
MANAGER,
SHANGRI-LA HOTEL,
SINGAPORE

In the eyes of Gen X'ers, you're from Mars. Tell us how your brain works.

Having grown up in the information age, we're always looking out for fresh new ideas, if not being already bombarded by them through social media. This rubs off on us and we're inspired to seek and live out these things and hence, job security is no longer a priority but chances to have new experiences are.

Which travel idea caught your eye this year?

I love the outdoors and am an advocate for the preservation of the environment for the future generations to enjoy. Most companies market themselves as 'eco-friendly' but Sweden's Kolarbyn Ecolodge takes this to a whole new level by providing guests with the opportunity to reconnect with nature. Imagine living in the forest and chopping your own wood, fetching your own water from the spring, picking wild blueberries and chanterelles, and having a meal by the open fire, topping the evening off with a moose and beaver safari! There's a sense of achievement and appreciation that one gets when everything is done manually, especially in my generation where everything is instantly available. The best part? No electricity!

If you run your company, what one thing will you do to ensure millennials do not leave and stay motivated?

For starters, allowing them the freedom to pitch their ideas and explore new ways of doing things, with the mantra being that no idea is stupid.

Which friend in another workplace do you envy and why?

There are two of them actually; one works in YMCA as an expedition guide and the other as an outdoor writer. I don't think they get a higher pay than I do but they both get paid to go outdoors, something which I truly desire. I guess money really isn't everything.

In 10 years' time... I'd be happy owning a rock climbing gym. – Raini Hamdi

LIM HUI-JUAN
CO-FOUNDER,
QUOTIENT TRAVELPLANNER

In the eyes of Gen X'ers, you're from Mars. Tell us how your brain works.

Our management team has a relatively traditional mindset in terms of work attitudes and values (work hard, work smart, integrity, respect for people, etc) but we have also experimented with many new ideas to motivate the team, create a warm and friendly environment as well as design benefits for our HR programmes that are inspired from our personal experiences and team feedback.

Which travel idea caught your eye this year?

The proliferation of alternative travel solutions such as Uber and Airbnb despite regulatory hurdles and protests globally. These companies dream of making cities more accessible (Uber) and providing unique accommodation for travellers (Airbnb), believe strongly in their vision and persist in growing their business.

If you run your company, what one thing will you do to ensure millennials do not leave and stay motivated?

One concept we have employed, which addresses the needs of not just the millennials but something all our staff appreciate, is a workplace that feels like home. They have the comforts of home in terms of F&B, relaxation areas and, most impor-

tantly, the confidence that they have the freedom to use these comforts.

Which friend in another workplace do you envy and why?

Is it odd that I do not envy any other workplace at the moment?

In 10 years' time... I'll still be involved in the travel industry, growing the recognition of the profession, developing sustainable programmes for tourism perhaps. – Paige Lee Pei Qi

BRONWYN TOWERS
OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE,
LUXPERIENCE

In the eyes of Gen X'ers, you're from Mars. Tell us how your brain works.

At a million miles an hour (but I am working on that)! With so much technology giving us access to multiple people at the same time, you are driven to want to keep up with everything and everyone across multiple time zones. I love the fact I can be in touch with someone in New York at the same time as someone in out-back Australia. I'm also driven to find the latest apps or developments that can connect me with the people I need to more efficiently.

Which travel idea caught your eye this year?

Luxe City Guides' new concierge app, which was launched at Luxperience this year. The technology some of our exhibitors used on their stands really enhanced the show. The idea of switching off and really being present and immersed in an experience is my way to travel. Many products at Luxperience are unique and offer exclusive opportunities that allow you to experience where you are in the most authentic of ways – eating the food,

being with the locals and taking in your surroundings.

If you run your company, what one thing will you do to ensure millennials do not leave and stay motivated?

Listen to them for feedback and new ideas. Give them dedicated projects to manage and use their imagination and empower them to make decisions.

Which friend in another workplace do you envy and why?

I don't really envy anyone as I have a great job that is enviable – I love being able to have my hand in a lot of different pots, whether it be marketing, social media, travel planning, sales, service, technology and of course the high of running an event. But I would love to create a job that allows me to get out on my mountain bike more often and discover great places to eat off the beaten track.

In 10 years' time... I'd be semi-retired and mentoring some up-and-coming Gen Zs and continuing to travel and experience new places (on my mountain bike). – Rebecca Elliot

HANS TJANDRA
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY
OFFICER,
MG GROUP

In the eyes of Gen X'ers, you're from Mars. Tell us how your brain works.

Millennials are not too different from Gen Xs in physical form, but we do think a little bit differently than previous generations. We are not afraid to try out new things, embrace technology and change in our daily lives. We relentlessly seek for information to make our lives better and easier. We are not too loyal to a brand or a company, but we are loyal to values that a brand or a company offers.





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Millennials

Which travel idea caught your eye this year?

One particular idea that took off further than my expectations this year is the last-minute booking platform. Asian hotels' occupancy rates are generally below 90 per cent year-round and last-minute booking tools saw opportunity from it. It is not something new, but the middleman apparently have cracked the code to bring hoteliers and potential customers closer via smartphones. As expected, millennials are the main customers for such last-minute hotel booking apps.

If you run your company, what is the one thing you will do to ensure millennials do not leave and stay motivated?

We will deliver our value propositions and keep updating them with future technologies and requirements. Millennials do not put price as their first priority when buying a product or service; they prioritise value, simplicity and convenience. Therefore, customers' point of contacts including helpline, website and offline channels need to be more efficient and helpful than before. In simpler words: Keep your company relevant now and in the future.

Which friend in another workplace do you envy and why?

I do not envy any other workplace because each has its own merits and drawbacks. However, I do admire Whatsapp for their efficiency, very high level of focus and breakthrough. Whatsapp really keep its core value simple and keep on working deeper to deliver higher value through current and future technologies. I personally love challenges above pay, fun or prospects, because I believe there are always good opportunities everywhere we go.

In 10 years' time... I am probably still pursuing what I am doing right now. I am now living my dream with a great company that allows me to grow as a person and as a professional. My other passion would be my restaurant business, which is also doing great at the moment. Hopefully in 10 years' time, I can be recognised as an influencer in Asia's travel industry, as well as a successful food entrepreneur. I am working towards those two goals. – Mimi Hudoyo

NOOR ISMAIL

HEAD OF SALES & MARKETING, ASIAN OVERLAND SERVICES TOURS & TRAVEL

In the eyes of Gen X'ers, you're from Mars. Tell us how your brain works.

Haha! We Gen Ys have less traffic in our brains. The way we see things are simpler but not necessarily that we don't think deeply about things. Personally, I would say that sometimes I act first, then think about consequences later.

Which travel idea caught your eye this year?

With more OTAs and B2C travel websites, it is interesting to know how we can leverage technology without jeopardising the main aspect of this business,

i.e. servicing our guests. Unfortunately, some OTAs are very aggressive and offer services at super-low rates and I wonder if they can sustain that in the long run. Asian Overland Services, which I work for, will celebrate its 40th anniversary next year and I think one of the secret recipes for this achievement is staying relevant with new trends.

If you run your company, what is the one thing you will do to ensure millennials do not leave and stay motivated?

My focus will be on making the workplace environment conducive. We are spending so much time in the office, so the workplace has to be multifunctional, attractive, trendy and sophisticated. The office should give a good feel to the staff and to a certain extent, be a place that millennial employees can be proud of.

Which friend in another workplace do you envy and why?

My friends working in the oil and gas industry seem to be well remunerated and the working hours are quite fixed – at least that is how it seems to me.

In 10 years' time... hopefully I will become more knowledgeable about the industry and have a senior position in the company that I work for. It is always good to know many aspects of the company,

not only on the business perspective but others areas such as administration, human development and operations such as opening new branch offices and technology. – S Puvaneswary

ATUL PRABHU

FOUNDER & CEO, ROOMCENTRAL

In the eyes of Gen X'ers, you're from Mars. Tell us how your brain works.

I believe I am instinctive. I follow my gut to take the right steps. When it comes to making decisions, I feel that sharing suggestions and ideas have to be encouraged to set the ball rolling at every stage but decision-making should be done swiftly and with accountability. Also, it is important that a leader take ownership and responsibility to provide a direction to the team.

Which travel idea caught your eye this year?

Definitely Airbnb because it helps travellers to directly connect and interact with the locals who can become hosts and offer home-like accommodation. It has provided a simple and efficient way for people to monetise their extra space and showcase it to the travellers at various price points. It is a really simple idea but it is executed so well that it is almost magical.

If you run your company, what is the one thing you will do to ensure millennials do not leave and stay motivated?

The most important aspect of keeping employees motivated and loyal is to make sure that you take care of your people the way you take care of yourself. A positive, healthy and friendly work environment that allows them to explore their potential and take responsibility and ownership as well is what we are

creating at RoomCentral. Little things like food, music and happy hours go a long way in creating an environment that breeds loyalty and motivated employees.

Which friend in another workplace do you envy and why?

Google has a very unique work environment. They help employees build new products by providing all the resources needed, giving the freedom to explore while entrusting them with responsibility, making their employees accountable.

In 10 years' time... Ten years is too long to predict. But in the next two to three years, I see myself expanding the portfolio of products under HOSTRA, the parent of RoomCentral and a technology company focused on delivering lightweight, flexible and data-driven solutions for the hospitality, transport and travel sectors. – Rohit Kaul

LUCINDA COWING

CUSTOMER SERVICES, WALK JAPAN

In the eyes of Gen X'ers, you're from Mars. Tell us how your brain works.

I may not be a typical millennial as sometimes I don't think my brain has evolved fast enough to process the sheer amount of information that I'm confronted with, not just in my job. I try very hard to be organised and I do rely very heavily on technology. Social media is important to me, but mostly on a personal level.

Which travel idea caught your eye this year?

Walk Japan runs snow-shoe hiking tours in some of the most remote and beautiful parts of Niigata and Nagano Prefectures. It can be hard work and take a bit of getting used to for first-timers, but (guests) learn quickly and they take frequent rests. It's incredible that in some places the snow is five metres deep beneath your feet.

If you run your company, what is the one thing you will do to ensure millennials do not leave and stay motivated?

I'm in two minds on this issue. I think it's important to have a culture of respect for people who have accumulated knowledge and experience in a company, but at the same time, creative and new ideas often come from subordinates. It's harder in a large company to have those voices and ideas heard, which is a shame. I also think that young people need to be stimulated at a time of such rapid change.

Which friend in another workplace do you envy and why?

There are very few friends that I envy because I have a job where I can work from home and I live in a beautiful, rural part of Japan. If I had to choose someone it would be the friends that I went to music college with, where I studied the piano, and who have gone on to make a career for themselves in that area. That was my original plan.

In 10 years' time... I don't know. I'm generally creative and artistic and there are many aspects of Japanese art and design that need to be managed and promoted more internationally, so maybe I can get a full-time job in that area. – Julian Ryall

JAKUB LEWANDOWSKI

PR & MARKETING PROFESSIONAL AT A LUXURY HOTEL IN HONG KONG

In the eyes of Gen Xers, you are from Mars. Tell us, how does your brain work?

Our travel needs are no different from baby-boomer or Gen X travellers. However, when selecting destinations, hotels and restaurants, we are somewhat twisted by the factor of how Instagram-worthy those choices are and how instantly we'll be able to share our experiences with our "friends and followers". We also tend to care more about the environmental impact of our travels and personal well-being.

I tend to book at least one hotel per three-night stay at a given destination to compare between hotels. I travel with my own fruit as an emergency airplane snack, my own set of chopsticks, metal straw/stirrer, and portable water filter to be able to refuse complimentary water in a hotel.

Other than that, I guess our brains work exactly the same way yours does!

Which travel idea caught your eye this year?

My partner and I always choose to travel with a purpose of experience that relates to our personal passions, often with a combination of encountering a new culture or seeing for ourselves one that is about to dissipate in our lifetimes due to excessive travel and popularity.

If you run your company, what is the one thing you will do to ensure millennials do not leave and stay motivated?

I would make sure they get the satisfaction from a job well done, and that their career is not limiting them from being spontaneous about their travel choices! I'd make sure the working culture is rewarding for free-spirited and spontaneous decision-makers to stick around for as long as there's mutual benefits from the work agreement.

Which friend in another workplace do you envy and why?

I've met a lot of interesting individuals on the job, from global celebrities to (professional bloggers) who often make their travel decisions (on the spur of the moment), and there are days when I envy them for just that.

In 10 years' time... I'd be at one of the lesser known islands in South-east Asia, running a by-invitation only, zero-waste hotel/homestay, which caters to like-minded (travellers). Or, if that doesn't work, skiing in Alaska. Really hard to tell... Millennials seem to be living on the spur of the moment, aren't they? – Prudence Lui

Bloom in the Park

21 October 2015, Wednesday - A blooming night of excitement as co-hosts, Park Hotel Group and TTG Travel Trade Publishing came together once again to celebrate the opening of Park Hotel Group's newest property, Park Hotel Alexandra - a unique, modern and elegant escape at the fringe of Singapore's city centre. The party's guests had a great time mingling under the stars over tantalising canapes and drinks while enjoying the electrifying performances of the night. Heartiest congratulations were also in order as the Park hosts basked in the honour of their 4th consecutive win as Best Regional Hotel Chain at the TTG Travel Awards 2015.

The party co-hosts came together for a toast to thank all attending guests and celebrate Park Hotel Group's 4th consecutive win as the Best Regional Chain Hotel at this year's TTG Travel Awards!



Darren Ng of TTG Asia Media, Mohd Rafin of Park Hotel Group, Judy Lim of CEL Development, Hermann Wegmueller and Kevin Tay of MG Group



Ambrose Bittner of Red Latern Journeys, Yupha Moonsarn of VirgoVirgin, Anne Tan of Park Hotel Group and Chua Meng Pin of Asia Choice Pte Ltd



Mario Scozia of A&A Incentives, Meetings, Conference Ltd with Peter Stenberg of Rustic Travel



Tracy Chua and Raymond Pek of TravelClick with Joey Kang of Rainmakers



Tony O'Halloran of Out and About Travel, Hem Chanpiseth of Service Excellence and Ngyuen Hang Guy of HGH Travel



Magdeline Ma and Jocasta Quek of Safe2Tavel, Rachel Ng of Park Hotel Alexandra and Jennifer Foo of APTI



Greg Carter of Chimu Adventures, Yvonne Cheng of Park Hotel Group and Chad Carey of Mad Project



James See of Singco Limited, Manja Wiegand and Benjawan Christen of Expedia, Cheong Hai Poh of Grand Park City Hall, Melanie McTighe of The Travel Corporation, Stanley Ho and Ethel Timtim Gardon of Grand Park City Hall, together with Gerald Fitzpatrick of Five Continents

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Companies

KEEPING THEM HAPPY



SIMON MCGRATH

COO PACIFIC, ACCORHOTELS

What's the one big step you took this year in a bid to retain employees?

At AccorHotels Australia, we are proud to have a loyal workforce with 60 per cent of our employees having more than two years' service. This is a reflection of the passion and commitment from our employees towards our guests. We recognise the talent challenges that come with a rapidly changing industry, and we have introduced several new programmes to support internal promotion and diversity.

This year, we have committed to achieving a greater gender diversity in senior leadership roles. We set an ambitious target to increase the number of women in executive positions from 27 per cent to 50 per cent by 2018, which is above our global target of 35 per cent.

What visible results did you see?

We have increased our female representation, with female general managers now up to 39 per cent. We have also identified 16 additional female leaders whom we are upskilling to progress them to a more senior or general manager role within the next 12 months.

Biggest learning point from it?

Diversity is at the very heart of our organisation; companies benefit greatly from having women in senior leadership roles and this is one of our top priorities.

On top of this, we will be employing up to 180 indigenous applicants this year (we're aiming for 600 new Indigenous employees by 2018), and we also seek to attract additional mature workers who we highly value for their experience and communication skills. – **Rebecca Elliot**



NICHLAS MARATOS

VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES,
ASIA-PACIFIC,
STARWOOD HOTELS &
RESORTS

What's the one big step you took this year in a bid to retain employees?

Starwood firmly believes that the rapid growth and global success of Starwood is anchored on our associates, and the company takes a multipronged approach towards retaining staff. This includes training, both on the job and e-trainings; incentive, especially with the sales teams; and career development.

Also introduced this year was Starwood Careers Month, an Asia Pacific-wide talent attraction exercise that focuses on both internal career development and external recruitment.

What visible results did you see?

Our annual internal survey, StarVoice, has shown that associate engagement scores has consistently improved year-on-year with Asia-Pacific achieving the highest rating of 91 per cent in 2014, which is testament to our successful human resource programmes and initiatives. We are confident that scores this year will be similar.

Biggest learning point from it?

As Starwood continues with our strong growth trajectory, especially across the Asia-Pacific, the need for retaining and attracting quality talent has become more evident. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

AMANDA ARLIN

DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES, PANORAMA GROUP

What's the one big step you took this year in a bid to retain employees?

We are aware that digitalisation (breaks down) boundaries, enabling people access to information at faster speeds than ever. To stay ahead and win the hearts of our customers, our strategy is to 'humanise' the brand, and make the brand and products relevant to them. Our challenge is aligning the people to this strategy.

We are now trying to think outside of the box where the human resource department is no longer just a support unit of the company but is expected to be a business partner too. As such, we have changed our policies and services to be relevant to our people.

For example, we customise compensations and benefits to fit employees' needs, such as giving an option for health benefits or transportation solutions for certain levels. We apply value-centred recruitment, taking onboard those who show service attitude. We also learn to understand generation motives and behaviour.

The most important thing is leadership. Surveys have shown that when employees resign, they are not leaving the company but they leave the (management). We have in place the Panorama Leadership Excellence programme to help our managers to become Panorama leaders.

What visible results did you see?

This policy is (still) in progress, but we have seen excitement from within, shown by the numbers that keeps it on track.

Biggest learning point from it?

We cannot have the same policy for everyone. This is because we are humans, we are unique and we like to be treated as special individuals. To build trusting relationships, we need to connect and engage. – **Mimi Hudoyo**



Travel organisations reveal the strategies they have undertaken this year to retain their best employees and keep them at the top of their game

Y AND PRODUCTIVE

CHRIS THOMAS

GENERAL MANAGER,
TALENT AND INNOVATION,
HK EXPRESS

What is the one big step you took this year in a bid to retain employees?

The airline shares the success with the staff immediately when we record positive earnings. For example, in addition to the already competitive base salary we offer, the bonuses of 2015 should be approximately two months of basic salary, which clearly motivates our staff to stay at HK Express.

We also built a brand-new, modern office space just next to the airport and we've replaced 80 per cent of our desktops and laptops in a move to upgrade systems and drive productivity across our back-office staff.

What visible results did you see?

Compared with 2014, the turnover rates in our two largest talent areas are significantly lowered. Our turnover in cabin crew is down 50 per cent, while cockpit turnover is also on track to be lower than 2014. Our office turnover remains low compared to the industry benchmark.

We've also enjoyed a big uptick in talent satisfaction as a result of the new office space and system upgrade. We encourage a shared dialogue with our people, listened to what they wanted most and delivered it.

Biggest learning point from it?

Our biggest learning point is the value derived from the unfiltered and anonymous staff feedback. We are pleased with both the high participation rate (85 per cent) and the staff survey result. By result, I don't mean we scored top marks in all categories. Rather, the survey highlighted areas of concern and gave our team a clear focus on issues to fix. With a strong commitment to fixing those issues, we wish to build a more satisfied team, and are confident that with the system upgrade, we will have a more productive workforce.

– Prudence Lui







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Companies

SYED RAZIF AL YAHYA

GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR,
SUTRA TRAVEL MANAGEMENT GROUP

What's the one big step you took this year in a bid to retain employees?

We introduced numerous technology-driven initiatives and products to make work more efficient for all our employees. The Gen Y employees love technology and they love the changes we have introduced in the workplace.

What visible results did you see?

I noticed that young people, with or without experience, wanted to join the company because they saw a future with us. Most of the existing staff also easily adapted to the changes.

Biggest learning point from it?

You have to provide training and give people time to adapt to the changes. This is especially true for the older generation of experienced staff who are comfortable with doing things manually. However, a minority will resist change and only look out for their own interests. Such people will eventually choose to resign. – S Puvaneswary

RATTAN KESWANI

DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR,
THE LEMON TREE HOTEL COMPANY

What's the one big step you took this year in a bid to retain employees?

Firstly, we focused on learning and development interventions at four stages – initial, supervisory, executive and higher management roles. Depending on their tenure, employees are taken through the higher levels of learning, based on their inclination and potential. We also identified employees and offered them learning opportunities and personalised mentorship programmes to enable them to aspire and grow. Lastly, performance bonuses are given based on deliverables, special projects and cross training targets. This helps to create a robust pipeline for growth as well as a 'steel spine' of 'must-retain' employees.

What visible results did you see?

Not only have these multiple programmes and strategies paid off in terms of higher motivation levels within the company, but they have also curtailed attrition. Our efforts in grooming these leaders of the future is bearing fruit. This year, Lemon Tree Hotels has been adjudged the 30th Best Place to Work For in India and the second Best Company in India for Unique Initiative/Programme.

Biggest learning point from it?

Employees desire an approximate two-year career progression. If we are able to project it for them and deliver our promise, retention gets proportionally managed. It's important to identify talent, nurture it, grow it and retain it. – Rohit Kaul



HIRAN COORAY

CHAIRMAN, JETWING HOTELS

What's the one big step you took this year in a bid to retain employees?

This year, the biggest investment we made to retain our best talent was to invest heavily on a programme called Learning and Development Activities. Throughout the year we designed and implemented development programmes aimed at a wide audience, ranging from general managers, executives, supervisors and trainees.

Signature programmes such as The Senior Managers Development Programme, Jetwing Lead, Everyday Leaders, Jetwing Ascension and Jetwing Achievers were implemented to enhance associates' knowledge, skills, introduce them to new concepts and patterns of thinking.

What visible results did you see?

A change in the approach when performing and handling duties was a key point that was observed, while improved coordination and stronger working relationships within the group and among work teams was also observed.

Biggest learning point from it?

Focused and structured investment on learning and development activities helps strengthen the bond within our organisation, while enhancing innovation levels, improving capacity and yielding better performance from our associates. – Feizal Samath



HIDEAKI FURUSAWA

MANAGER OF GLOBAL SALES DEPARTMENT,
YOKOHAMA BAY SHERATON HOTEL & TOWERS

What's the one big step you took this year in a bid to retain employees?

We have regular performance reviews and team meetings, but we feel that feedback from the staff and having open communication channels are important. We insist that all our managers listen to their subordinates – regardless of whether their comments are positive or negative – and we think that this helps to increase understanding between everyone involved. Being able to communicate sounds like a simple thing to do, but it's critically important.

What visible results did you see?

Turnover in the hospitality industry is a constant issue, but we think we are having some success in making people happy in their positions and keeping them longer. But looking into the future, I fear this could become a problem as we, like many hotels in Japan, are operating at 95 per cent capacity and that is putting more pressure on our staff.

Biggest learning point from it?

As well as keeping those channels of communication open, a competitive salary and guaranteed holidays are important to staff, particularly for the younger employees. I've heard of staff at Japanese companies who have never taken paid holidays, even after many years with a company. I don't think such a company will be able to keep its best people if it treats them like that today. – Julian Ryall



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On The Radar

HIDEKI YOSHIMURA,

FOUNDER AND CEO,
EVOLABLE ASIA

The ability to think outside the proverbial travel industry box and take calculated risks suggests that a new generation of Japanese leisure sector players is coming through the ranks.

Hideki Yoshimura, founder and CEO of Evolvable Asia, is just 32, but his vision coupled with a new generation's approach to business could easily herald a shake-up in the travel business.

Evolable Asia operates three travel industry websites: Tripstar, a multi-language portal that provides hotels, and both domestic and international flights; Soratabi, which links to domestic flights; and Tabiweb, which permits a user to make a reservation at an overseas hotel.

And while a web-based travel business is no longer revolutionary, Yoshimura has put Evolvable Asia on the map by doing something that no other Japanese travel firm has tried. Aware that Japan has an acute shortage of Internet engineers, which makes them expensive, Yoshimura left that side of the business to more-than-capable engineers working in Vietnam.

The model worked so well that Evolvable Asia received US\$5.3 million in new funding from Fenox Venture Capital, which Yoshimura intends to invest by setting up an office in Silicon Valley and conquering the US market as well.

That's the sort of vision that marks this company as one to watch.

Whodo youlookup to in the travel industry?

"I admire what Richard Branson has achieved. He had an unconventional concept of the market and he achieved a remarkable breakthrough in the travel industry through sheer enthusiasm and by harnessing the teamwork of his staff. He applies a light touch to his management and everyone at the company seems to enjoy working for him."

FAEEZ FADHLILLAH

CEO AND CO-FOUNDER,
LAGISATU.COM

In 2013, Faez Fadhilillah co-founded Lagisatu.com, a travel metasearch engine focusing on Muslim-friendly hotels. The fast-growing website caters to the growing legions of Muslim travellers looking for hotels that cater to their religious needs, such as having prayer mats and the *qibla* direction in rooms.

More recently at the World Halal Travel Summit in Abu Dhabi last October, the Lagisatu Travel Group

Hideki Yoshimura



Aditi Balbir



launched Salam Standard, an online hotel reference tool that provides information on hotel services and facilities that cater to Muslim travellers.

More than 10,000 properties worldwide have already joined the Salam Standard initiative, including major international hospitality chains such as AccorHotels, Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts, Rotana Hotels & Resorts, Anantara Hotels & Resorts and Rixos Hotels.

A recipient of the Malaysia's Young Technopreneur 2013 award, Fadhilillah is also an avid speaker at international travel conferences and seminars, and is currently the vice president of research and technology at the Malaysian Association of Tour & Travel Agents.

Whodo youlookup to in the travel industry?

"I have high regard for two individuals who built a company from scratch into one of the most successful in the industry. Douglas Khoo, co-founder of Qunar, whom I regard as a mentor and advisor; and Yeoh Siew Hoon, founder of Web In Travel, whom I admire for building Asia's most successful travel conference."

Faez Fadhilillah



Ha Lam



ADITI BALBIR

CO-FOUNDER AND
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
V RESORTS

Aditi Balbir has ambitious plans to expand V Resorts, the brand she co-founded in 2012, across India.

At a time when the Indian hospitality sector is seeing an influx of international players, Balbir has successfully led V Resorts to carve a market niche in the management of resorts in offbeat locations.

Currently, V Resorts has seven properties in states including Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. The hotel group is focusing on venturing into new destinations where the resorts are run and supported by local communities and where experiences like trekking and birdwatching can be offered.

Based in Delhi, the astute entrepreneur has previously worked with marquee names such as Barings Private Equity and McKinsey. She has extensive hands-on experience in management and business leadership. Under her leadership, V Resorts has seen two successive rounds of funding raised from venture capitalists like Bedrock and Seedfund.

Whodo youlookup to in the travel industry?

"When it comes to the hospitality industry, there's only one name that one can look up to and it's none other than Vikas Oberoi."

Yento Chen



Eric Gnock Fah



These promising entrepreneurs have made it this year, bringing their organisations to greater heights and transforming the industry with their fresh ideas

HA LAM

CEO, TRIIP.ME

Ha Lam founded Triip.me in Ho Chi Minh City with her husband and several other friends in 2013.

The female entrepreneur and mother of three young children took several bold steps to bring the travel startup to where it is today. Earlier, she and her husband sold their house and pooled together their personal savings to to bolster the finances of their venture.

Triip.me has since been making waves in the travel industry thanks to its innovative use of the thriving sharing economy space. The three-year-old portal turns ordinary people into amateur tour guides, as they are given the liberty to create a tourism package and sell it to tourists directly on the website.

As a testament to their growing potential, Triip.me won the inaugural World Tourism Forum Innovation Award in April 2015, bagging a cash prize of US\$10,000. Triip.me is currently valued at US\$1 million.

Who do you look up to in the travel industry?

"We look up to Airbnb. They have worked hard over the past seven

years even though no one believed in them. And they do it just because they love to deliver great experiences for travellers. Their story reminds us why we are doing what we are doing."

ERIC GNOCK FAH

CO-FOUNDER, KLOOK

With seven languages under his belt, Eric Gnock Fah is a melting pot of cultures, putting him at the epicentre of the travel business. Owing to his experience as an investment banker at Morgan Stanley and later in the hedge fund space, he has also developed a keen business acumen.

Tapping on the rising popularity of FIT travel in Hong Kong, Klook was launched in anticipation of revolutionising the way travellers plan their itineraries through one-stop desktop and mobile applications. It enables travellers to book at pre-departure or at the very last minute for a curated selection of activities at an exclusive price.

Fah is pursuing aggressive expansion for this travel startup, growing the Klook team from three to over 50 in four offices.

In October 2015, Klook strengthened

its foothold in Asia by raising US\$5 million from investors like Matrix Partners and brought on Agoda's North Asia Head as strategic advisor. This is just the beginning of the site's quest to take on the on-line travel activities space in Asia.

Who do you look up to in the travel industry?

"Agoda is the company we relate to the most. Their execution has been absolutely first class. Within a short period of time, Agoda's team consolidated the previously fragmented hotel sector in Asia and forged strong relationships with them. The company also did a phenomenal job in scaling the consumer side. Travel is prone to a winner takes all market and Agoda has clearly achieved that in Asia – and that is the goal for Klook."

YENTO CHEN

CEO, DESTINATION TOUR

One of Indonesia's most prominent outbound players, Chen has come a long way from his early days as a staffer in a travel agency close to two decades ago to become one of the shareholders of Enjoy Wisata, a travel agency based in Jakarta.

Earlier this year, Chen finally set up his own company, Destination Tour. Starting small but armed with big ambitions, Chen's strategy is to focus on personalised service to develop both corporate MICE and retail businesses for his company. He also seeks to build trust among his clients based on the firm beliefs that satisfied clients are key to driving business growth.

Chen aims to make Destination Tour a strong player in the Indonesian MICE sector in five years and one of Indonesia's top 10 travel companies before his planned retirement at 55.

Who do you look up to in the travel industry?

"I admire Bapak Rudy Akili, the founder of Smiling Tours and Travel. I learnt a lot from him when I was working at his company. His innovation and leadership skills helped the company to become one of the top tour companies in the mid-1990s. When he stepped down, his children took over and grew the company further, showing how he well he passed down his entrepreneurship skills to his children."

By Julian Ryall, S Puvaneswary, Rohit Kaul, Paige Lee Pei Qi, Prudence Lui and Mimi Hudoyo



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Time Out

MARNIE WHIPPLE-TARSINOS

REGIONAL SALES MANAGER,
ASIA-PACIFIC,
CRYSTAL CRUISES

With this gift of time I would be on a sailboat in a warm water destination like Greece, the Seychelles or Tonga and start each day with a swim right off the boat followed by meditation. I would nibble on in-season local fruits and soak up the rest of each day, enjoy the sea view, observe the sounds and dance of birds and fish, savour the smell of the salty air, and feel the sun and sand between my toes. With a pen in hand I would write, and when the sea calls I would jump back in for another swim before unfurling the main sail to connect with our awe-inspiring planet.

– Raini Hamdi



MINT LEONG

MANAGING DIRECTOR,
SUNFLOWER HOLIDAYS

I would go to a five-star beach resort in Langkawi and spend three days pampering myself. I would wake up late, have a leisurely breakfast, laze by the beach or pool, enjoy a couple of spa treatments over the three days. I would also walk around town, sightsee and go window shopping. If I have friends who are free, I will also spend time with them.

– S Puvaneswary



MAY MYAT MON WIN

GENERAL MANAGER,
CHATRIUM HOTEL ROYAL
LAKE YANGON

If given three days, I would fly off to a different city to soak in the local culture and experience new things.

Like my previous trip last month to Hanoi, I sipped coffee in a shop that wasn't found on TripAdvisor. I watched people strolling by and living life. I enjoyed myself tremendously, stayed offline and took it easy. Like any vacation, there will also be a sunset dinner and a daytime spa.

– Xinyi Liang-Pholsena



AMANDA HYNDMAN

GENERAL MANAGER,
MANDARIN ORIENTAL,
BANGKOK

Goodness me, I cannot remember when I last had 24 hours alone since I first became a general manager 23 years ago, let alone three days! I am very fortunate though to have found my piece of heaven on earth whenever I need a change of scenery – our holiday home on the island of Menorca.

I usually walk 15km to 25km a day around the port, along the coastline and beaches. I also love to cook and after browsing through my cookbooks for hours, I head to the market with Nigella as my inspiration, stopping for far too many coffees while trawling through the British tabloids. My blissful solitude continues with even racier reading, *Wild Mary: The Life of Mary Wesley*, for the umpteenth time in the bath. But by early evening I would long for the company of my husband for champagne or friends who can always be persuaded to come over for big meals. I find it very cathartic to make big meals and at least three homemade desserts for them.

By day two, let alone day three, my mind would be drifting back to the other love of my life – my hotel.

– Raini Hamdi

If given three days to spend by yourself, how would you spend it?



LISA FITZELL

GROUP MANAGING
DIRECTOR,
DIETHELM TRAVEL
GROUP

Juggling work and a family is a challenge. I love it but time is precious. Although I travel a lot in my job, I still love exploring new places.

If I had three days, I would discover a new destination I haven't been to before. I recently fell in love with the people of Myanmar on a visit to Yangon and I would return to visit the mountain town of Kalaw. There I would hike, cycle, take in the beautiful scenery, visit hill tribe villages and breathe in fresh mountain air. I would return refreshed ready to pick up life again!

– Xinyi Liang-Pholsena



Women leaders in the travel industry divulge their dream vacations – if given a break from all work and family obligations



MONETTE ITURRALDE-HAMLIN

PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER,
TEAMASIA

Three days just for me? That would be heaven on earth! I would travel somewhere that I have never been before and search for that elusive field of lavender flowers, bring along a book to read, my sketchbook and paints to capture what I see, my laptop to write my blog, and my iPhone plus charger/universal adapter to take photos and post on social media. It would be great to walk around, see the sights, visit museums and bookstores, sample local cuisine, drink wine or sip coffee at the plaza, and meet interesting people. And who knows, maybe fall in love again! –

Rosa Ocampo

SONJA VODUSEK

GENERAL MANAGER,
THE PENINSULA MANILA

I love everything about Amanpulo, the Aman Resorts' whisper-quiet island paradise in Palawan, the Philippines. This is where I go to recharge, think and create while snorkelling in the Tiffany-blue waters that's rife with sea turtles, sitting back and enjoying the stunning sunsets, stargazing from my villa (you can also look at the moon and the constellations through a NASA-worthy telescope), reading a good book, walking along the powdery white sand beach, eating and – most importantly – sleeping. It's my little private "happy place", and a long weekend there is like two weeks off. –

Raini Hamdi



ERNIE KUSMASTUTI WASIAT

GENERAL MANAGER,
ROYAL AMBARRUKMO
HOTEL, JOGJAKARTA

If I have three days to myself, I would spend the time creating my own necklaces.

Necklaces for me are more than just accessories. They are a part of me. It boosts my confidence when appearing in public and meeting my VIP guests.

When I am in a bad mood, I will go into my room. When I clean my necklaces and rearrange them, it helps me to feel better.

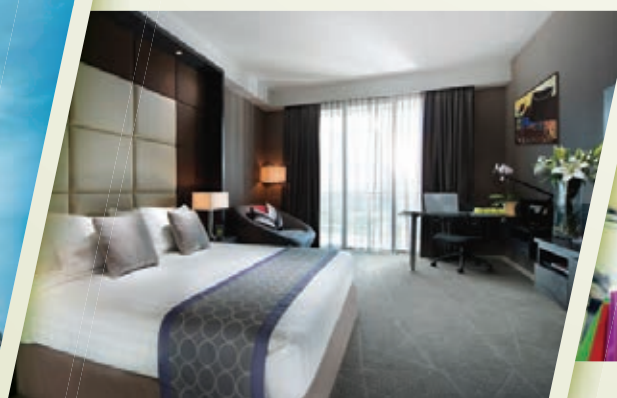
I like necklaces with different gem stones. I have been meaning to create my own necklaces; I have all the tools but not the time. –

Mimi Hudoyo



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Time to meet – us. Here are the faces behind the bylines that you see in our print and online. We love TTG and we hope our passion continues to hook you to read us



RAINI HAMDİ
SENIOR EDITOR

Who's in your family? Kurt, Hatta, Tamara, Chanel, Vanessa (and their spouses), Luis and Luna **What do you do for fun?** Zumba **Your ideal vacation?** Hiking with Kurt in the Alps **How do you book your own leisure trips?** Kurt does it mostly – he's retired **What are you reading right now?** *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman **How do you stay healthy?** Exercise every day, eat lots of salad, fruits and nuts **Favourite food?** Singapore hawker food **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Drinking more than I should at social functions **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** People who stroll in a crowded walkway; people who read their mobile while walking – especially in crowded walkways **Most people don't know that you...** have a 28-year-old son



KAREN YUE
GROUP EDITOR

Who's in your family? Two adorable boys – one my age and another who has just turned one in early December **What do you do for fun?** I tell my husband bad jokes and watch him cringe **Your ideal vacation?** A month with my family in a cool and quiet countryside that has been painted in the rich colours of autumn **How do you book your own leisure trips?** I rely on one trusted travel consultant for the easy job of recommending, planning and booking my luxury resort sojourns, but personally take on the time-consuming process of fixing my annual two-week vacations in Japan **What are you reading right now?** A lengthy online article explaining the meaning behind the colours and textures of baby's poop **How do you stay healthy?** I drink beer; it is made from healthy grains **Favourite food?** *Tutu kueh* **A bad habit you cannot kick?** I chew my fingernails when I'm thinking **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** People who keep sighing in frustration – they are instant mood busters. **Most people don't know that you...** sold chicken rice in a small neighbourhood shop throughout 2005, just for the experience. It was exhausting work, but so satisfying when you work for yourself



XINYI LIANG-PHOLSENA
DEPUTY EDITOR, TTG ASIA & TTG INDIA

Who's in your family? My husband and our baby girl **What do you do for fun?** I like to cook and blog about my culinary learning journey, although having a baby means having less time to try out new recipes **Your ideal vacation?** A road trip with my family, filled with good conversation in the car, numerous food stops and gorgeous scenery along the way **How do you book your own leisure trips?** I usually look to Google and friends for recommendations and tips, before making the bookings directly online **What are you reading right now?** *Love, Life, and Elephants: An African Love Story* by Daphne Sheldrick **How do you stay healthy?** Doing housework and lifting my chubby baby whenever I think my arms need some toning **Favourite food?** My current obsession is *naam phrik kapi* (Thai shrimp paste dip) **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Reading my iPad in the dark **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Supermarket or convenience store staff bagging a single small item into a plastic bag and the customer doesn't say no **Most people don't know that you...** were the interpreter for Thai action star Tony Jaa during his *Tom Yum Goong* movie promotion in Singapore



S PUVANESWARY
EDITOR, MALAYSIA

Who's in your family? I'd say my dog is more 'family' than the humans I live with **What do you do for fun?** I love spending money on foot reflexology **Your ideal vacation?** A quiet beach vacation **How do you book your own leisure trips?** I compare prices online and book with the cheapest provider **What are you reading right now?** Mende Nazer's autobiography called *Slave* **How do you stay healthy?** I avoid people who are negative and caustic **Favourite food?** Pineapple pizza **A bad habit you cannot kick?** I sleep too much **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Smokers who ask: "Do you mind if I smoke?" It annoys me that I always say "No" when I do mind so much **Most people don't know that you...** would love to be an entrepreneur



MIMI HUDOYO
EDITOR, INDONESIA

Who's in your family? My two sisters, one in-law, and five wonderful nieces and nephews **What do you do for fun?** Spending time with my family – going out for lunch and watching movies together, or gathering around food, drinks and jokes at home **Your ideal vacation?** I travel so much for work that my ideal "vacation" is to stay at home where I can try out new recipes in my kitchen, do some gardening, have a traditional massage (yes, I can call a masseuse home) or just to laze around watching movies **How do you book your own leisure trips?** I book online when I travel to a familiar destination and through a travel consultant when it is a new one **What are you reading right now?** *The Rise of Majapahit* by young Indonesian novelist Setyo Wardoyo **How do you stay healthy?** I walk for miles and miles...in the shopping malls, and have my weight training with shopping bags in both hands **Favourite food?** Most things savoury **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Snacking under stress (this usually comes when I'm on deadlines) **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Spam mails, spam calls **Most people don't know that you...** like talking to the plants in my garden



PAIGE LEE PEI QI
ASSISTANT EDITOR, SINGAPORE

Who's in your family? Many ladies (three sisters, my mum) and the only male exception – my dad **What do you do for fun?** Feeble attempts at calligraphy in my journal **Your ideal vacation?** A spa retreat far away from the frenetic city's hustle and bustle **How do you book your own leisure trips?** My favourite travel consultants are TripAdvisor users who provide me with realistic feedback and expectations before I click book. **What are you reading right now?** On top of the Bible, I am in the midst of a psychological thriller by Paula Hawkins, *The Girl on the Train*. **How do you stay healthy?** Opting for yogurt ice cream instead of the real ice cream **Favourite food?** Green tea chocolate **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Social media. The longest I've steered clear of it was one month, when I challenged myself personally to a social media fast **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Skinny people who tell me they are too fat **Most people don't know that you...** used to wait for Santa Claus when the clock struck 12, and still wishes that he exists



TTG People



ROSA OCAMPO
CORRESPONDENT, THE PHILIPPINES

Who's in your family? My siblings, nephews and nieces, a few grandchildren, friends, and friends of friends who camp at home perennially **What do you do for fun?** Sleep **Your ideal vacation?** Catching up with friends anywhere in the world **How do you book your own leisure trips?** Through travel websites **What are you reading right now?** *Where God was Born* by Bruce Feiler **How do you stay healthy?** Work, work, work, then sleep, sleep, sleep **Favourite food?** Anything and everything edible **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Caffeine addiction and sleeping too much **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Being taken advantage of **Most people don't know that...** I can catch a falling star



PRUDENCE LUI
CORRESPONDENT, HONG KONG

Who's in your family? My hubby and a 13-year old daughter **What do you do for fun?** Outdoor activities to appreciate nature like hiking and canoe **Your ideal vacation?** Enjoying food and wine in the Pacific Alliance (Mexico, Peru, Brazil and Colombia) of South America **How do you book your own leisure trips?** If it's for family trip, I'll leave all the hassle to my reliable agent **What are you reading right now?** *The First Aid Manual* published by Hong Kong St John Ambulance for renewing my first aider qualification **How do you stay healthy?** Staying away from desserts and sleeping for at least seven to eight hours per night **Favourite food?** I can't live without rice, especially congee, rice noodle and rice rolls **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Turning my radio on before going to bed **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Driving too slow in the fast lane during peak hours **Most people don't know that you...** love Chinese musical instruments and play *erhu* in my leisure time



CAROLINE BOEY
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT,
CHINA & SPECIAL PROJECTS

Who's in your family? My 81-year-old mum, older brother, sister-in-law, two nieces, a nephew and their respective spouses and boyfriend **What do you do for fun?** I enjoy working up a good sweat, spending time with my family and friends, watching my favourite TV series, cooking and baking **Your ideal vacation** To discover a new place or revisit a favourite where I can still work up a good sweat, spend time with family and friends, watch my favourite TV series, cook and bake **How do you book your own leisure trips?** I book online **What are you reading right now?** *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. **How do you stay healthy?** I exercise regularly, drink lots of water, eat healthy and have cheat days, enjoy the occasional drink, get enough sleep and always see the glass half full **Favourite food?** I love anything spicy **A bad habit you cannot kick** I used to complete people's sentences but I think I may have been cured **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Rude people **Most people don't know that you...** practise holding my breath for more than 40 seconds. My yoga instructor says it is good for living longer. He can do so many things I cannot, so I guess he must be right



ROHIT KAUL
CORRESPONDENT, NEW DELHI

Who's in your family? Parents, wife, a daughter and a son **What do you do for fun?** I play a game of cricket with my friends and try to win even if cheating is needed **Your ideal vacation?** A quiet beach destination with my family **How do you book your own leisure trips?** I book directly with suppliers **What are you reading right now?** *How to Keep Your Woman Happy: A Manual for Men* **How do you stay healthy?** I play sports and walk **Favourite food?** *Monji Haak*, a vegetarian Kashmiri cuisine of collard greens that is eaten with steamed rice **A bad habit you cannot kick?** I don't have any bad habit. I am a saint **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** People who don't value people who have been helpful to them **Most people don't know that you...** I never spoke to any girl in my school. I was too shy



FEIZAL SAMATH
CORRESPONDENT, SRI LANKA/
MALDIVES

Who's in your family? My wife, son, daughter, fish and a dog who gives me hell but is adorable to the rest of the family **What do you do for fun?** Travel across Sri Lanka whenever I can find the time **Your ideal vacation?** Three days in a beach resort, tea country or British colonial bungalow with the phone off the hook and to hell with writing! **How do you book your own leisure trips?** Usually on my own through the web. **What are you reading right now?** Climate change series on *National Geographic* magazine **How do you stay healthy?** Don't ask. Trying to stay on track (I mean using the treadmill itself is a challenge) **Favourite food?** All the bad ones – burgers, sausages and alcohol! Unfortunately due to a strict diet owing to health issues, I'm off these at the moment. Waiting for the green light...hmm! **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Nothing. If there is a will, there is a way **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Injustice and bad road manners **Most people don't know that you...** have raised millions of rupees for children's charities over the past 30 years



REDMOND SIA
CREATIVE DESIGNER

Who's in your family? Mum, dad, brother, sister-in-law and my fur kid (a Jack Russell Terrier) **What do you do for fun?** Travelling **Your ideal vacation?** Sunny places **How do you book your own leisure trips?** Mostly online **What are you reading right now?** Comics **How do you stay healthy?** Eat and walk **Favourite food?** Mutton curry **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Eating too much **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Nothing **Most people don't know you...** love snacks with garlic chilli



GOH MENG YONG

CREATIVE DESIGNER

Who's in your family? My wife, my three-year-old daughter, my one-year-old son, my mother, brother and sister
What do you do for fun? Building lego, playing with my kids, cooking and gaming
Your ideal vacation? Any part of Japan for two weeks
How do you book your own leisure trips? Mostly online
What are you reading right now? *The Dalai Lama's Book of Wisdom*, which I got during a stopover in Thailand
How do you stay healthy? Eating moderately and healthily (smirk), cycling
Favourite food? Sashimi, my wife's cooking
A bad habit you cannot kick? Binge watching on Netflix
Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you? People who do not give their best at anything they do
Most people don't know you... write with my right hand and draw with my left hand



LINA TAN

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Who's in your family? Steven (husband), Victoria (daughter), Gabriel (son) and Buddy (family dog)
What do you do for fun? Laze around and watch movies/drama
Your ideal vacation? Travel to any part of the world for shopping and pigging out with my family
How do you book your own leisure trips? Go on the website to search for cheap air tickets and hotel stays
What are you reading right now? The Bible, reading the stories and trying to figure the meaning behind each story
How do you stay healthy? Walk Buddy and do housework as exercise
Favourite food? I like savoury food but nothing in particular is my favourite
A bad habit you cannot kick? None that I can think of
Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you? My outburst at anything that upsets me! I cannot keep calm
Most people don't know you... like to be left alone at times! Hahaha

MEET THE NEWCOMERS

When did you join TTG and what do you find most fascinating about your job and the industry?



DANNON HAR

ASSISTANT EDITOR, ONLINE

Since hopping aboard the TTG Asia supersonic jet plane on July 13 this year, there has been little time to reflect until now, when I got tasked to jot this personal piece. The ride is best described as being aboard a luxury cruise ship going full speed against river rapids, where every sightseeing opportunity is an excuse to Tweet and Instagram for #TTGAsia. Social media shenanigans aside, my first love and mind remains fixated on increasing the inbound traffic of TTG Asia's online properties to achieve maximum occupancy. Speaking of which, time to check in on how the new website is developing...

RACHEL AJ LEE

SUB EDITOR

I joined the TTG family on July 13, 2015 and it has been a rollercoaster ride. Coming from a lifestyle background, adjusting to "harder" trade news is kind of like walking into a chiller after a dip in a hot onsen. But I get to discover the world through overseas trade shows and have a hand in producing show dailies, and expand my editing and writing portfolio, all of which makes the switch pretty eye-opening.



JULIAN RYALL

CORRESPONDENT, JAPAN

My first contribution to TTG Asia was in January – and I confess it has been a steep learning curve since day one. I'd previously written travel stories, but never covered travel as an industry. My second confession is that it's addictive and I consider myself fortunate to be writing about a sector that is dedicated to helping people have a good time in some of the most exotic and beautiful places in the world. What can possibly be bad about that?

REBECCA ELLIOT

CORRESPONDENT, AUSTRALIA

I filed my first story for TTG in April and was over the moon when I became the official Australia correspondent in July. I love exploring and uncovering the latest news, innovations and opinions from the industry in Australia and then sharing them with TTG readers. The industry is thriving Down Under, which means there's always a good story to be told.





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