

TTG

ASIA

No. 1743/February 2017



View from the top

Wanda Tulfo Teo, the first travel agent to become the Philippines' tourism secretary, wants to be the change agent the industry is seeking. She tells Rosa Ocampo what she intends to achieve

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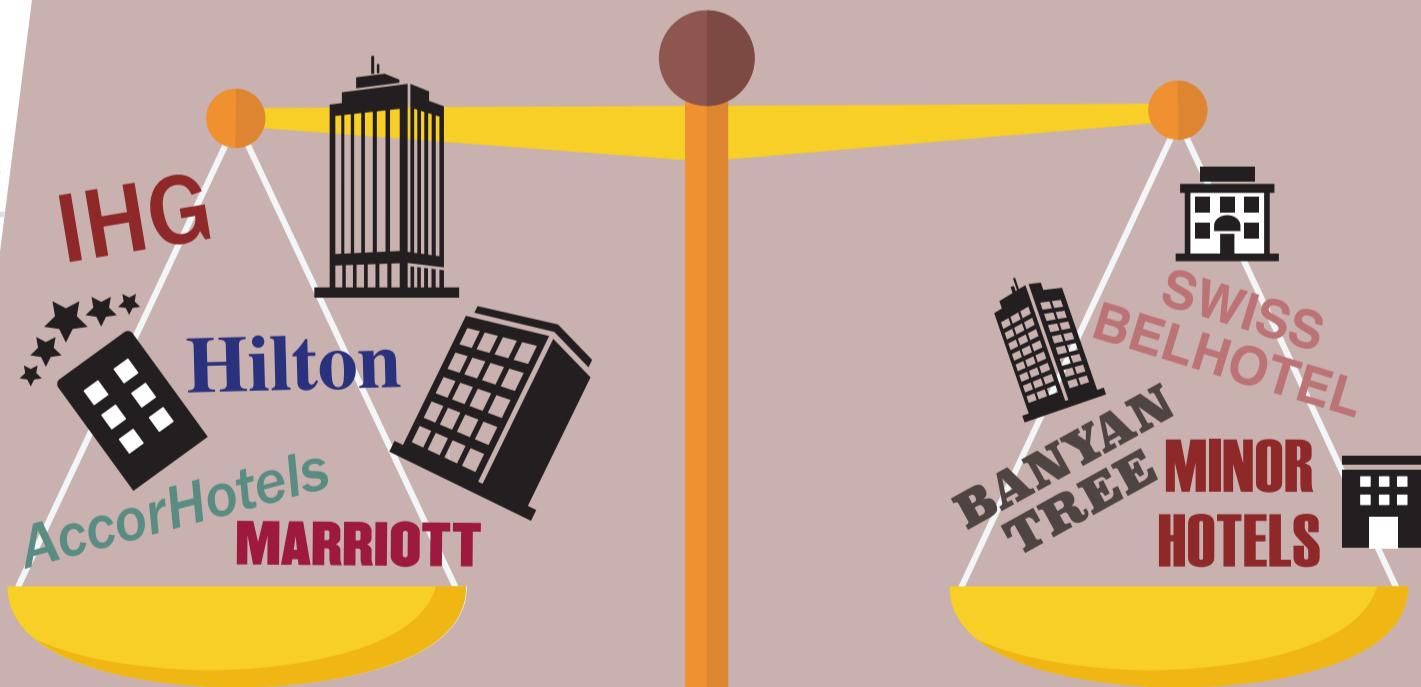
It's a wild ride for APAC's theme parks

Going beyond the 101's in Taiwan

Getting Gen Y to love cruising

Heyday for smaller players

As global chains figure out synergies from their M&As, smaller groups are taking the battle against Goliath and making hay, says Raini Hamdi



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Home is where the trip is



Take a leaf
from the cruise
industry which
is building
new ships to
cater to multi-
generational
travel by
mainland
Chinese.

A heartwarming trend this Chinese New Year (CNY) is a rise in family trips among mainland Chinese travellers, which augurs well for the industry.

According to ForwardKeys, the fastest-growing segment this CNY is family travel of up to four people, which has increased 18 per cent and accounts for more than half (51 per cent) of the overseas travel pie this CNY.

What caught my eye is that a new generation of Chinese professionals who are working in first-tier cities in China, such as Shanghai or Beijing, or in other countries outside China, are *not* returning home for the Spring Festival, which officially starts from January 27 to February 2 this year. Instead, according to search engine Wego, they are flying their parents and extended family to the city they work in. The family then either stays put in the city for a holiday or travel to another destination for a vacation.

Several factors are helping to drive this trend. Chinese families are getting smaller. With one or two children now, compared with seven or more before, it is more feasible to get together in a different country.

The airline industry plays a huge role. There are new routes and improved connectivity. Seat capacity rose 370 per cent in January from China to Czech Republic, Spain 178 per cent, the UK 9.3 per cent and Russia eight per cent, according to ForwardKeys, which also notes that Europe is back in favour after a 7.4 per cent dip in 2016 most likely due to the string of terrorist attacks in several European cities. There are also more direct flights from second-tier Chinese cities to Asia, along with cheaper

airfares. For instance, Hainan Airlines launched a direct flight from Changsha to Sydney last July with a promotional airfare of less than US\$100. SilkAir launched a direct flight from Fuzhou to Singapore.

Asia has been receiving the largest chunk of CNY travellers and this year is no different. Ctrip's top 10 overseas destinations this CNY are, with the exception of the US, Asian countries (Thailand, Japan, the US, Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, South Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam).

Visa relaxation is also helping Asian countries to expand their share of the CNY travel pie. Among examples, a 10-year visa, effective last November, allows mainland Chinese travellers multiple entries to the country. Cambodia grants Chinese a three-year multiple-entry business and tourist visa from last September. Malaysia introduced e-visa services for them last March.

All the stars seem aligned for this trend to grow further and industry members should be well-equipped to handle more family travel. Take a leaf from the cruise industry. It is building new ships or reconfiguring existing ones to cater to multi-generational travel by mainland Chinese guests, for instance having more inter-connecting rooms.

My team and I wish all our Chinese readers family unity and togetherness in this Year of the Rooster.

Raini Hamdi

Senior Editor

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COMING UP



BUSINESS TRAVEL Following last year's chaos, will 2017 be another year of turmoil and affect business travel this year?

INTEGRATED RESORTS It's no longer just about casinos as integrated resorts reinvent their non-gaming attractions and strategies to cater to a new generation of visitors

MALDIVES A flurry of new resorts opening in the Maldives (right) is posing new challenges to a lucrative tourism industry that is used to seeing strong demand and high room revenue

INDONESIA Gili Air, part of the Gili Islands, sees more investor attention as plans to develop it into an eco-friendly destination get underway





ROCK

... the Singapore's National Stadium in fancy dress or your team's colours, to the accompaniment of live entertainments acts. The party continues at Clark Quay after the final whistle on both nights.

RUCK

... with the world's top 16 national sides, including New Zealand, Australia, England, Kenya, South Africa, Fiji and Asian challengers – Hong Kong and Japan, as they serve up sizzling rugby sevens action.

RUMBLE

... with fans of all ages at the carnival atmosphere on both matchdays, treat yourselves to top-notch food and beverages and try your hand (and feet) at the rugby-themed activities around the stadium.

With less than a hundred days to go, till the 2017 HSBC Singapore Rugby 7s kicks off, rugby fans keen on a weekend of fun, excitement and colour must book their tickets now.

Individual passes, family tickets and exclusive hospitality packages still available from

<http://www.singapore7s.sg>

Analysis

Getting Gen Y to love cruising

Cruise lines are doing more to change Asian millennials' mindset of cruising from 'what my parents and grandparents do' to a vacation alternative they too desire to have. **Paige Lee Pei Qi** looks at whether the efforts are enough

It was an unusual sight – 3,800 passengers almost all under the age of 30 onboard the *Mariner of the Seas* last November for a three-night cruise. Their main attraction? The Electronic Dance Music (EDM), Asia's largest music festival at sea since its inception in 2014.

It's The Ship transformed the Royal Caribbean vessel into a non-stop heart thumping dance floor. Parties went on from dawn to dusk everywhere on the ship, from the main deck with its hot tubs and pools, to the bars, clubs and lounges.

This hedonistic floating music festival is a way cruise lines are changing the mindset of millennials that cruising is only for the rich or their parents' generation. Royal Caribbean's managing director, Singapore and South-east Asia, Sean Treacy, said millennials comprise about 20 per cent of the cruise line's guests in the region.

"Many young people in Asia have never cruised before or have only done so once or a few times in their childhood, so their idea of cruising can be rather outdated and limited. It's no surprise that a lot of them do not find cruising appealing." Hence, said Treacy, there is a huge opportunity to grow the pie.

Events like *It's The Ship* and other music-themed cruises lure the younger generation. Treacy pointed out the enormous publicity generated, especially on social media, raising awareness that there's a slew of onboard entertainment and activities that can be enjoyed, from ice skating, inline skating, rock-wall climbing and basketball to street parties.

Royal Caribbean has added more facilities that appeal to youths, including the first sky-diving simulator at sea, a zipline and digitally innovative shows.

Princess Cruises too is seeing an upward trend for shorthaul cruises by first-time millennial cruisers, according to South-east Asia director, Farriek Tawfik.

Last October, it launched a new *Time Back* advertising campaign for the South-east Asian market, aiming at millennial women with hectic lifestyles to relax on a cruise.

The campaign showed how guests



could de-stress onboard at places like the Izumi Japanese Bath or enjoy fine food at the ships' specialty restaurants.

Tawfik said: "Given today's demanding work environment, we decided to cater specifically to the region's growing traveller segment of savvy yet work-weary female professionals in search of a holiday of elegant service and ultimate pampering."

As staying connected is their top priority, Princess Cruises also now offers Wi-Fi packages to millennials. "They document every detail on social media," Tawfik said.

Another cruise company that is taking the millennial market seriously is The Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collec-



Above: Millennials party at sea all night long during the *It's The Ship* event – and all day long too (see left) with DJ Sander Van Doorn entertaining revellers

tion, part of The Travel Corporation. Uniworld even launched a new brand, U By Uniworld, last December just for this customer set.

Dangling the "Instagram and Snapchat-worthy rivers of Europe", the company promised that the new brand will deliver immersive itineraries with longer stays that focus on local experiences, restaurants, bars and nightlife.

Ellen Bettridge, president and CEO of Uniworld, said in a statement that the brand will offer "a new way for exploratory, younger travellers to experience the pulse of Europe".

"We are targeting an active traveller between the ages of 18 and 40, with everything from the décor, dining and cocktail service to the land activities thoughtfully curated to appeal to, and meet the needs of, this audience," she said.

Hip and fun

Tour operators interviewed too believed there is huge potential to tap younger

cruise travellers, and laud efforts of cruise lines to position themselves as, in the words of Jess Yap, general manager at Country Holidays Singapore, "hip and fun".

However, Dynasty Travel's managing director Clifford Neo opined that shorter cruise itineraries of four to six days will be more than enough for this crowd as they may get bored beyond that.

There are also other factors that deter millennials to cruise, which cruise lines must overcome, he said. "They may not like the strict food and entertainment schedule, as well as the lack of time they get to spend in a destination when the ship pulls up there."

Nevertheless, Neo agreed that the injection of new forms of entertainment onboard is helpful in changing the perception of cruises as boring.

"Cruise ships are now brimming with activities and all these developments can show the (younger) cruise passengers that cruising is actually more active than they think," he said.

Chan Brothers Travel Singapore observed that while its main bulk of cruise travellers is families, the proportion of millennials has been stable and is expected to increase. A spokesperson attributed this to an overall paradigm shift in travel over the years, where holiday-makers, both young and old, start to appreciate vacations to recharge and rejuvenate instead of packing the holiday with endless sightseeing.

"A regional cruise vacation may include up to three offshore destinations, which millennials may find appealing to them as they are able to explore different cities," she said.



"Many young people in Asia have never cruised before, or have only done so once or a few times in their childhood. So their idea of cruising can be rather outdated and limited, and it's no surprise that a lot of them do not find cruising appealing."

Sean Treacy

Managing director of Singapore and South-east Asia, Royal Caribbean

Virginia is for lovers

Why? Because it is for lovers of history, the outdoors, food and wine, shopping and family trips. **Rita McCleny**, CEO and President of Virginia Tourism Corporation, explains more.

What factors make the destination more appealing to travelers from South-east Asia?

Air connectivity, especially non-stop flights, and visa reform play a critical role in increasing visitation to the U.S. We have seen the number of travelers from Asia to Virginia and the Capital Region increase year-on-year as it becomes easier to visit and stay longer. It is also exceptionally easy for travelers visiting the Capital Region and Virginia to go to several destinations in one trip.

What activities and attractions do you recommend for travelers from South-east Asia?

Virginia is diverse and can fuel every passion and interest. That is why we say Virginia is for Lovers.

It is a must-see destination for history lovers being the birthplace of America and home to eight U.S. presidents including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Virginia also has world-renowned icons such as Monticello, Mount Vernon, Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown, Appomattox Court House and Arlington National Cemetery.

Nature lovers can enjoy hiking in Shenandoah National Park or kayaking with dolphins in Virginia Beach. Our new Virginia Oyster Trail is ideal for food lovers, providing the perfect way for visitors to connect with the waterman culture around the Chesapeake Bay and sample our eight unique oyster regions. And the wine from our more than 280 wineries or beer from our more than 170 craft breweries pairs perfectly with our oysters.

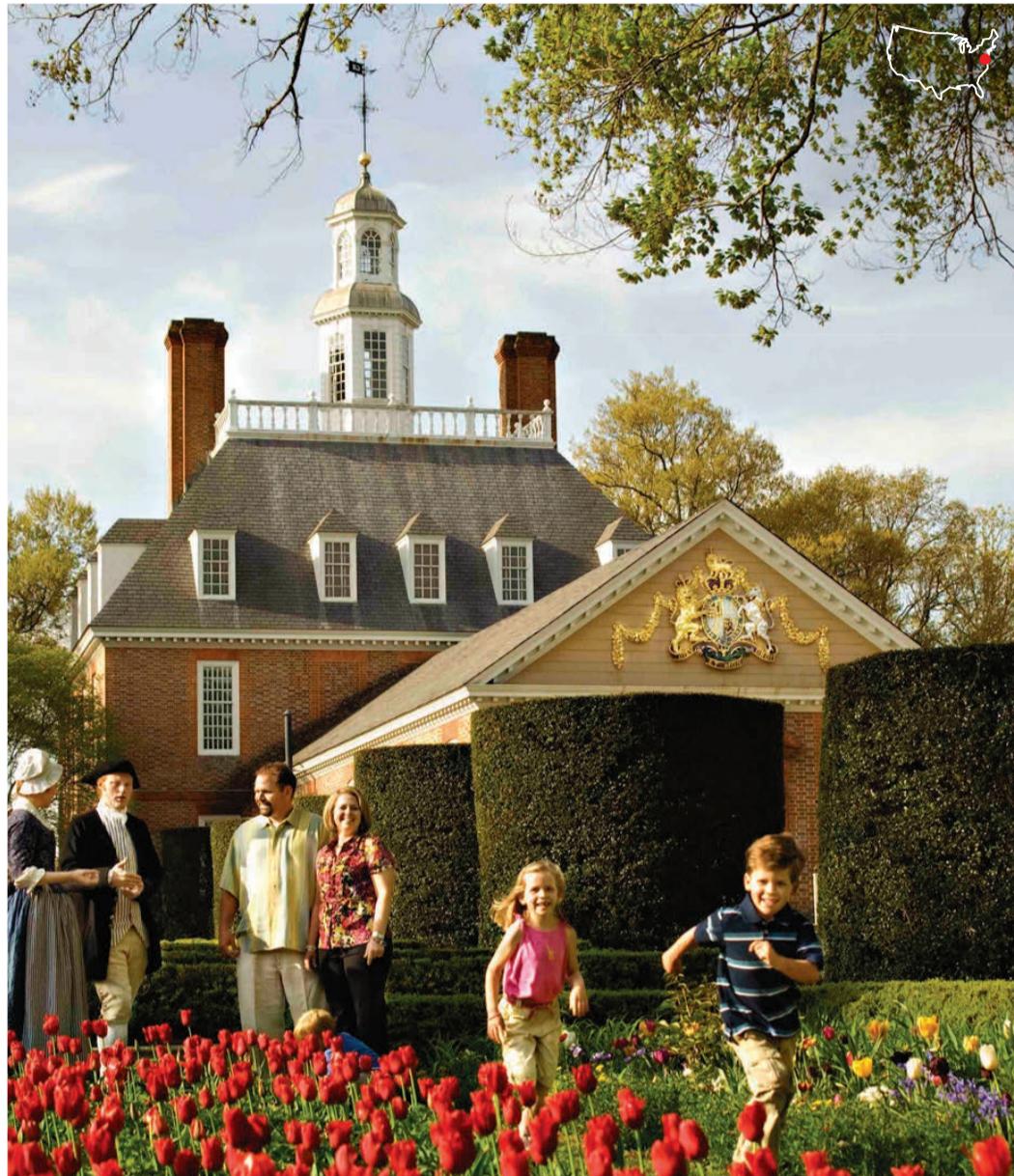
Families will especially enjoy our theme parks, Busch Gardens and Kings Dominion, which offer a wide variety of child-friendly attractions.

How many days and what itinerary do you suggest for the first-time visitor?

First-time visitors will want to spend at least three to four days exploring Virginia, an easy addition to a trip to Washington DC or the East Coast.



Shenandoah National Park.



Colonial Williamsburg.

Visitors should start with a trip to Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington, then explore the one-of-a-kind shops and restaurants in

historic Alexandria. Touring and tasting in wine country in Loudoun County, just outside Washington DC, is a must followed by the breathtaking scenery of Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park and Luray Caverns, the largest underground cavern system in Eastern USA. Then make a stop in Virginia's up-and-coming capital of Richmond, which made it to *Travel + Leisure* magazine's list of must-see cities for 2016.

How many days and what itinerary do you suggest for a repeat visitor?

Repeat visitors should plan at least a week in Virginia and visit attractions such as Virginia Beach, with 28 miles of warm, sunny beaches and the Historic Triangle, which includes such icons as colonial Williamsburg and historic Jamestown.

They will also want to visit Virginia's heritage music trail, The Crooked Road, which winds along The Blue Ridge Parkway and through the Appalachian Mountains connecting visitors to iconic music venues like The Carter Family Fold; and Charlottesville, home to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, the

University of Virginia and a wealth of wineries, cideries, and wonderful farm-to-table cuisine.

What is one message you want to convey to our readers?

A vacation in Virginia is all about love, pure and simple. Virginia offers high-quality experiences that enable visitors to feel completely connected to loved ones, no matter what kind of holiday they prefer. Virginia is for food lovers, oyster lovers, wine lovers, craft beer lovers, history lovers, music lovers, outdoor lovers, beach lovers, mountain lovers. Virginia offers something for every taste.

Asians love to eat. What are three interesting food facts?

National Geographic Traveler named Richmond, the capital of Virginia, in its elite list of Where to Travel for Food in 2016.

Virginia is also recognized as the Oyster Capital of the East Coast and it is the fifth largest producer of wine in the U.S. and has the fifth largest number of wineries.

Asians also love to shop. Tell us more about the shopping.

Virginia offers a wealth of luxury, outlet, one-of-a-kind

boutique and antique shopping destinations to fit every budget and style. From the unique small shops that line the main streets of our small towns, to the high-end shopping of Tysons Corner, which is known as the Rodeo Drive of the East Coast and easily accessed via the Metrorail from Washington DC, we offer every kind of shopping imaginable.

Virginia is for food lovers, oyster lovers, wine lovers, craft beer lovers, history lovers, music lovers, outdoor lovers, beach lovers, mountain lovers.
Virginia offers something for every taste.



RITA MCCLENNY
CEO and President
Virginia Tourism Corporation

What are key events and festivals travelers should not miss?
Visitors to Virginia would be hard pressed to find a weekend that did not offer a local festival or special event. Just to highlight a few, there is Historic Garden Week in April, Virginia Arts Festival in May, The Mountains of Music Homecoming Festival in June, Virginia Craft Beer Month in August, the Virginia Beach Neptune Festival in September, Virginia Wine Month in October, Virginia Oyster Month in November and the 100 Miles of Lights in December. A great source of information for our latest festival or event is Virginia.org.

For more information, please go to VisitTheUSA.com



Analysis

A vision impossible?

Bangladesh dreams of one million arrivals by 2018. It needs all the willpower, reports **Rohit Kaul**

The travel and tourism industry of Bangladesh is trying hard to bounce back from last July's terrorist attack in the capital city Dhaka.

On its part the government is planning a host of initiatives to boost tourism in the country. A masterplan, and the development of beach destination Cox's Bazar for tourism, are integral to its strategy of attracting one million international arrivals by the end of 2018, from around 600,000 in 2015.

Last year's attack, the worst in the history of Bangladesh, decimated the industry.

"We lost about 90 per cent of inbound business after the terrorist attack," said Taufiq Rahman, chief executive, Journey Plus.

"Our overseas associates stopped communicating with us. A company that we were working with since 2002 removed Bangladesh from its website and brochures. Travel advisories issued by markets like Japan, the UK and Germany added to the woes."

Rahman said business started to look up from November and his company recently handled a few tourist groups from markets like the UK and Poland.

Japan, the UK, the US, China, Spain and France are the major international source markets for Bangladesh. But a section of tour operators said the tourism industry has been ailing for a long time in the absence of world-class infrastructure, adequate marketing budget and awareness about its tourism attractions.

Said Syed Qadir, managing director, Wonder Ways: "The government of Bangladesh has been trying to promote tourism but there is no long-term planning. Bangladesh is also not ready as a destination in infrastructure. Majority of the hotels that are opening are in Dhaka while the other destinations lack accommodation options."

"Dhaka, being the business hub, attracts a lot of international tourists but there is a need to develop tourism activities in other parts of the country."

International hotel chains including Starwood Hotels & Resorts, InterContinental Hotels Group and Carlson Rez-



Aerial view of Dhaka, the capital city which has welcomed international hotel chains

dor Hotel Group have recently entered the market but most of the hotels are in Dhaka. Some hoteliers in the region agreed that supply in the capital city has surpassed the demand.

"The hospitality market in Dhaka is saturated," said Nasser Rahman, chairman & managing director, Dusai Hotel & Resorts.

"Before 2007 there were only two five-star properties in Dhaka. But over the years many international chains have opened their hotels in the city. Four Points by Sheraton has just opened and JW Marriott is soon entering the market. These hotels largely cater to the business segment."

"Beyond Dhaka, the demand for five-star properties is limited," he pointed out, observing that the five-star resorts catering to leisure tourists that have opened in other parts of the country like Cox's Ba-

zaar are facing a tough time.

The middle and upper-middle class is limited in Bangladesh. Moreover, the local market is very price sensitive so most resorts are finding it difficult to make money, he said.

"We desperately need to attract high-end international leisure tourists. But we have yet to brand our country as a tourist destination internationally," said Rahman.

Of late, however, the government has started to show interest in raising awareness of the country as a tourist destination. It hosted the PATA New Tourism Frontiers Forum 2016 recently and will also host the UNWTO Joint Commission Meeting in May.

PATA CEO Mario Hardy said: "Bangladesh has potential but there is work to be done in infrastructure. The first step is to create confidence among locals that they have something to offer and at the same time the government has to put in money to make the destination ready to welcome more tourists. It is not going to happen overnight and will need a series of activities to make it possible."

According to Bangladesh tourism minister, Rashed Khan Menon, a national policy for tourism was declared in 2010 with the objective of promoting Bangladesh in the overseas markets. However, the political turmoil that ensued in the country had made it difficult to achieve the vision.

Nevertheless, the government is building infrastructure for tourism, said Menon.

Initiatives

"We are expanding the airport in the world's longest unbroken beach, Cox's Bazar, for international operations, which is likely to come up by the end of 2017. We are also developing a railway line that will

connect Chittagong to Gundum, on the border with Myanmar.

"Bangladesh is home to important Buddhist destinations like Paharpur, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and this a market we are looking to tap," said Menon.

International airlines like China Eastern have expressed interest to operate flights to the airport, he added. Bangladesh is looking to achieve a target of one million international tourist arrivals by the end of 2018, he said.

The government is also coming up with a masterplan that will focus on investment opportunities to develop tourism across the country, which is a first for Bangladesh.

The masterplan will also advise the tourism ministry about the new tourism destinations and attractions in the country that can be promoted domestically as well as internationally.

As well, it will detail the economic and employment benefits that can be drawn through tourism.

One of the plans is to develop an exclusive tourist zone in Cox's Bazar that will be spread over an area of more than 440 hectares.

The tourist zone will have hotels, restaurants and an amusement park. The government is presently trying to attract potential investors to invest in the project.

"We will provide land to the interested entities on a long-term lease basis," said Akhtaruzzaman Khan Kabir, CEO, Bangladesh Tourism Board.

"All the clearances, including environment clearances, will be provided by the government. We expect that within two years after finalising who the investors are, a major part of the tourist zone will be ready."

The first step is to create confidence among locals that they have something to offer... and the government has to put in money to make the destination ready to welcome more tourists.

Mario Hardy
CEO, PATA





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View from the top

Making a good change agent

The first travel agent to become tourism secretary in the Philippines, Wanda Tulfo Teo wants to prove that she has the mettle and industry experience to change the country's travel industry for the better.

She tells **Rosa Ocampo** what she intends to achieve

You were a travel agent for 22 years. How has this given you an edge in your post?

(Detractors said that) I'm merely a travel agent who knew nothing. But having come from the industry, I understand and relate to the problems of the trade. I'm also seen as one of them so it's now easier for the trade to deal with the Department of Tourism (DoT). I'm working with the trade now on accreditation and addressing issues such as the lack of tour guides, hotels and rates, etc.

(Some say) I have no marketing background. But there are those with marketing background who are not hands-on. I'm hands-on and am already getting a good response from tour operators and travel agencies abroad.

Many are expecting too much too soon. I'm just five months here (as of early December). Give me one, two years and I will prove them wrong.

There were criticisms about your bringing of new people to DoT.

I came from the private sector and have to work with people whom I can trust. I have not fired anyone except one who was not performing.

How do you deal with the critics?

Although I get hurt by the critics, I derive strength from my four brothers in the media. They've told me not to get distracted by criticisms as long as I do my job, not to be onion-skinned and just work really hard to prove myself.

One advice Mon (Ramon Tulfo, the crusader newspaper columnist) has given me is to ignore critics so I won't get discouraged and fall down. The most painful thing to a critic is being ignored.

How did you start in the travel industry?

I worked as a model (for couturier Renee Salud) and flight attendant (with Air Niugini). After I got married, my husband and I lived in Davao where I taught business administration at Ateneo de Davao University. But my love for travelling led me to set up Mount Apo Travel & Tours.

I did well selling outbound and my forte was Europe. I was also the top producer for airlines and Royal Caribbean International cruises, and received awards for my performance.

When I realised that many didn't know the Philippines, I felt that I had to do something about it, so I started handling inbound, starting with Davao and later Boracay and Palawan as well.

Selling inbound was not easy but I

joined sales missions and travel fairs abroad to move things forward.

It must be tough selling Davao then.

Davao was not safe then. People would always cancel, and we didn't have foreign groups in Davao. It's now easier to sell Davao.

Tell us more about your experience as president of the National Association of Independent Travel Agencies (NAITAS) and other organisations.

There are three big organisations in the Philippines – Philippine Travel Agencies Association, Philippine Tour Operators Association and NAITAS, which was lagging behind before I brought it up to par with the other two. I started by increasing its membership, and mounting travel and trade shows.

I was also secretary of the first Tourism Congress of the Philippines. I was very active in Davao. I was elected president of the Davao Travel Agencies Association and got re-elected for a second term. I also served as president for the Davao Association of Tour Operators.

What can we expect from the DoT after two years?

I'm already working on increasing arrivals. There will be more tourist attractions, activities, flights and hotels. Beautiful destinations will be developed and poor communities will benefit from tourism. Being a Cabinet member is an advantage as I can personally approach those in the government to speed up the requisites to boost tourism.

This will be a very good year. We're able to bring to the Philippines the Miss Universe pageant, Madrid Fusion Manila, UNWTO International Conference on Tourism Statistics and we also won the bid for a conference of 1,000 university professors from England. China has also lifted its travel ban against the Philippines.

What's your vision for Philippine tourism?

The Philippines will become known as one of the best destinations in Asia, with the development of many more local beautiful destinations.

Thailand receives millions of Chinese visitors while we get just 500,000. The Philippines should be at par with them. We're selling (similar) attractions but we have another selling point: Filipino hospitality. We go out of our way to help.

The economic benefits of tourism can help the many marginalised communities.



There are those with marketing background who are not hands-on. I'm hands-on and am already getting a good response from tour operators and travel agencies abroad.

What's being done to realise this vision?

The *It's More Fun in the Philippines* campaign slogan will be levelled up from the Miss Universe pageant in January this year. It will not be changed but improved by focusing on unique Philippine service and hospitality.

We're selling the Philippines in Asia, Europe, the US and the rest of the world. We engage with travel agents, the media and bloggers to bring them to the Philippines.

Since China lifted the travel advisory against the Philippines, big investors have been coming in. I want to increase arrivals from China to two million in 2017 but (China) expects to reach three million.

What about tourism infrastructure?

The tourism secretary is also a Cabinet member. The advantage is that I can personally follow up with other Cabinet members on matters concerning tourism such as airports and road infrastructure.

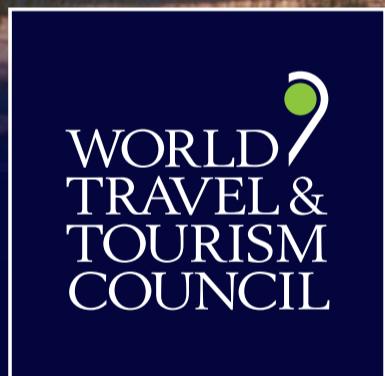
And safety and security concerns in the Philippines?

The Philippines is safe. Crime rate has gone down. I tell travel agents to visit the Philippines and see for themselves. They realise it's safe and (gain confidence to sell) the Philippines.

After the bombings in Davao (in early September), I questioned the placing of the country on red alert (with security measures stepped up) as it would discourage tourists from visiting. But Philippine president Duterte asked me: "Wanda, what's more important to you: red alert or tourists not coming here?" So there, we now have more peace and order.

What's the legacy you want to leave after finishing your six-year term?

That the Philippines will become a top destination, that I've been a good tourism secretary and that I've done good for the country.



REDEFINE TOURISM

Our world is changing. Most of this change is positive, but what about the things we love and dream of seeing that are threatened with extinction?

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Travel & Tourism offers sustainable solutions to help resolve these issues.

Join us as we discuss a plan for action:

THE GLOBAL SUMMIT: TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD **Bangkok, Thailand, 26–27 April 2017**

To learn more about our research and priorities, and to watch and take part in our live debates, visit our website at www.wttc.org

Social

From recent trade movements to major upcoming events, we round up the latest happenings to keep you plugged in

APPOINTMENTS



Stephen England-Hall



Ron Pohl



Sean Menke



Eileen Khew

STEPHEN ENGLAND-HALL

NOW Chief executive, Tourism New Zealand
THEN Chief executive, Loyalty New Zealand

SEAN MENKE

NOW CEO and board member, Sabre
THEN EVP and president, Sabre Travel Network

CHRIS BAILEY

NOW CEO, Royal Phuket Marina
THEN COO, Centara Hotels and Resorts

KEN MUSKAT

NOW CEO, SkySea Cruises
THEN EVP, sales, PR & guest services, MSC Cruises

RON POHL

NOW SVP and COO, Best Western Hotels & Resorts
THEN SVP brand management, Best Western Hotels & Resorts

JOSEPH SAMPERMANS

NOW GM, The Peninsula Bangkok
THEN GM, The Peninsula Beijing

EILEEN KHEW

NOW DOSM, Marina Mandarin Singapore
THEN Area DOSM, Far East Hospitality

TRADE CALENDAR SEE YOU AT...



Asia Aviation Festival

February 20-21, Singapore

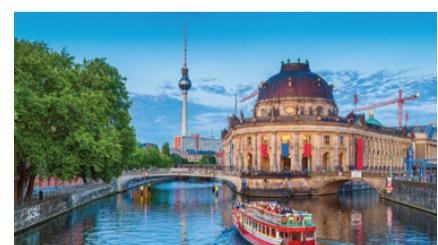
Over 150 full service airlines, LCCs and airports across Asia-Pacific will come together during this two-day event to share industry insights, seek out new ideas to boost revenues and profits, and explore new technology.



AIME

February 20-21, Melbourne

The 25th edition of this show is set to reflect on the industry's past; the people, the places and the events that have shone, while also looking at the future of the industry and its up-and-coming leaders and new event styles.



ITB Berlin

March 8-12, Berlin

The world's largest tradeshow – spread over 26 exhibition halls – brings together over 10,000 exhibitors from 187 countries, as well as some 120,000 trade visitors. The official partner country this year is Botswana.

PATA ANNUAL SUMMIT 2017

'Disruption. Innovation. Transformation: The Future of Tourism'

May 18-21 | Jetwing Blue Hotel | Negombo, Sri Lanka



Join us at the PATA Annual Summit 2017, a 4-day event that brings together thought leaders and industry professionals from around the world under the theme "Disruption. Innovation. Transformation: The Future of Tourism". The programme includes a one-day conference and complimentary access to a half-day UNWTO/PATA Ministerial Debate as well as other exciting networking opportunities.

Generously hosted by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, PAS 2017 takes place on the tropical island of Sri Lanka in the charming fishing village of Negombo.

LEARN



The travel industry is constantly transforming. How will travel and tourism change in the future? What are the travel priorities of the new generation? How can tourism products and services provide travellers with a seamless and immersive experience? The one-day conference features international experts who will together help to define the evolving landscape of travel and tourism.

NETWORK



As part of the PAS 2017 programme, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) works in partnership with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) to host the UNWTO/PATA Ministerial Debate which brings together Tourism Ministers and leading tourism experts to address thought-provoking issues. The Annual Summit also embraces the PATA Annual General Meeting and the PATA Youth Symposium that allows students and young professionals to engage with industry leaders.

EXPLORE



Sri Lanka boasts amazing beaches and coastal destinations. Located close to the Bandaranaike International Airport, Negombo is a seafood lover's realm with fresh catches available at a diverse selection of restaurants and bars. Alternatively, take a boat ride along the Dutch canals or into the ocean to catch a glimpse of the fishing boats. The venue, Jetwing Blue Hotel, embodies a contemporary taste of luxury living where modern elegance meets simplicity.

Register now at www.PATA.org/PAS-2017

For further information, email events@PATA.org



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AN OFFICIAL ASEAN TOURISM FORUM 2017

LATE NIGHT FUNCTION: PHILIPPINES NIGHT

Philippines Night was an event to behold as the destination introduced its newly appointed executive leaders, Secretary of the Philippine Department of Tourism, Ms. Wanda Corazon Teshiba Tulfo-Teo and celebrity Chief Operating Officer of the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines, Mr. Cesar Montano. Attended by ATF 2017 delegates including international buyers and media, government and NGO representatives, as well as important travel trade personalities, the party proved that the Filipinos are certainly more fun with their amazing vocal talents and superb hospitality. Guests made the most of the event amidst great company, non-stop drinks and delightful treats that satisfied the most diverse of taste buds.



Mario Hardy and Melissa Burckhardt of Pacific Asia Travel Association and Jens Thraenhart of Mekong Tourism

The party's hosts and partners: Lilian Lui of Shangri-La Hotel Singapore, Pierre Quek and Ar-lene Lee of TTG Asia Media, Reto Klauser of Shangri-La Hotel Singapore, Maricon B. Ebron of Tourism Promotions Board Philippines, Shirley Tan of TTG Asia Media, James A. Sy and Baby De Luna of Tourism Promotions Board Philippines



Shirley Tan of TTG Asia Media, Moe Ibrahim and Gerald A. Hendrick of Bintan Lagoon Resort and June Tham of Q Lifestyle Limited



Angeline Tang and Ellysa Lim of Avis Budget Group, Ar-lene Lee and Darren Ng of TTG Asia Media, Lionel Yeo of Singapore Tourism Board, Shirley Tan and Pierre Quek of TTG Asia Media



Gina Youm of Rplay, Albena Tsoneva of Hermes Fly, Maria Ignatova of Ormatravel and Violeta Rousseva of Hermesholidays



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Maricon Ebron of Tourism Promotions Board Philippines
(2nd from right) presenting the lucky draw prize

Darren Ng of TTG Asia Media, Roberto U. Teo of Mt. Apo Travel & Tours Inc., Secretary Wanda Corazon T. Teo of Philippine Department of Tourism, Her Excellency Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul of Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand, Mr Cesar Montano of Tourism Promotions Board Philippines and Michael Chow of TTG Asia Media



Jerico Feliciano of City of Dreams Manila, Casey Faylona of Movenpick Hotel Mactan Island Cebu and Ryan Carlo Villanueva of Dusit Thani Manila

Andrew Morgan of Unique Travel Representation, Rachael Young of Hayes & Jarvis, Matthew Clift of The MC Collection, Jonathan Wilkins of Select Representation, Emma Mitchell of Hayes & Jarvis, Aaron Little of Secret Escapes and Chalida (Biim) Yenwathanha of Novotel Hotels & Resorts Phuket Kamala Beach



Cesar Montano wows the crowd with his professional vocals, alongside Faye Abadicio and Arriba band



Yothin Uthaphu of Veranda Resort Pattaya, Yuphadee Ruangdet of Diamond Cliff Resort and Spa, Phadhanun Siriwardhanadun of Deevana Patong Resort and Spa and Roger Siriboonysuk of Discover Holidays

Report Hotels Chains

Heyday for smaller players

As global chains figure out synergies from their M&As, smaller groups are making hay, says **Raini Hamdi**

On the question of who wins in the continuing trend of hotel industry consolidation, one group that appears to be thriving are smaller hotel companies, at least in Asia where the hotel market remains buoyant and the majority of hotels is unbranded.

During a session on mega hotel mergers presented by Baker & McKenzie at Hotel Investment Conference Asia-Pacific (HICAP) in October last year, 60 per cent of the audience polled believed fewer global hotel chains won't be financially better for owners and operators. In another instant poll there, 73.6 per cent believed smaller players would benefit from mega mergers.

These players include small and medium-sized hotel management companies; hotel groups that focus on a real niche such as boutique or luxury, which can't easily be copied; and owner representation firms that have the best accounting experts to decipher the various fees chains are charging them and take chains to task if these fees don't commensurate with the returns.

For these companies, the field is wide

open as owners ponder if they would be better off with huge chains where benefits of consolidation have yet to be proven or flow through, or with smaller groups which may not have the scale but are more likely to be able to give more focus to their hotels and stay truer to the brand DNA.

Marriott International's regional vice president of hotel development Asia-Pacific, James Doolan, who's on the Baker & McKenzie panel, agreed that "inevitably there would be people who just don't like it, (being) part of a conglomerate that's much bigger than it was before".

"For the smaller groups, that's the opportunity – 'attacking' or identifying the smaller, under-performing assets that feel a bit left out in this new world. There are opportunities for them to pick some of these up. I think there will be a little bit of that at the end of this (merger)," he said.

Bangkok-based Minor Hotels, which owns, operates and invests in 155 hotels currently – small in relation to Marriott international's 5,700 properties, Hilton International's 4,700 or AccorHotels' 3,942 (as of June 30, 2016) – has already benefited from industry consolidation on at least one

score. Speaking at a HICAP panel session, CEO Dillip Rajakarier said: "Actually we are happy... some of the best people are joining us from Starwood and Marriott."

Rajakarier also said it had been difficult for Asian owners, particularly the less experienced ones, to decide what to do in the changing market. He said: "Sophisticated owners will manage their business well, but those owners who are not used to having hotel assets will have problems: who are they going to speak to, who is going to manage their asset, who is going to be their competitive set?"

Swiss Belhotel is a perfect example of how smaller groups are positioning themselves ever more confidently in an environment of confusion and uncertainty that M&As bring about.

At HICAP, the Hong Kong-based company announced that it intends to pick up more management contracts, bringing its portfolio to over 200 hotels and 40,000 rooms by 2020, from 135 hotels now, as it "continues to provide a strong and attractive alternative to the big brand players such as Accor, Marriott and InterContinental Hotel Group", said a spokesperson.

Chairman and president Gavin Faull, who founded the independent hotel management group in 2000, told *TTG Asia*: "The more M&As there are, the better the business will be for us, because there are fewer people for developers to talk to (as a result of the consolidation).

"Many owners feel they are being dictated to... On top of it, we live in a world of big generational change... you have to be a lot more flexible and chain control is not flexible."

"We are flexible. We talk to owners and staff, so it's personalised management. I was in Kuala Lumpur yesterday and the guy could not believe I was president of the company!"

All of Swiss Belhotel's 135 hotels are management contracts, 80 of which are in operation, the rest in pipeline. Faull counts timing and earning the trust of owners as among the key pillars of his success. Swiss Bellhotel, for instance, has been in Indonesia since it was a sleeping giant, with a strong, silent partner, Ciputra, he said.

While the big chains dangle the benefits of having millions of loyal customers, Gaull said loyalty programmes are not the key anymore as people stay in different hotels for different reasons. "People now holiday once a month. There is a cultural and generational change."

"And I might have lost out initially to the big chains on distribution, but with the Internet today, the world is open. Technology is a lot cheaper now," he said.

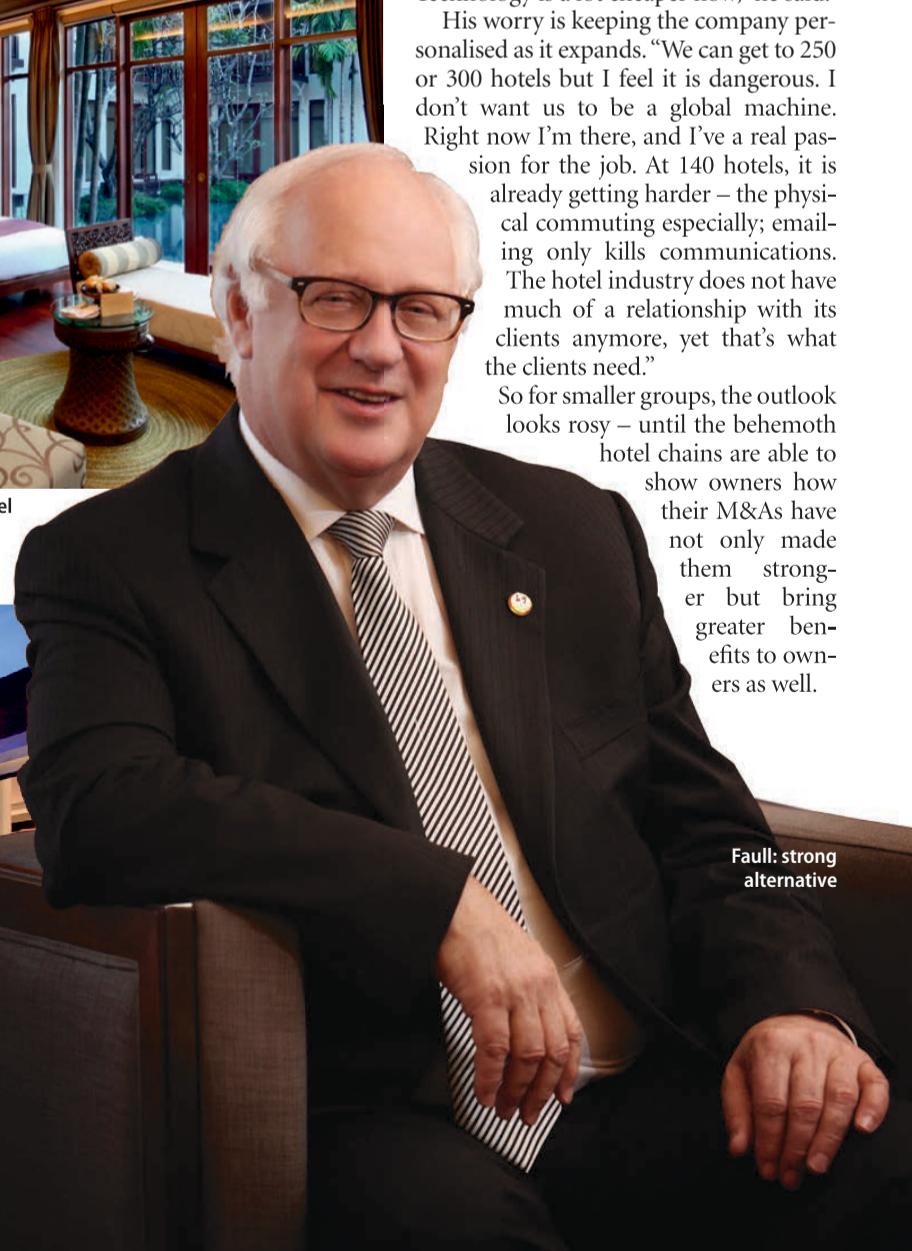
His worry is keeping the company personalised as it expands. "We can get to 250 or 300 hotels but I feel it is dangerous. I don't want us to be a global machine.

Right now I'm there, and I've a real passion for the job. At 140 hotels, it is already getting harder – the physical commuting especially; emailing only kills communications. The hotel industry does not have much of a relationship with its clients anymore, yet that's what the clients need."

So for smaller groups, the outlook looks rosy – until the behemoth hotel chains are able to show owners how their M&As have not only made them stronger but bring greater benefits to owners as well.



Clockwise from left: Swiss-Belhotel Brisbane, Anantara Angkor and Banyan Tree Lang Co – smaller chains hold their ground





Key hotel M&As in the last 12 months

Louvre/Sarovar

French chain Louvre Hotels Group, which was acquired by China's Jin Jiang International in March 2015, has acquired Indian hospitality chain Sarovar Hotels. Sarovar manages over 75 hotels in 50 destinations in India under the brands Sarovar Premiere, Sarovar Portico, Hometel, Park Plaza and Park Inn brands.

Wyndham Hotel Group was battling Louvre to buy Sarovar.

Accor/Banyan Tree

AccorHotels has taken a five per cent stake in Banyan Tree Holdings with an initial investment of S\$24 million (US\$16.9 million) to collaborate on the long-term development of Banyan Tree-branded hotels around the world.

This investment will be made through a mandatory convertible debenture with AccorHotels having an option to purchase an additional stake of around five per cent.

The move gives Banyan Tree access to AccorHotels' global reservations, and sales network and loyalty programme Le Club AccorHotels.

Said Ho Kwon Ping, executive chairman of Banyan Tree Holdings: "With the current consolidation of mega-hotel companies, smaller but also global players – many family-controlled – are also seeking strategic alliances with the global giants. Our strategic alliance with AccorHotels allows us to remain an independent company, enabling us to continue securing hotel management agreements on our own and yet accelerating Banyan Tree's speed and scope of expansion."

AccorHotels also announced in November that it's buying a 30 per cent stake in 25hours Hotels with a view to accelerate the global expansion of the Hamburg-based boutique chain.

Explaining the move, Sébastien Bazin, chairman & CEO of AccorHotels, said the group saw the appeal of design-oriented boutique hotels that serve as a "workplace for urban nomads and an ideal starting point for outings into key cities".

Accor also bought home rental site

onefinestay earlier last year. But its biggest acquisition to-date is FRHI (Accor/Fairmont), completed last July.

HNA/Hilton

China's HNA Group will be acquiring around 25 per cent equity stake in Hilton Worldwide – including Hilton's planned spin-offs of Park Hotels & Resorts and Hilton Grand Vacations – from affiliates of investment firm Blackstone for about US\$6.5 billion.

The deal, expected to close this quarter, will reduce Blackstone's interest in Hilton to around 21 per cent.

As part of the transaction, HNA will enter into a stockholders agreement with Hilton, and into similar agreements with Park Hotels & Resorts and Hilton Grand Vacations, effective upon closing.

The agreement allows HNA to appoint two directors, one HNA member and one independent member, to Hilton's board of directors, bringing the total to 10 board members.

As well, HNA has agreed to certain restrictions on its ability to sell any of its interest in Hilton for a two-year period, and to limitations on HNA's ability to acquire more than 25 per cent of Hilton's outstanding shares without Hilton's consent.

Blackstone, which made initial investments into Hilton nine years ago, will continue to have two seats on Hilton's board, including Jon Gray who will remain chairman.

HNA/Carlson and Rezidor

HNA has also closed the deal to acquire all of Carlson Hotels, including its 51.3 per cent share in Brussels-based Rezidor Hotel Group, Carlson Hotels' master licensee based in Brussels with hotels in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

It has also announced a mandatory public offer to the shareholders in Rezidor Hotel Group to acquire all shares in Rezidor for a cash consideration of SEK34.86 per share (US\$3.79), below Rezidor's closing price of SEK37.20 on December 22.

In 2015, HNA also purchased a minority stake in Red Lion Hotels Corp. It also owns about a 30 per cent share in Madrid-based NH Hotels.

KSL/Outrigger

US private equity firm KSL Capital Partners, through an affiliate, has acquired Outrigger Hotels & Resorts from the Kelley family who founded Outrigger 70 years ago. The deal was completed last December.

The Outrigger portfolio comprises 37 hotels with around 6,500 rooms, condominiums and vacation resort properties throughout Hawaii, Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean. Long-time president and CEO David Carey, part of the Kelley family, will continue to helm the chain. The new investor is expected to infuse capital and accelerate Outrigger's growth plan.

Marriott/Starwood

Marriott International completed its US\$13 billion acquisition of Starwood Hotels & Resorts last September, making it the largest hotel company in the world with 5,700 properties and 1.1 million rooms in more than 110 countries.

The new combined entity now has 30 brands under its umbrella, although only 20 currently have a presence in Asia.

One of the first things it did was to create a new division for all its eight luxury brands,

St Regis, The Luxury Collection, W Hotels, The Ritz-Carlton, Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Bulgari Hotels & Resorts, Edition and JW Marriott.

This year, it is scheduled to open nearly 30 luxury hotels and has a total of 180 luxury hotels in its development pipeline, including 20 new countries such as Iceland, Nepal and Cuba.

Accor/Fairmont

AccorHotels completed its acquisition of FRHI Hotels & Resorts (FRHI) last July, paying US\$840 million in cash and issuing 46.7 million shares to Qatar Investment Authority and Kingdom Holding Company of Saudi Arabia, giving them respective stakes of 10.4 per cent and 5.8 per cent in Accor's share capital.

This acquisition adds the luxury hotel brands Fairmont, Raffles and Swissôtel into Accor's stable.

"The acquisition of these three emblematic luxury hotel brands is a historical milestone for AccorHotels. It will open up amazing growth prospects, lift our international presence to unprecedented heights, and build value over the long term," said AccorHotels' Bazin.

"By leveraging the operational synergies between FRHI and AccorHotels, we are well-positioned to accelerate the growth of our luxury brands and offer guests even more exciting hotel choices and destinations to explore."

AccorHotels plans to generate approximately 65 million euros (US\$72 million) in "revenue and cost synergies" with the integration, the company said in a statement.

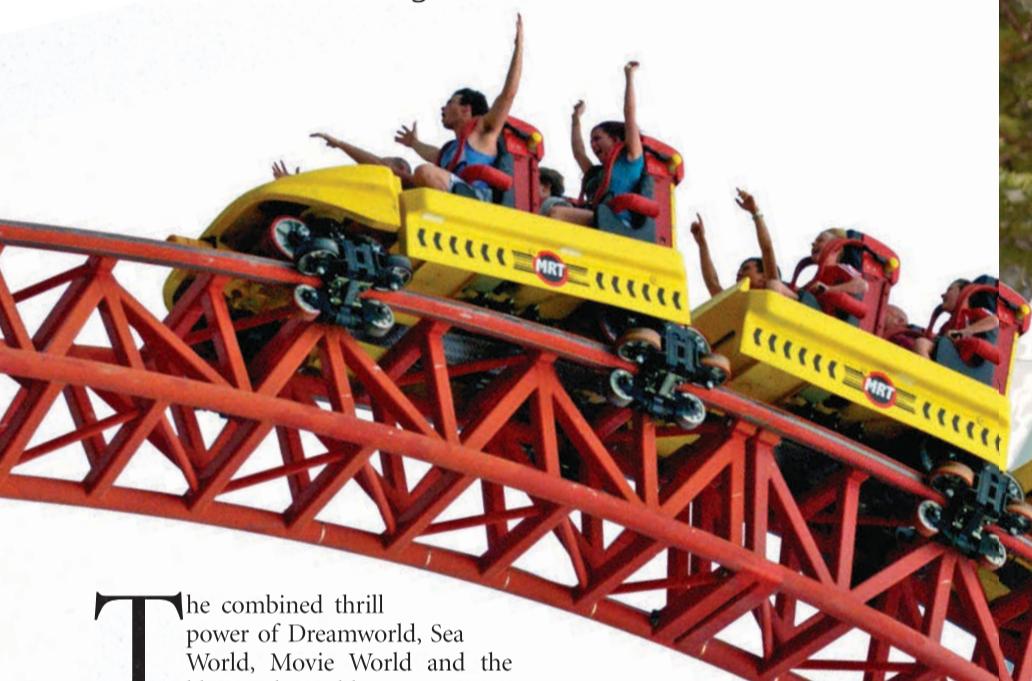
One of the first things AccorHotels did was to entrust an old Fairmont hand, Chris Cahill, as the group's CEO of luxury brands to lead the FRHI integration and oversee the strategy and global operations of AccorHotels Luxury Brands. In this newly created role, Cahill is also a member of AccorHotels' executive committee. He was most recently executive vice president global operations at Las Vegas Sands Corp.

From top left: Sofitel Singapore Sentosa Resort & Spa; Fairmont San Francisco; JW Marriott Singapore South Beach



In for a wild ride

Australia has over the years gained a reputation as a prime destination for theme parks, but this now hangs in the balance with newer and more affordable alternatives surfacing elsewhere in Asia-Pacific



The combined thrill power of Dreamworld, Sea World, Movie World and the likes in the Gold Coast was one of the key drawcards for Asian travellers to Australia before the turn of the century. A new generation of theme parks and integrated resorts has since mushroomed across Asia, with Asian agents now reporting mixed views as to whether Australia can retain its status as a reigning theme park destination.

Outbound agents in markets such as Singapore and the Philippines are confident that Australia will remain a top destination for theme park lovers, while elsewhere in Malaysia, Cambodia and Japan, sentiments are strong that new and innovative theme parks in Asia could give their Australian counterparts a run for their money.

It's wholesome Down Under

"Even with a gradual increase in theme park openings in various parts of Asia, Australia still maintains its charm and is perceived as a classic year-round destination with well-built theme parks," said

Chan Brothers group managing director, Anthony Chan.

Other agents, too, are quick to point out that there's more to Australia than just theme parks, which, when combined with its unique wildlife, natural sites and adventure offerings, make the country an attractive proposition across a broad spectrum of age groups and demographics.

Dynasty Travel Singapore's managing director, Clifford Neo, said: "Australia has always been popular as a family playground with great food, and the good exchange rate will make the destination even more affordable for (Singaporean) travellers."

Karan Anand, head – relationships, Cox & Kings India, agreed: "Australia offers some of the most splendid coastlines and marine tourism that are unique compared to the rest of the world. Australia ranks among the top go-to places for



Sunway Lagoon Malaysia

Superman Escape in Movie World, Gold Coast, Australia

many Indian travellers and is viewed as a composite travel destination with an array of activities."

Rakshit Desai, managing director, FCM Travel Solutions, India, stated that theme parks constitute just a small part of holiday packages for an "aspirational destination" like Australia. "With theme parks opening in Asia, it is safe to assume that Indians will now shift their attention to the overall experiential quotient that Australia offers instead of (solely on) theme parks," he added.

Outbound travel behaviour from the Philippines also tell a similar story, with agents such as Marites Pastorfide, assistant general manager of the Philippines' Wayfair Tours, stating that Filipinos visit Australia "for its totality".

In China, Nicole Wang, director of resource procurement, CTS MICE Service, said Australia remains one of the most popular outbound destinations with its theme park draws, which are commonly used by incentive groups for training programmes and pre- and post-tour visits. However, she urged the greater use of Chinese signs and information in order to appeal to Chinese theme park goers.

Even with a gradual increase in theme park openings in various parts of Asia, Australia still maintains its charm and is perceived as a classic year-round destination with well-built theme parks

Anthony Chan
Group managing director, Chan Brothers



Interest in Australian theme parks was higher 10 years ago, but the typical reaction we get from Japanese travellers now is that Tokyo Disneyland, DisneySea or Universal Studios Japan are bigger and have better rides.

Koichi Suzuki
Sales manager, Southern Travelnet

And for markets with no shortage of theme parks on their home grounds, Australia's uniqueness becomes even more important as a pull factor to justify an overseas theme park experience.

"Parks that feature animals are far more popular because iconic Australian animals – kangaroos, koala bears, crocodiles – are hard to find in Japan," observed Koichi Suzuki, sales manager for Australia specialist Southern Travelnet.

Tsuneaki Aoyama, CEO of Tokyo-based A'sway, concurred, pointing out that Australian theme parks that "show off sports, the outdoor life and wildlife" best capture the attention of his Japanese clientele.

However, David Yan, MICE general manager at Hua Yuan International Travel China, notes that theme park visits are "not a must" for Chinese travellers to Australia. "While (Australia) remains popular, demand is not as strong as before," he remarked.

"Theme parks can be part of a tour, but it is usually not a priority or the reason to go to (Australia) unless it is a family vacation or part of a teambuilding group."

The deadly mishap, which took place at the Gold Coast's Dreamworld late last year, hence didn't receive much attention in the local media as it was not a well-known destination for Chinese travellers, added Yan.

As well, most trade players interviewed across Asia-Pacific also stated the Dreamworld accident has not dealt a significant blow to demand, although Hong Kong's Morning Star Travel Services told *TTG Asia* that it took the attraction off its itineraries shortly after the accident.

Pastorfide is positive that Australia theme parks' overall reputation of being well-maintained, professionally run and

offering different kinds of attractions remain its strongest suite.

Novelty rides, affordability keep Asia hot

The success of theme parks in Japan is demonstrated by the frequency with which they open or new attractions are added to existing parks.

Universal Studios Japan has announced plans to add an area dedicated to the Super Mario character, while a Nemo attraction will open next year at DisneySea. Legoland Japan is scheduled to open in Nagoya this year, while the Moomin characters will have their own park in Saitama Prefecture by end-2018.

Said Southern Travelnet's Suzuki: "Interest in Australian theme parks was higher 10 years ago, but the typical reaction we get from Japanese travellers now is that Tokyo Disneyland, DisneySea or Universal Studios Japan are bigger and have better rides."

This is also a trend that Adam Kamal, CEO of Olympik Holidays, observes of the "mass market of Malaysian theme park goers". Promising Malaysian destinations such as the Movie Animation Park Studios opening this year in Perak and Sunway Lagoon in Selangor, as well as foreign ones like Shanghai Disneyland, have roused the curiosity of many Malaysians, he added.

The attractiveness of Australia's theme parks is clearly sliding for mature markets like Hong Kong.

Morning Star Travel Services, general manager, Danna Cheung, said Hong Kong travellers' love for novelty have them seeking new theme parks in South-east Asia and undermining traffic to establishments in Australia, which "have been built for a while and are (relatively) outdated".



Furthermore, more Asian travellers are turning away from Australian parks in favour of more affordable alternatives sprouting up across the region.

Desmond Lee, group managing director at Apple Vacations & Conventions, remarked that Asian theme parks have a broader appeal to Malaysians as entrance fees and overall travel expenses are lower than Australia.

In the Philippines, Lyn Galon, travel consultant, Scorpio Travel and Tours agreed that affordability is now an especially large factor that has affected travel to Australia and other outbound destinations, with the peso at an eight-year low of 50 to the US dollar in November 2016.

Dreamworld was removed from packages at Hong Kong's Hong Thai Travel Service, with deputy general manager Daniel Chan citing lack of updates to its attractions and pricey admission fees as the main reasons.

Some outbound operators in Thailand have gone as far as to remove theme parks from their itineraries altogether. Suparerk Soonrangura, founder and managing director of NS Travel & Tours, elaborated that the growth of charter flights to Thailand and competition among LCCs caused price wars in outbound tour business in Thailand. Clients were hence looking for cheap tour packages, prompting tour operators to exclude theme parks.

Meanwhile, agents in Cambodia expressed that Australia remains off the map for Cambodian travellers who are instead opting for theme parks nearer

home, such as Disneylands in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo.

Seang Volak, owner of Cambodia's Palm Tours, said: "China is traditionally a more popular destination for theme parks. Cambodia has close ties with the country, there are more frequent and direct flights and it is closer."

Still, some opine that efforts to refresh theme park attractions may not be enough to guard against the winds of change affecting travel demand.

Somchai Chomraka, managing director of Weekend Tour Thailand noted that while theme parks were popular among Thai travellers in 2006 – especially with the opening of Disneyland parks in Hong Kong and Tokyo – this soon dwindled in 2010 when online games became famous, leading many agents to exclude theme parks from their main programmes.

Even the newly opened Shanghai Disneyland was relegated to an optional part of Weekend Tour's itineraries with demand already on the decline, according to Somchai.

To him, these are all part of a business cycle. "Theme parks are replaced with water parks which can be found in Thailand's beach destinations such as Hua Hin, Pattaya, and Phuket. Then again water parks will lose its attractiveness eventually," he mused.

– Reporting by Paige Lee Pei Qi, S Puvaneswary, Julian Ryall, Rosa Ocampo, Caroline Boey, Prudence Lui, Rohit Kaul and Marissa Carruthers

Can HK keep its amusement?

Shanghai Disneyland attracted four million visitors in just four months since opening in June 2016, but agents in Hong Kong insist that the declining performance of their domestic theme parks are attributed to factors in the broader economic landscape rather than a mere diversion of traffic to Shanghai.

Observing that the new Shanghai attraction has had no impact on Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL) was Wing Wong, managing director, W Travel Service, who explained that the former mostly targets traffic from northern China while the latter caters more to south and south-west China as well as South-east Asia.

Wong added: "Both parks have different styles – the Shanghai one clings to Chinese culture while HKDL has a more international style."

Still, theme parks in Hong Kong have found themselves in the weeds, with industry players pointing to the global economic

uncertainty and a plunge in mainland Chinese arrivals, a trend that preceded the opening of Shanghai Disneyland.

HKDL laid off nearly 100 staff in April 2016 and recorded a net loss of HK\$148 million (US\$19.1 million) for the fiscal year ending early October 2015, with vice president, sales and distribution marketing, Terruce Wang stressing that the park's 2016 performance was "aligned with Hong Kong's overall arrival numbers".

Wang continued: "We observed some positive trends in our international markets over the past few months and attribute this to our efforts in South-east Asian markets and the launch of a strong franchise in our park, Star Wars: Tomorrowland Takeover. This proved to be popular not just with our traditional family segment, but also male and young adult guests."

He added that the park would continue to ride on the excitement and leverage popular Disney franchises, such as through the

launch of the Iron Man Experience last month and the opening of 750-room Disney Explorers Lodge in 2Q2017.

Further ahead, a multi-year development plan spanning 2018 to 2023 (subject to funding approval) may result in the addition of *Frozen* and other Marvel Super Heroes attractions.

Also moving forward with new plans is Ocean Park, whose 2015/16 annual report showed a 18.8 per cent drop in visitors to six million.

Executive director of sales & marketing, Vivian Lee said starting January 2017, admission fees were increased to HK\$438 for adults and HK\$219 for children/seniors. In addition to the two hotels under construction, the new all-weather Ocean Park Water World will extend opening hours to offer night attractions. – Prudence Lui

Right: Disneyland Hong Kong's Iron Man Experience



Destination Taiwan



Going beyond the 101's

While Taipei may be the mainstay of Taiwan's tourism, the vast tourism resources and gems beyond the city are putting more secondary destinations on the map for Asian travellers. **Prudence Lui** reports

With annual visitor arrivals exceeding 11 million last year, Taiwan now sees a greater need to divert touristic traffic beyond Taipei in the north to other parts of the island.

Kathy Yuan, Taiwan Tourism Bureau (TTB), international affairs division section chief, said: "Tourist traffic is concentrated in big cities and we hope to extend that focus to other places. Other than Kaohsiung, which is already building its reputation, Taichung, Tainan and now Hualien are on the radar."

"We hope to pursue Penghu and Taitung in future. In fact, Penghu plans to market itself as a cruise port; Keelung and Kaohsiung presently dominate the scene," she added.

With HK Express inaugurating a twice-weekly Hong Kong-Hualien service last December, its second Taiwan route after Taichung, visitors can more easily access Hualien and discover its natural sites including Taroko Gorge and Meilunshan Park.

The airline's director for commercial, Luke Lovegrove, said: "Our data showed a significant untapped market between Hualien and Hong Kong. We have been pleasantly surprised by the support shown by the local community in Hualien for this new direct route with Hong Kong."

However, Pan Asia Tourist & Study Tour International, managing director, Danny Wong, commented: "The service hardly benefited us agents as it's a LCC with a direct-to-consumer sales strategy. If China Airlines operates this route, we'd definitely have a share."

Meanwhile in Tainan, hospitality players are finding reason to cheer in new air

Destination in numbers

8.8 million

The number of visitors to Taiwan from January to October 2016, a 3.4 per cent year-on-year growth. South Korea was the best performer (up 32.6 per cent) while arrivals from China dropped 11.7 per cent to 3.1 million

6.2 million

The number of leisure tourist arrivals in Taiwan, up 2.4 per cent. Business travel arrivals decreased 3.9 per cent to 606,958

66.3%

The occupancy level for international hotels in Taiwan from January-September 2016, while room rates average NT\$4,007 (US\$125.48). In Taipei alone, occupancy was 68.6 per cent and average room rate was NT\$4,726

routes, among other developments.

Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel, Tainan, director of sales and marketing, Edward Lei, said the hotel has "benefited" from connections linking Hong Kong launched two years ago as well as Osaka and Ho Chi Minh City last year, especially since Japan and Hong Kong are two key international markets.

Taroko National Park in Hualien, eastern Taiwan

Viewpoints

What do secondary cities need to do to attract more international visitors?

Edward Lei,
director of sales
and marketing,
Shangri-La's
Far Eastern
Plaza Hotel, Tainan



More international flights to Tainan are needed. I hope Tokyo and South Korea will be next on the list (after connections to Osaka and Ho Chi Minh City began in 2016). This is because Japan is our top market, and in 2016 FIT traffic from South Korea to Tainan doubled.



Benjamin
Pien, general
manager,
Phoenix Tours

Since Taiwan is not big and it takes only two hours from Taipei to Kaohsiung, we could make use of Taichung as a transit point to access these potential spots. Taiwan's best natural scenarios are mostly located outside big cities, so it's vital for secondary destinations to unveil their unique selling points. From there, agents may package them into an itinerary to raise visitors' awareness and pique their interest.

Issue of the day



Pingxi, Taiwan

Fallouts from frozen relations

With Taiwan's tourism suffering from plummeting Chinese arrivals, the government has thrown a life-line to affected businesses. **Prudence Lui** reports

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 North America bound

Eva Air has launched the Taipei-Chicago route in November 2016 on its new Boeing 777-300ERs. The four-times weekly service leaves for Chicago every Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

Meanwhile, Air Canada announced plans to commence a daily Vancouver-Taipei route in summer 2017, which will be operated by Boeing 787-9 aircraft.

2 Paint the town Indigo

Kaohsiung received its first international branded hotel with the opening of the 129-room Hotel Indigo Kaohsiung Central Park.

This also marks the Taiwan debut of InterContinental Hotels Group's Indigo brand, which will subsequently be launched in Taipei and Alishan.

The 149-key Hotel Indigo Taipei North will be located in the heart of Dazhi Business District, adjacent to historic and cultural landmarks including the National Palace Museum whereas the 84-room Hotel Indigo Alishan will be located in Alishan National Scenic Area.

3 Aloft lands in Taipei's Beitou

Aloft Taipei Beitou opened in January 2017 in the city's hot springs district, marking the brand's second hotel in Taiwan.

The property features 292 loft-inspired rooms and suites equipped with SPG Keyless technology, while amenities range from the American style restaurant Nook and the signature W XYZSM bar to three meeting spaces.

4 Jamie's Italian opens in Taipei

Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver brought his Jamie's Italian restaurant to Taiwan last November.

Situated at the third floor of Shinkong Mitsukoshi Department

Store, the restaurant has 170 seats and two private rooms each with capacity for 15.

In addition to signature homemade pasta and pizza, it also serves up dishes specially for the Taiwan market like the Taiwan Hot Pizza and Jamie's Beer.

5 Taoyuan gets Plaza Premium treatment

Plaza Premium Lounges were launched at the departure halls in Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 of Taoyuan

an Airport last summer.

Spanning over 2,500m² with capacity for about 600, the new lounges feature live-cooking stations serving international cuisine.

Plaza Premium also sponsored two Travellers Experience Zones, which include the brand's signature honeycomb seating, hot showers, private resting suites, complimentary Wi-Fi, among other outlets.

The basic lounge-use package starts at NT\$1,300 (US\$40.66) for two hours.



2016/shutterstock

The Chinese slump sent Taiwan's tourism sector into turmoil as it affected the livelihood of those employed in the sightseeing sector. Over 20,000 industry members from across 200 travel companies then took to the streets in September to call on the government with ways to improve the situation.

TTB has announced NT\$300 million (US\$9.4 million) in subsidies to help affected tour operators design discounted packages for domestic tourists. These will be targeted at seriously-affected areas including Jiayi, Hualien, Taoyuan, Kaohsiung, Taitung, Nantou and Pingtung, etc.

The bureau has also put forth four key directions to help affected stakeholders, namely to diversify the market, assist transformation of business, expand domestic travel and develop creative products to retain Chinese visitors.

Some players such as Phoenix Tour general manager, Benjamin Pien, see the crisis as an opportunity to wean the tourism industry from one that is too dependent on Chinese tour groups and riddled with cut-throat prices.

The company no longer handles group tours from China and has shifted its focus to providing tailor-made tour products for premium Chinese visitors, although this accounts for only two per cent of overall business, he added.

Taiwan Tour Bus operator, Chao Tung-yuan also noted that the protest in September was mostly made up of business in the zero-fee tour field like coach buses and operators. He said: "I think (the demonstration) was of no use since the market regulates itself. But in this case, it (has to do) with government policy and I believe the situation will improve in future."

Taiwan was seeing steadily surging arrivals from China in recent years until a political stalemate between Taipei and Beijing sent arrivals in a nosedive. This was allegedly due to a politically-motivated move in Beijing to limit the flow of Chinese tourists to certain parts of Taiwan after new president Tsai Ing-wen – who does not endorse the 'one China' policy – took office.

According to statistics from Taiwan Tourism Bureau (TTB), Chinese traffic grew 30 per cent in March 2016 but the figures abruptly plunged 12.2 per cent in May when the Taiwan's new ruling party took over on May 20. In the first 10 months of 2016, only 3.1 million Chinese travelled to Taiwan, representing a 11.7 per cent year-on-year decrease.



MY WAY

What are your current challenges?

The biggest challenge is to build up the brand awareness. Although Aloft is a rapidly growing hotel brand worldwide, as the first Aloft hotel in Taiwan we have to put in the effort to elevate our brand reputation and communicate our brand value to the people here.

As a marketing planner, I also have to observe market trends carefully and devise strategies to address market needs.

The Aloft brand focuses on the next generation of travellers and is committed to offering vibrant guest experiences, so I have to ensure I stay up-to-date in my work with fresh ideas.

If I had my way to improve things, I would.... I would like to do more to support local artists and musicians, such as by hosting art or design workshops and speeches. In turn, our guests could be given new travel experience!

I also want to cooperate with the government or the private sector to raise awareness of the tourism industry, get young people interested in working in the hotel industry, offer more internship opportunities to enthusiastic young entrants and improve the work environment to inspire our staff and help them feel truly valued.

2016/shutterstock

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Destination India



A whiff of the wellness market

Energised by the government's focus on medical tourism, Indian tour operators are pulling out the stops and devising ways to capture the market. **Rohit Kaul** reports

The Indian government is showing a keener interest to develop the medical tourism sector, which is currently pegged at US\$3 billion and has the potential to reach US\$8 billion by 2020, according to a recent Grant Thornton report.

In 2015, the National Medical and Wellness Tourism Board was established as a platform for stakeholders to come together and discuss the challenges that the country faces in promoting medical and wellness tourism. It also put in place strategies to be adopted by both the public and the private sector in order for India to grow a larger share of the global medical tourism market.

"India's ministry of tourism is taking steps to put India on global medical tourism map," said Ravi Gosain, managing director, Erco Travels, lauding the launch of the Medical and Wellness Tourism Board as an important step with prominent personalities from the medical and tourism sector sitting on the board.

"Till now, we have only been able to touch the tip of the iceberg considering the immense potential of medical tourism," said Subhash Goyal, chairman, STIC Travel Group.

"The medical and wellness tourism board will help us to identify challenges

that the country is facing in the promotion of that segment," he added.

Most recently, the Indian government expanded the e-tourist visa facility to include short-term medical treatments, enabling tourists from 150 countries to apply for medical visas online.

According to India's ministry of tourism, 134,344 international medical tourists visited the country in 2015. In 1H2016, nearly 100,000 foreign tourists visited the country availing medical visas, with South Asian countries like Bangladesh and Afghanistan leading the way.

A strong drawcard for India lies its affordability of medical treatments vis-à-vis developed countries. Said K Hari Prasad, president, hospitals division, Apollo Hospitals Enterprise: "Estimates show that medical procedures in India allows patients to save about 65-90 per cent as compared with the US."

Maharaj Wahi, chairman of Rudra Experiences, agreed: "The scope of medical tourism is huge for India primarily because we are cost effective in comparison with other countries."

"The post-treatment period, during which a medical tourist has to recover, offers us an opportunity to promote tourism," he said.

Wahi added that India's strengths lies in

its quality hospitals, experienced doctors, global recognition in the medical field and top nursing facilities. "Destinations like Thailand and Malaysia are more popular for wellness tourism, but when it comes to medical procedures India is better placed," he remarked.

Added Goyal: "Apart from Allopathic treatment, we have Ayurvedic, Unani and Naturopathic treatment, which is not available in Malaysia and Thailand."

Excited by the government's focus on the medical tourism, Indian tour operators have devised strategies to capture the segment.

"We have signed contracts with some popular hospitals in major cities to recommend them to international patients. We are targeting mostly Europe and North America customers who are looking for cosmetic surgeries and wellness treatments," said Gosain.

Wahi said his company had been receiving queries for medical tourism even without much promotion. He said: "We see good potential in markets like the US, Canada and the UK that have a significant non-resident Indian population. Our focus will be on promoting medical tourism packages through the Internet."

Goyal said: "We are focusing on the African market as there is a greater need for

Destination in numbers

7.8 million

The total number of foreign tourists arriving in India from January to November 2016, a growth of 10.4 per cent year-on-year

917,446

The total number of international tourists arriving on e-visas from January to November 2016, a 168.5 per cent year-on-year growth

US\$20.7 billion

The tourism earnings from January to November 2016, a year-on-year growth of 9.1 per cent

Viewpoints

What kind of potential do you see for medical tourism and what is being done about it?

Valsa Nair Singh, principal secretary, tourism and culture, Government of Maharashtra

Maharashtra aims to be the number one destination for medical tourism through state-of-the-art healthcare facilities and well-trained medical professionals. We are planning to create a web platform to provide various services and facilities to global patients. There are also plans to introduce policies for promoting the state for medical tourism.



Rajeev Kohli, joint managing director, Creative Travel

I think medical tourism is a waste of time for the inbound tourism industry because it doesn't serve the purpose of tourism. Someone coming for a heart surgery or kidney transplant is not going to take a trip post-treatment. A one-day trip to a destination, in my opinion, is not medical tourism. The Ministry of Tourism should focus on activities that generate value and numbers for the tourism industry. In medical tourism, 80-90 per cent of the money goes to the hospitals. There is hardly scope for a tour operator to make money from medical tourism.



world-class medical treatments in those countries. We will reach out to these markets by participating in medical tourism tradeshows."

According to the trade, medical tourism to India is growing not only from traditional markets like South Asia, Africa, Russia and Gulf countries but also from Europe and North America.

Issue of the day

Cash crunch bites into tourism

Business has been affected even though agents see the long-term benefits of demonetisation, reports Rohit Kaul

India's demonetisation drive to curb the flow of black money in the economy, which saw the government declare Rs500 (US\$7.35) and Rs1,000 bills as illegal tender in November 2016, has caused concern for both the inbound and outbound travel sectors.

According to a section of the inbound trade, the move has dampened the prospects of this season's inbound business that began in October.

"While the demonetisation move was essential, some considerations could have been made to accommodate foreign tourists," pointed out Louis D'Souza, executive director, Tamarind Global.

"The fallout has seen a marked increase in concern from foreign tour operators and tourists with confirmed bookings about the availability of Indian currency in exchange for their international currency, as well as ATMs and hotel counters.

"Some foreign tour operators have actually dissuaded guests from travelling till the issue is dealt with," he added.

For instance, a number of historical monuments managed by the Archaeological Survey of India only accept cash for entrance fees, and there is no alternative payment mode such as credit card and online transfer. And while entrance fees for some monuments can be paid online, the website is unable to handle the influx and gets stuck, lamented Ravi Gosain, managing director of Ercos Travels.

He added: "This is a serious problem which is giving a bad name to India."

The demonetisation move has also hit the outbound business, according to Ashwani Sharma, CEO, Sheraton Travels. He said: "The leisure market especially has not taken the announcement positively."

Meanwhile, a slowdown in longhaul travel demand was observed by Rakshit Desai, managing director, FCM Travel Solutions, India. "The demand for year-end travel season was slightly lower than usual. We have seen cancellations for longhaul destinations such as the US and Europe," he said.

However, Desai said that demand for shorthaul destinations like Bhutan and Sri Lanka have seen an upswing.

Hitank Shah, Gujarat's chapter chairman of Travel Agents Federation of India, said: "Demonetisation has affected travel industry adversely, with business being down by 30-40 per cent."

To address the issue, the chapter has inked an MoU with a private bank to facilitate travel loans for customers of its members to boost their business, according to Shah.

However, Manoj Upadhyay, head sales India, ClubMed, expects the situation to improve in time to come.

"Demonetisation will have a short-term impact on the travel sector. However, in the long run, this move will be positive for the growth of the outbound sector as it is expected to bring about changes in customer behaviour with more cashless transactions, and a shift from unorganised to organised business," he added.

"The move clearly points at the cash economy going away," concurred Aditi Balbir, managing director and founder of V Resorts. "In the short run, the spending will go down, but the economy will benefit in the long term."



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Destination India

MY WAY



Nishant Pitti
Founder
easemytrip.com

What tourism challenges is India currently facing?

India is a rich tourism destination with varied attractions and a diverse culture. Unfortunately, the number of international tourist arrivals in the country don't justify the potential. Our neighbouring countries like Thailand and Malaysia are doing better than us.

Compared with other Asian countries, we are also lacking world-class theme parks that can lure well-travelled international tourists.

There is a need to identify key tourism destinations in India and market them aggressively to global markets.

The lack of cleanliness in tourist destinations is another turn-off for travellers. While the government has taken steps such as the *Clean India* campaign, a lot more still needs to be done.

We can make use of India's vast coastline by creating infrastructure to develop the cruise segment.

If I had my way to improve things, I would... focus on infrastructure development in every tourist destination of the country. Though India is witnessing infrastructure development in terms of road connectivity, wayside amenities and better local transportation, these need to happen at a faster pace.

Ensuring the safety of tourists especially female travellers should be a priority. There needs to be a mechanism, such as dedicated tourist police in tourist destinations, to ensure safety of our guests. If incidents involving tourists are reported, they have to be dealt with swiftly and properly.

Although India has made the visa process easier by introducing e-visas, the government should allow multiple entries on e-visas (compared to one single entry for a stay of up to 30 days currently; and a maximum of two e-visas per year). A traveller should be allowed to apply for an e-visa in advance, compared with the present 30-day window before date of travel.

Due to government restrictions, we have limited nightlife options and bars have to close at 23.00. Some tourist places should be developed into night spots through night bazaars and allowing pubs to operate till later.

NEWS IN A MINUTE



1 JW Marriott rises in Kolkata

Towering over JBS Haldane Avenue, the 281-room JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata boasts amenities including Spa by JW, a gym and an outdoor infinity pool.

F&B options include JW Kitchen, an all-day restaurant; and Vintage Asia, a fine-dining restaurant serving Thai and Chinese dishes. Meeting facilities are spread across 13 rooms to offer a total of 3,736m² of event space.

2 Coimbatore welcomes its first Radisson Blu hotel

A 135-key Radisson Blu hotel has opened in Coimbatore, the second largest city in Tamil Nadu state.

Meeting spaces in the property include a 873m² banquet hall, pre-function area and lawn. Other facilities include a rooftop swimming pool, four eateries, an on-site fitness centre and a spa.

3 RBD Sarovar Portico opens its doors in Bengaluru

Recently opened in Bengaluru, the RBD Sarovar Portico offers 86 rooms across three categories, with facilities including a gym and the all-day dining restaurant Brunchilli.

Crystal Palace, the banquet hall located on the rooftop, has an area of 251m², including 37m² of pre-function area. It can accommodate up to 250 for a reception, 175 in theatre-style and 100 in classroom-style.

4 European fare with bay views

The St Regis Mumbai has opened

Luna Nudo Gusta, a modern European restaurant on level 37 in October 2016, offering views of the bay as well as a stage for music performances.

Menu highlights include the burrata and Florentine fennel salad, house-smoked hickory salmon and lobster risotto.

5 Costa neoClassica sails to the Maldives from Mumbai

Costa neoClassica will homeport in Mumbai during its weekly sailings between Mumbai and the Maldives from now until March 18, 2017.

This new seven-night itinerary sails along India's south-western coast, with stops at Cochin and Mangalore (Mumbai-Maldives) and Colombo and Goa (Maldives-Mumbai).

6 Groove to the ghungroo beat

Taking place in the evenings from 18.15 to 21.00 at Parsi Anjuman Hall in New Delhi is the immersive dance narrative ghungroo. The performance showcases the history of the city through *kathak* – an ancient North Indian dance style. Visitors will be treated to an authentic Indian barbecue post-show.



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MOST READ

MANAGEMENT CHANGES IN SINGAPORE DMC SCENE

Diethelm Travel Singapore has appointed two industry veterans to key senior management positions, with Judy Lum now the general manager while Yvonne Wong supports the company's business development. The departures of Lum and Wong from Tour East, both of whom had served the company for around 30 years, have caused the industry to speculate if a different culture, mindset and approach since JTB took over Tour East two years ago might be a reason.

On the other hand, Tour East Holdings does not see these resignations as a blow, even though it risks losing accounts in the future. CEO & president Shigeyuki Suzuki stated that general managers are "on the same page in business direction and strategies" as the JTB owners.

TOURS SHAKEN UP BY TRIPS SHARING ECONOMY

Asian tour operators are reinventing tours and strengthening capabilities as sharing economy players like Airbnb foray into their territory. Airbnb claimed 500 experiences in 12 cities worldwide at a launch last mid-November, and tour operators recognise it's just a matter of time before more big players enter the travel business.

But Matt Masson, managing director of Buffalo Tours Singapore, believes that it is difficult for new players to disrupt tour operations and deliver the same experiences that DMCs provide. Asian Trails' e-commerce and marketing manager, Niels Steeman, added insurance coverage and security might be an issue for the trip-sharing economy.

RESISTANCE TO NEW TOURISM LEADER EASES IN THE PHILIPPINES

The private sector's initial opposition over Cesar Montano's appointment to COO of the Tourism Promotions Board, marketing arm of the Philippine Department of Tourism (DoT), about his lack of qualifications seems to have quietened to a pensive acceptance. Industry members are now urging the trade to rally behind the new TPB head for the common goal of promoting the Philippines.



OPERATORS URGE 'NEUTRALITY' FOR VISIT ASEAN@50 TRAVEL PACKAGES

Tour operators believe ASEAN's 50th anniversary this year is a golden chance to increase business to South-east Asia, but stress that there is a need for neutrality, coordination and cooperation.

Operators have indicated that some packages are offered with booking ability to specific companies only, and pointed out that they should be standard and can be handled by any DMC instead. Also, the ASEAN private sector has a role to play, but there is not much involvement from national airlines currently to promote regional travel, and there's a lack of a coordinated promotional campaign.



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WE LIKE

Snippets of happenings good and bad surrounding the travel trade



CURTAINS CLOSE ON SEAWORLD SAN DIEGO'S THEATRICAL ORCA SHOWS

SeaWorld San Diego in California has ended its long-running killer whale show in January, following years of outcry and criticism from celebrities and animal rights groups over such performance shows. The aquatic theme park has been featuring killer whale shows with Shamu in the first starring role back in the 1960s.



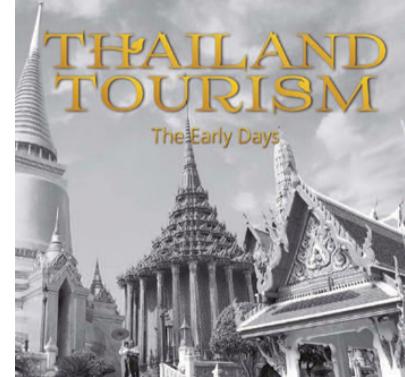
SeaWorld will transition from theatrical orca shows to a more educational presentation that focuses more on their natural behaviours and environment. The new show, Orca Encounter, will debut in summer this year.

JETSTAR ENCOURAGES TRAVELLERS TO CLIP THEIR WINGS THIS LUNAR NEW YEAR

In an unusual move for an airline, Jetstar encouraged Singapore families to stay home to celebrate the Lunar New Year with their loved ones. The airline waived all change fees and fare differences to move flight departures on January 27 and 28 (the first two days of the Lunar New Year) after a social experiment saw young travellers giving up free flights during this period when they realised how important this festive season was to their family.

NEW BOOK ON THAILAND'S EARLY TOURISM DAYS

Dusit International has published *Thailand Tourism: The Early Days*, a book detailing the history of the tourism industry in Thailand and pioneers – such as Kusa Panyarachun, founder of the country's first travel agency and Prasert Prasarttong-Osoth, founder of Bangkok Airways – behind its early development.



Priced at 1,500 baht (US\$42.50), it will be available at Asia Books and all Dusit hotels in Thailand. All proceeds will be donated to the Royal Project Foundation, which helps to improve the living conditions of Thailand's rural communities.



AVALANCHE HITS ITALIAN SKI RESORT

Several people died and numerous were missing after an avalanche – triggered by a series of earthquakes – buried Hotel Rigopiano on January 19. The hotel is located at an altitude of 1,200m in the Apennine mountains in Italy's Abruzzo region.

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.

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- Lott Tour (2011)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)
- Regal Airport Hotel (2015)
- Banyan Tree Spa (2015)
- Qatar Airways (2016)
- Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (2016)
- Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (2016)

TTG Asia Media is pleased to announce that it has set up a virtual TTG Travel Hall of Fame (www.ttgtavelhof.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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