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Janene Laird

The head of the International Feng Shui Association – Australia Chapter tells Karen Yue that holding regular events to raise the standards and awareness of professional practise among members and the public is key to long-term survival

TTG associations

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TEL : +86 571 8720 4909 E-Mail : roger@hz.cn www.micehangzhou.com/en

EDITORIAL

Karen Yue
Group Editor (karen.yue@ttgasia.com)

Gracia Chiang
Deputy Group Editor
(gracia.chiang@ttgasia.com)

Hannah Koh
Assistant Editor, TTG Asia Online
(hannah.koh@ttgasia.com)

Paige Lee Pei Qi
Assistant Editor, Singapore
(lee.peiqi@ttgasia.com)

Xinyi Liang-Pholsena
Assistant Editor, Thailand/Indochina
(liang.xinyi@ttgasia.com)

Kathy Neo
Copy Editor (kathy.neo@ttgasia.com)

S Puvaneswary
Editor, Malaysia/Brunei
(puvanes@ttgasia.com)

Mimi Hudoyo
Editor, Indonesia (jdmfasia@cbn.net.id)

Greg Lowe Thailand
(tg@thegreglowe.com)

Prudence Lui Hong Kong/Greater China
(prului@yahoo.com)

Shekhar Niyogi, Rohit Kaul India
(shekhar.niyogi@ttgasia.com,
rohitkaul23@gmail.com)

Feizal Samath Sri Lanka/Maldives
(feizalsam@gmail.com)

Marianne Carandang, Rosa Ocampo
The Philippines
(marianne.carandang@ttgasia.com,
rosa.ocampo@gmail.com)

Redmond Sia, Goh Meng Yong
Creative Designers

Lina Tan Editorial Assistant

SALES & MARKETING

Michael Chow Group Publisher
(michael.chow@ttgasia.com)

Jonathan Yap Senior Business Manager
(jonathan.yap@ttgasia.com)

Mervin Lee Business Manager
(mervin.lee@ttgasia.com)

Stephanie So Business Manager
(Hong Kong, stephanie.so@ttgasia.com)

Cheryl Tan Corporate Marketing Manager
(cheryl.tan@ttgasia.com)

Stephanie Toh Marketing Executive
(stephanie.toh@ttgasia.com)

Cheryl Lim Advertisement Administration
manager (cheryl.lim@ttgasia.com)

Carol Cheng Asst Manager Administration
& Marketing (Hong Kong, carol.cheng@
ttgasia.com)

PUBLISHING SERVICES

Tony Yeo Division Manager

Haze Loh Senior Creative Designer

Lynn Lim Web Executive

Carol Wong Senior Circulation Executive
(carol.wong@ttgasia.com)

OFFICES

Singapore

TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd,
1 Science Park Road,
#04-07 The Capricorn,
Singapore Science Park II,
Singapore 117528
Tel: +65 6395 7575, fax: +65 6536 0896,
email: contact@ttgasia.com

Hong Kong

TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd,
Unit 2011, 20/F,
Harbour Centre,
25 Harbour Road, Wanchai,
Hong Kong
Tel: +852 2237 7888, fax: +852 2237 7227

TTG ASIA MEDIA PTE LTD

Darren Ng Managing Director

Raini Hamdi Senior Editor
(raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com)

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The power of education

The late Nelson Mandela once wisely declared: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

While changing the world may be too lofty an aspiration for most associations, providing education for its members and other stakeholders is definitely critical for the continued existence of the association.

In this issue's *Profile* (see page 14), the effervescent chief of the International Feng Shui Association (IFSA) Australia Chapter, Janene Laird, explains how her society keeps busy year-round with numerous seminars and workshops that reach out to both members and the public.

IFSA's events for members serve a purpose common to associations, which is to educate members in a bid to improve their personal and professional capabilities, and therefore reinforce the association's relevance to members and encourage continued membership. IFSA achieves this by inviting famous industry experts from beyond Australia to lead seminars and workshops.

However, what impresses me is the reason behind IFSA's public events. These

events help to generate interest in the practice and also educate the public on what makes genuine feng shui as opposed to false advice dished out by unqualified practitioners. This in turn creates a stronger demand for legitimate feng shui guidance, which simply means more business for IFSA members who are certified practitioners.

It also forces feng shui practitioners to maintain a high level of professionalism in order to serve a community of educated consumers, and one way to stay at the forefront of the feng shui practice is continued education which may be provided by the association.

It is a virtuous circle.

Associations of various trades can benefit from conducting public outreach programmes, and they need not be massive events like the annual gatherings of global members.

IFSA's story is interesting and I would also love to hear what you are doing to engage the public for the eventual benefit of your members and association.

You know how to reach me!



Karen Yue
Group Editor

PROFILE

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Janene Laird

Once a school teacher for almost 20 years and now head of the International Feng Shui Association – Australia Chapter, Janene Laird still holds education in high regard and believes that her association needs to actively conduct events to raise the standards and awareness of professional feng shui practice among members and the public. She talks to Karen Yue



GUIDE TO

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High-tech convention centres

Convention centres in Asia have been investing in technology improvements to enhance event delivery and delegate experience. *TTGassociations* spotlights a selection of those that have most recently powered up



DESTINATIONS



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Thailand's tough run

It may be ASEAN's second hottest destination for business events but political strife is taking some shine out of the exciting kingdom this year, discovers Greg Lowe



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Much work to be done

Shedding a gambling city image and raising service standards and accessibility may boost Macau's fortunes in winning association events. By Prudence Lui



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Sunny days ahead

Business and association events are on the rise for the Philippines, but not all cities in the country are getting a piece of the action, discovers Rosa Ocampo



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Changes in the wind

All eyes are on two upcoming convention and exhibition venues which are expected to remedy Jakarta's current lack of event space, writes Mimi Hudoyo

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Multi-party understanding of pharma laws can aid compliance



Sullivan: collaboration across the supply chain will reduce resistance to compliance

By Paige Lee Pei Qi and Karen Yue

While global regulations on the healthcare sector are already impacting international medical meetings held in Asia, greater collaboration is needed between the meeting suppliers and medical societies to make sense of the regulations, said sector specialists at the Healthcare Meetings Forum Asia in August.

These pharmaceutical laws, which can require doctors to pay their own attendance fees at events, prohibit the use of luxury hotels, and cap the price of hosted meals for delegates, are changing the way healthcare events are executed.

As these laws are set by countries, international and national healthcare authorities as well as societies and corporate firms, their breadth is wide, resulting in much confusion among healthcare event owners and organisers.

Speaking to *TTGassociations* on the sidelines of the forum, which was organised by Healthcare Meetings Forum (UK) and Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre, Lisa Sullivan, managing director of INVIVO Communications, a company involved in pharmaceutical and medical events in various destinations, said: “The problem in Asia now is that everyone thinks (these laws are a hindrance to events). They must understand that these are rules to help everybody do things in a transparent manner.”

For Ronald Yeoh, medical director & consultant ophthalmic surgeon at Eye & Retina Surgeons, Camden Medical Centre, who runs cataract and refractive surgery meetings in Asia-Pacific, the regulations are complicated and frustrating, although necessary.

“Administering these complex rules incurs additional time and administrative cost. I hope compliance regulations can be kept simple,” Yeoh said.

Industry experts say a closer collaboration down the event supply chain can help healthcare event owners and organisers to better comply with the wide-ranging pharmaceutical laws.

Professional conference organiser Ace:Dayton Direct (International) managing director, Nancy Tan, believes that conference organisers like herself must guide healthcare clients around laws that impact the organisation of meetings.

A compliance manager at the Asia-Pacific office of a global pharmaceutical firm told this magazine that event agencies and venues could help “significantly reduce” time spent on event planning by simply understanding the laws that impact healthcare events. Citing an example, she said: “There were many times when I had to reject proposals of delegate dinners that were too fancy, all because the conference organiser was unaware of existing prohibitions.”

Global chefs to get UN recognition

Chefs across the world are being recognised by the United Nations (UN), with the first step being a cooperation agreement signed in September between the latter and the World Association of Chefs Societies (Worldchefs).

Worldchefs president Gisur Gudmundson, told *TTGassociations* that the main objective of the association is for the profession to be recognised by the UN. “We need to be recognised as the responsibility that we have is similar to that of a doctor. We deal with food and it is a huge responsibility,” Gudmundson said, adding that the lives of people are “in our hands”.

Iceland-based Gudmund-

son, who was in Male to launch the first Chefs Guild in the Maldives, said UN’s recognition would attract more people to the profession which does not have many takers.

Meanwhile Worldchefs is preparing a new curriculum with the support of Unilever for culinary schools worldwide on sustainability measures.

Gudmundson explained that chefs are involved in sustainable practices in the kitchen aimed primarily at cutting food waste, and work is now underway to set rules and guidelines to select the most sustainable restaurant in the world in October 2015. –

Feizal Samath

Philippine associations join hands for global reach

Three of the Philippines’ biggest associations have merged their health and wellness events under the roof of the Second International Beauty, Health and Wellness Expo, which was held in Manila at the end of August, indicative of a rising trend in event mergers.

Coming under the Expo umbrella are the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s (PCCI) Philippine Health and Wellness Conference and Happiness is Wellness Festival, and Management Association of the Philippines’ (MAP) and People Management Association of the Philippines’ (PMAP) National Wellness Summit.

“This is the biggest collaboration we have had in our 13 years of operations,” said Expo organiser Mitch Ballesteros, who is also CEO of Ex-Link Events.

Apart from the big three, other industry movers and

shakers have also linked their own events to the Expo.

Ballesteros said the trend of merging events under one roof is growing as the expertise and resources of organisations can

be unified for a wider local and global reach.

“Collaboration is more practical and affects more people,” said Emy Chavez, president, Philippine Council for the Advancement of Association Executives (PCAA).

“It’s like outsourcing. You also need people to help market your own ideas and initiatives...There’s strength in numbers,” Chavez added.

PCAA, for instance, has tied up with Makati Business Club (MBC) to introduce the latter’s Integrity Initiative to PCAA members in a session in October.

“We are trying to convince all associations that form part of PCAA to scatter the principles of integrity and MBC has a big part in it”, said Chavez. –

Rosa Ocampo



Chavez: strength in numbers

Venues will do well to understand needs of healthcare event clients: industry players

By Karen Yue

Pressured event budgets and funding for medical society events, along with stricter requirements on compliance with pharmaceutical codes that impact meetings, are some of the key challenges facing healthcare event owners and planners today, found a quick poll conducted with attendees of the Healthcare Meetings Forum Asia in August.

In such a climate, venues will fare well if they “spoke the language” of healthcare event clients, said Mark Handforth, founding director of UK-based Compliant Venues, which assesses venues to support them in meeting the needs of healthcare meetings and provides skill-based training to help venues be “appropriate and truthful”.

“Marketing of venues is quite linear, covering many sectors and event types. However, the healthcare sector is very specific and sometimes the marketing messages may be misleading for this market. We help venues and their staff understand that, which will in turn give them greater confidence in interacting with domestic and international healthcare event clients,” Handforth said.

Explaining the meaning of “appropriate language”, Handforth said: “A hotel or venue’s operation personnel or salesperson will not just be talking to healthcare event clients about F&B, they will have to be ready to discuss their capability to support transparency reporting and event compliance (to pharmaceutical codes).”

“Many hotels and convention centres want a piece of the (healthcare events business), but if the director of sales, for example, lacks the right language of this sector, he or she can very quickly be pushed aside by a client who needs to work with an educated partner.”

Compliant Venues publishes online independent reviews of venues that are worded with healthcare event clients in mind. Clients may then use the information to “speed up their venue decision-making process”.

Currently the company only reviews venues in Europe, although there are plans to expand its reach to Asia.

While Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre does not yet carry such accreditation, its CEO, Arun Madhok, said the venue is already seeing much success with medical and healthcare

meetings and events.

Suntec Singapore has a dedicated sales team familiar with regulations affecting such business functions, a specialisation that Madhok believes has benefited the venue.

Madhok said: “Today, although medical and healthcare events represent 30 per cent of the key events we’ve hosted, we still see significant growth opportunities in this area. We are regarded as the venue of choice in Singapore for medical and healthcare events and they form a key part of our business strategy.”

Understanding the legal and budget constraints faced by medical and healthcare associations and companies is important, opined Madhok, who said his team “not only comprehends a large portion of the pharmaceutical codes but also offers solutions to help reduce event costs for healthcare event clients”.

Examples of options include flexible function spaces that allow clients to hire less space and bento lunch boxes which are convenient for “time-strapped doctors who often need to eat while watching a presentation”.



Madhok: helps to be accredited as a compliant venue

Zonta International picks Yokohama for 2018 gathering

The Yokohama Convention & Visitors Bureau (YCVB) has won the bid to host the 64th Zonta International Convention, which will see approximately 2,000 delegates from 67 countries coming together to Yokohama in 2018.

Zonta International, which is an international service organisation serving to advance the status of women through service and advocacy, has more than 30,000 members worldwide. Founded in 1919, the organisation will be marking the start of its 100th year anniversary celebrations with this convention in Yokohama.

With Zonta International having 1,000 members from Japan, Hiroko Kano, convention manager of YCVB said: “As Japan is not well-known to all the members of Zonta yet, this convention will help raise Japan’s profile to international Zontians by showing the Japanese historical and cultural attractions, social security and Japanese hospitality.”

Although details are yet to be final-



Female power on show in Yokohama come 2018

ised, Kano confirmed that there are plans for pre and post congress tours.

Kano added that Yokohama is growing to become a city renowned for hosting conventions to advance women’s causes, which is “one of the pillars of the city’s focus and the nation’s growth strategy”.

This upcoming convention will hence help fuel Yokohama’s determination to become the city with the most conducive working environment for women in Japan, Kano said.

Great Ideas comes to Asia

THE American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) will bring its Great Ideas Conference to Asia next year.

Hong Kong has been chosen as the venue for the Washington DC-based association’s first-ever Asian conference, which will see 150 to 200 association management practitioners from Asia-Pacific gathering.

ASAE’s Great Ideas Conference tackles creative approaches to everyday issues in association management and is traditionally held in the US. Orlando, Florida is scheduled to host it in March 2015.

Emy Chavez, president of Philippine Council for the Advancement of Association Executives (PCAEE), which is on the ASAE advisory board for the Great Ideas Conference 2015, said the upcoming Asia conference is a pilot event that could become annual if successful.

PCAEE will aim to host the 2016 conference if so, said Chavez. – **Rosa Ocampo**

Sheraton to draw associations to Macau

By Raini Hamdi

Sheraton Macao Hotel Cotai Central, the largest hotel with the biggest meeting space in Macau, aims to crack open the international associations market for the enclave.

The property is believed to be one of few hotels, if not the only one, in AMEA to have a director of sales dedicated to the associations business, Corinne Janssen. It has 3,896 rooms and a total meeting space of 4,891m². For such capacity, the associations market is key.

But Janssen is battling long-held perceptions of Macau by international associations that the SAR is unsuitable for large events.

"We've been opened just over a year. With associations, you don't get your runs on the board quickly. This is a long-term approach," said Janssen.

"But one trend we're seeing is that international associations, particularly those in North America, are looking to expand their membership and many of them are looking at Asia. Many realise that an effective way to enter these markets is by leading with an event. So they would organise a congress here and...

it helps them to get members. They know that a congress in Macau is almost certain to get high attendance from the region as Macau is becoming popular for Asians."

Janssen admitted though that a "tested" destination such as

Singapore is today a strong competitor for Macau.

She added: "Also, people say Macau is the Las Vegas of Asia, which is a bad comparison because Macau has so much more in terms of cultural diversity (and there's an entire historic component here that you wouldn't find in Vegas. Accessibility (is wrongly) perceived to be difficult. It does not take you more time to go from Hong Kong airport to Macau, than from Kuala Lumpur airport to the city centre."

Janssen also pointed out that among them, the Sheraton, Venetian, Holiday Inn, Conrad, Four Seasons and Venetian's Parisian, which is scheduled to open in 2016, could offer associations not just a combined total of 5,000 rooms at a go in the low season in a single contract, but different price points to meet associations' varying levels of delegates, be they university students or association board members.

The five opened hotels have joined forces to bid for large congresses and, according to Janssen, have got a few deals on the book although she could not share the details.



Sheraton Macao Hotel Cotai Central has the ability to support association events

Dubai scores 2015 International Dragon Award Meeting

Dubai has secured the bid to host the 2015 International Dragon Award Meeting (2015 IDA Annual Meeting), which will take place from August 22 to 25 next year.

The IDA Annual Meeting, which will be held at the Dubai International Convention & Exhibition Center, is an international Chinese life insurance and financial services industry event recognising top insurance and financial professionals.

"The reason to choose Dubai is not only because it is one of the most attractive tourism destinations, but also (because it) has a state-of-the-art business and convention centre, which is equipped with the latest facilities. There is confidence that Dubai's accessibility in terms of airlift, the number of well-designed hotels, and the highest quality service standards will make the 2015 IDA Annual Meeting a successful business event," said Richard Wu, chairman of the Worldwide Chinese Life Insurance Congress that organises the event.

Steen Jakobsen, director of Dubai Business Events – the Official Convention Bureau, commented: "We are honoured that Dubai was selected as the first city outside of Asia to host the International Dragon Award 2015 event, and we are very much looking forward to showcasing this remarkable city to the thousands of delegates who will be attending.

"China is an increasingly important market for Dubai, which is particularly well suited for Chinese visitors thanks to its high standards of hospitality and vast array of leisure attractions which include some of the best hotels and shopping malls in the world," Jakobsen added.

{ Bureau brief }

Hangzhou to consolidate MICE position

Hangzhou Tourism Commission (HTC) is taking steps to add a second brand – Hangzhou MICE Promotion Center, indicating it is taking on the roles of a convention and exhibition bureau (CVB) – to the Hangzhou Tourism Promotion Center to ensure the destination does not lose its number three ranking in China.

Roger Shu, MICE manager, HTC, said: "There were 15 international meetings in Hangzhou in 2013 and the city ranks third in China with about 10,000 delegates. Our target is to reach 25 international meetings in three years' time. With a CVB, Hangzhou will be in a stronger position to influence decision-makers to hold association meetings from Europe, and to attract more incentive business to the city."

Shu added that Hangzhou's needs for a CVB and to "professionalise the industry" are being highlighted to the city's mayor, and expressed hopes that the bureau can be set up by 2015.

Hangzhou is also setting up a system to collate MICE data. – **Caroline Boey**

Penang advances on CVB set-up

The Penang state government has unveiled the appointed of David Hall, senior partner at David Hall & Associates, as a consultant to set up the structure of Penang International Convention and Exhibition Bureau (PICEB).

Announced by Penang state minister for tourism development, Danny Law Heng Kiang, Hall's new posting also tasks him with recommending a sustainable funding model and potential candidates to fill PICEB's COO position.

David Hall & Associates is an Adelaide-based specialist in the convention and visitor

bureau (CVB) industry, and also consults during the formation of Sarawak Convention Bureau.

PICEB, which will be a division under Penang Global Tourism, will be set up by end of the year but may only begin operations in early 2015.

Malaysia wants association HQs

As part of Malaysia's efforts to grow its number of association events, the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau is stepping up courtship of global associations, urging them to establish their headquarters in the country.

This new direction has already yielded a victory – the World Scout Bureau Central Office announced in June that it will shift out of Geneva in favour of Kuala Lumpur. It has 162 member countries and about 36 million registered members. – **Karen Yue**



Hilton Phuket Arcadia unveils new event space

Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa has added a new event space to its MICE inventory in a bid to win more regional business.

The 180m² Andaman Room, which can be divided into two, seats up to 130 people in theatre setting and includes an adjoining 66m² sheltered outdoor area.

General manager David Prince said: "With the addition of the Andaman Room, the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa

is one of the most comprehensive MICE venues in South-east Asia."

Jens Frank-Mikkelsen, director of business development, told *TTGassociations* the property is targeting a range of source markets including the US, Australia, Europe, China, Singapore and Hong Kong. Key sectors include banking and finance, health-care, transportation, logistics, industry associations and international government

agencies.

"The hotel is now a part of Hilton Worldwide's Connect+ website, a service which provides industry-leading tools for meeting planners and allows customers to connect with Hilton event experts and sales representatives," Frank-Mikkelsen said. "We also have a special meeting package that is valid from June 1 to December 30, 2014." - **Greg Lowe**

New hardware scores Grand Hyatt Taipei more bookings

The 853-room Grand Hyatt Taipei has completed phase one of its US\$100 million makeover, with rooms in the West and East wings now sporting fresher, modern interiors.

Remaining works to the grand lobby, restaurants and exterior lighting are expected to finish by the start of 2015.

The makeover follows the hotel's refurbishment of its Grand Ballroom in 2000 and Grand Residence meetings area in 2006, as well as other updates to various facilities throughout the years since its opening in September 1990.

Liling Chu, Grand Hyatt Taipei's director of events, said the renovation has helped to

generate increased business, especially from new clients who are attracted to new facilities in the hotel.

"Business has been thriving," Chu said, adding that the Grand Ballroom enjoys an average occupancy rate of 70 to 80 per cent.

According to Chu, domestic bookings make up 55 to 60 per cent of the hotel's event business, and these functions are usually weddings and social gatherings. Conference and meeting packages offered by the hotel are mostly consumed by international companies with offices in Taiwan.

Although the hotel is now armed with updated hardware, Chu gave no indication that room rates and venue rental fees would be adjusted upwards. - **Karen Yue**



First Courtyard by Marriott opens in South China

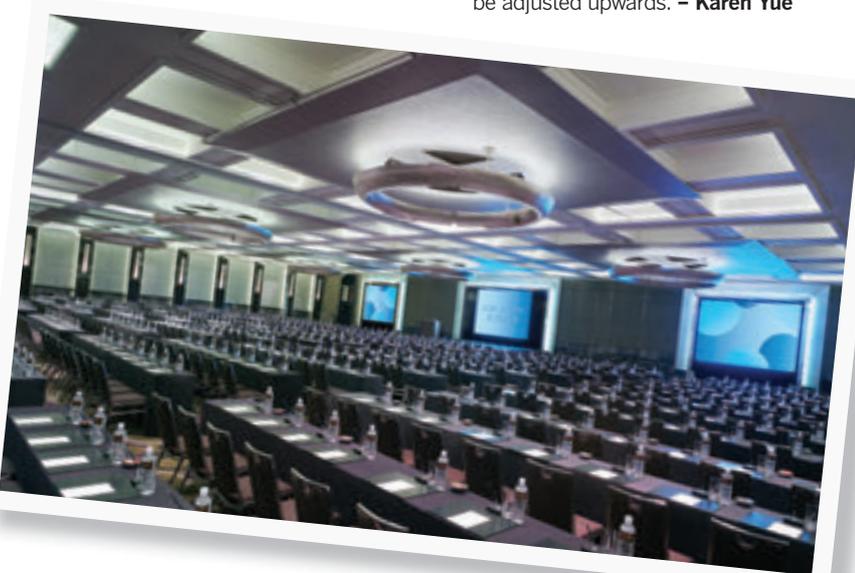
The 234-key Courtyard by Marriott Boluo has opened in Huizhou, China, making it the first Courtyard by Marriott in South China and the 71st Marriott International property in the massive country.

It comes outfitted with seven meeting rooms, with the largest being the Kaisa Ballroom which has capacity for 600 guests. All function venues are equipped with modern audiovisual technology and high-speed Internet access.

Other facilities at the hotel include two restaurants, a well-equipped fitness centre, an indoor swimming pool with a dry steam room, and an outdoor pool.

In an email interview with *TTGassociations*, Kevin Gong, general manager of Courtyard by Marriott Boluo, said the Pearl River Delta, which comprises primarily of Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong, will provide the hotel's main source of business event bookings.

Since the hotel's official opening, it has hosted a 500-pax local association gathering and a two-day corporate meeting for 90 guests. - **Karen Yue**



New tower and name for Hyatt Regency Incheon

The Hyatt Regency Incheon, South Korea was rebranded Grand Hyatt Incheon on September 1 and now boasts expanded meeting space with the opening of its new West Tower – just in time to welcome the participants of the 17th Asian Games.

Ratnesh Verma, senior vice president, real estate and development, Asia Pacific, Hyatt Hotels & Resorts, said: “The hotel, including the addition of a new tower, further solidifies our brand presence in this key gateway market.

“With its dramatic meeting facilities, large number of rooms and its proximity to the airport, the expanded hotel offers a unique destination within Asia that is attractive to meeting and group business. We continue to remain committed to South Korea as a

strategic market with its robust economy and a renewed attraction both as a business and leisure destination.”

The 522-key hotel is minutes away from Incheon International Airport, and offers 500 more rooms with the launch of the West Tower that connects to the East Tower via a sky bridge. The West Tower boasts residence-style rooms with kitchens for long-staying guests, a 1,250m² Grand Ballroom, multi-dimensional event venues, an all-day dining Grand Café serving Western and Asian cuisines, the Swell Lounge, two swimming pools and a children’s play zone.

Meanwhile, extensive renovations are scheduled to take place in phases at the East Tower over the next 18 months.



Etihad Airways connects Abu Dhabi with Rome

The national airline of the UAE has commenced non-stop daily flights between Abu Dhabi and Rome, using an Airbus A330-200 aircraft in a two-class configuration that features 22 Business Class seats and 240 Economy Class seats.

The service will depart Abu Dhabi at 02.40 and arrive in Rome at 07.10, and take off from the Italian capital at 12.00 to land in Abu Dhabi at 19.55.

Commenting on the new service, the carrier’s president and CEO, James Hogan, said: “Italy is a very important market for Etihad Airways and we are delighted to establish a second gateway here, after Milan Malpensa.

“Demand from business and leisure travellers has been incredibly strong on this new route, strengthened by the convenient onward connections we offer in both directions, either with Etihad Airways’ own flights or through our extensive network of codeshare and alliance partners.”



{ What’s on offer }



Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre

Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre

Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre is offering association event planners a meeting package, priced from S\$85⁺⁺ (US\$68⁺⁺) per guest. The deal is available for new bookings, and a minimum attendance of 50 delegates applies.

The venue also has a corporate dinner promotion that dishes out a S\$200 discount per table for gatherings hosted any day between Monday and Thursday. The usual price for such dinners starts from S\$950⁺⁺ per table. The offer is available only for new bookings, and a minimum booking of 10 tables (10 guests per table) applies.

Both deals are valid until December 31, subject to availability. Other terms apply.

Contact (65) 6820-3883 for bookings.

JW Marriott Hotel Bangkok

To mark the launch of its newly renovated Grand Ballroom and function rooms, JW Marriott Hotel Bangkok has come up with a special meeting package priced from 5,999⁺⁺ baht (US\$190⁺⁺). It includes accommodation in a single occupancy superior deluxe room, daily international buffet breakfast at Marriott Café, a full- or half-day meeting arrangement, and high-speed Inter-

net access for the entire stay. The package is available for events held by December 31, 2014.

For bookings call (66) 2656-7700 ext. 4406.

Amari Hotels Resorts & Spa

Coffee breaks at hotels under this chain have been given an educational twist through five separate themes: *Going Bananas*, *Cubism*, *Brainteasers*, *Organic*, and *Cupcakes*. Choices will be reflected in display posters that show interesting facts about the chosen topic, uniform colours for the wait staff, and the F&B selection.

Meetings held between now and March 31, 2015 will get to choose a theme for free.

Meeting packages offered currently come in half- and full-day options, and are priced at 1,450 baht (US\$45) per person and 1,650 baht per person respectively.

For more information, contact Ya’kob Zaini, director, sales, Onyx Hospitality Group Singapore at (65) 6827 9768.

Resorts World Sentosa

Festive business event packages are now available at this integrated resort in Singapore.

Deals for Christmas gatherings at Resorts World Convention Centre are priced from

New cliff-top venue in Bali opens

A multi-million dollar revamp of Ayana Resort and Spa, Bali has resulted in the creation of a new 7,500m² ocean-front venue that works well for corporate gatherings and networking events.

Sitting in a private cliff-top location and offering 180-degree ocean and sunset views, SKY can accommodate up to 1,000 delegates in a standing cocktail set-up. It is also supported by two outdoor reception lawns at the cliff-edge, with total capacity

for 500 people in a round-table arrangement, the SKY deck with capacity for 80 people seated, an 80-seat amphitheatre, a bridge that allows wheelchair access and be used as a stage for entertainment, and a preparation villa for VIPs and event hosts.

Ayana Resort and Spa can also be the site for meetings and conferences, as it offers 368 keys and a selection of meeting rooms and boardrooms.



\$75⁺ per person; at Universal Studios Singapore from \$115⁺ per person; at Ocean Gallery, S.E.A Aquarium (image on the right) from \$135⁺ per person; at Malaysian Food Street from \$90⁺ per person.

Chinese New Year event packages are priced from \$788⁺ per table at Resorts World Convention Centre, while dinner party deals are available from \$1,288⁺ per table at Universal Studios Singapore and Ocean Gallery, S.E.A Aquarium, and from \$98⁺ per person at Malaysian Food Street.

Terms and conditions apply.
Email mice@rwsentosa.com for details.

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AsiaWorld-Expo is offering a special full-day meeting package for its Runway 11 venue. Priced at HK\$650 (US\$84) per person, the package includes coffee break and lunch. A minimum booking for 300 pax is required and a 10 per cent service charge applies. Alternatively, event planners can utilise Runway 11 through a daily rental, priced from HK\$74,980 plus a minimum F&B spend of HK\$65,000. Terms and conditions apply.

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Earth-loving accommodation

Cosmo Hotel Hong Kong, an EarthCheck Bronze Benchmarked property, has debuted a green floor with guestrooms fully stocked with a range of eco-friendly and natural in-room amenities.

Guests booked into one of these green rooms can enjoy Tarocco skincare and haircare products that are rich in Vitamin C and antioxidants, and four options of Jurlique aromatherapy essential oils. These green rooms encourage healthier living too, by providing guests with handpicked organic teabags, 11 types of pillows including natural buckwheat and wheat fiber, and a complimentary Water Bar featuring four types of bottled water.

Guests can unwind at the hotel's green patio on the 5th floor. The Breeze offers complimentary high-speed Wi-Fi, freshly brewed Italian coffee, fresh fruits and magazines throughout the day.



Anita Chan, general manager of Cosmo Hotel Hong Kong, said the hotel would consider converting more floors into green floors should guest feedback be encouraging.

Renaissance opens in historic centre

The 329-key Renaissance Beijing Wangfujing opened its doors to customers in September.

Located in the historic Wangfujing Street of China's capital and close to Tiananmen Square and Beijing Capital Theater, the property offers a range of meeting facilities including a 930m² Jinmao Grand Ballroom which is perfect for receptions with up to 1,000 guests, and five meeting rooms.

Well-appointed guestrooms offer a range of amenities, from flatscreen TVs to wireless high-speed Internet access.

Guests can indulge in gastronomic delights at Hutong Place for private dining and entertainment; Qing Dynasty Palace which specialises in imperial cuisine; Wanli restaurant for Cantonese fare; R Bar for an evening of cocktails and live music; and Food Studio for all-day dining.

Juice up your day at The Westin Singapore

Staying true to the Westin brand's promise *For a Better You*, The Westin Singapore has joined hands with The Juicery to launch a new, dedicated fresh juice and smoothie offering.

Westin Fresh by The Juicery features juices and smoothies designed for guests seeking healthy options while traveling. These delectable mixes are designed to nourish the body and mind with nutrition rich ingredients such as beetroot, açai, kale, pomegranate,

mint, spinach and blueberries.

Guests can grab one of these refreshing juices and smoothies to kick-start their day at the hotel's contemporary gourmet deli, Daily Treats on Level 1, and signature interactive dining complex, Seasonal Tastes on Level 32.

The Westin Singapore is among the first hotels to pilot the new menu, which will be featured at all Westin hotels worldwide by early 2015.



AirAsia's new Premium Flex offers more corporate benefits

AirAsia Group has launched a product called Premium Flex designed to entice corporate road warriors.

Passengers will enjoy the flexibility of changing their flight without being charged a fee. However, they will have to pay the fare difference, if any.

Premium Flex offers a maximum of two changes to flight date or time, complimentary 20kg baggage allowance, complimentary seat selection, express boarding and express baggage at the airport carousel.

The product is available for all AirAsia flights (except for Sri Lanka).

Flight change is available up to two hours before the scheduled departure time of the original flight and must be at least three hours before the departure time of the new AirAsia flight and at least four hours before the departure time of the new AirAsia X flight.

The change can be performed via web, mobile and all AirAsia official offline booking channels.

Vietnam gets skyscraper hotel

The five-star Lotte Hotel Hanoi, which welcomed its first guests on September 2, has joined the Worldhotels global portfolio, following Lotte Hotel Seoul - Downtown, Lotte Hotel World Gangnam and Lotte Hotel Busan.

Occupying the upper floors of a new skyscraper located between the city's Old Town and New Business District, the 318-room Lotte Hotel Hanoi is the tallest hotel in Vietnam. Guestrooms are decorated in contemporary style with subtle Vietnamese touches, complete with complimentary high-speed Internet access.

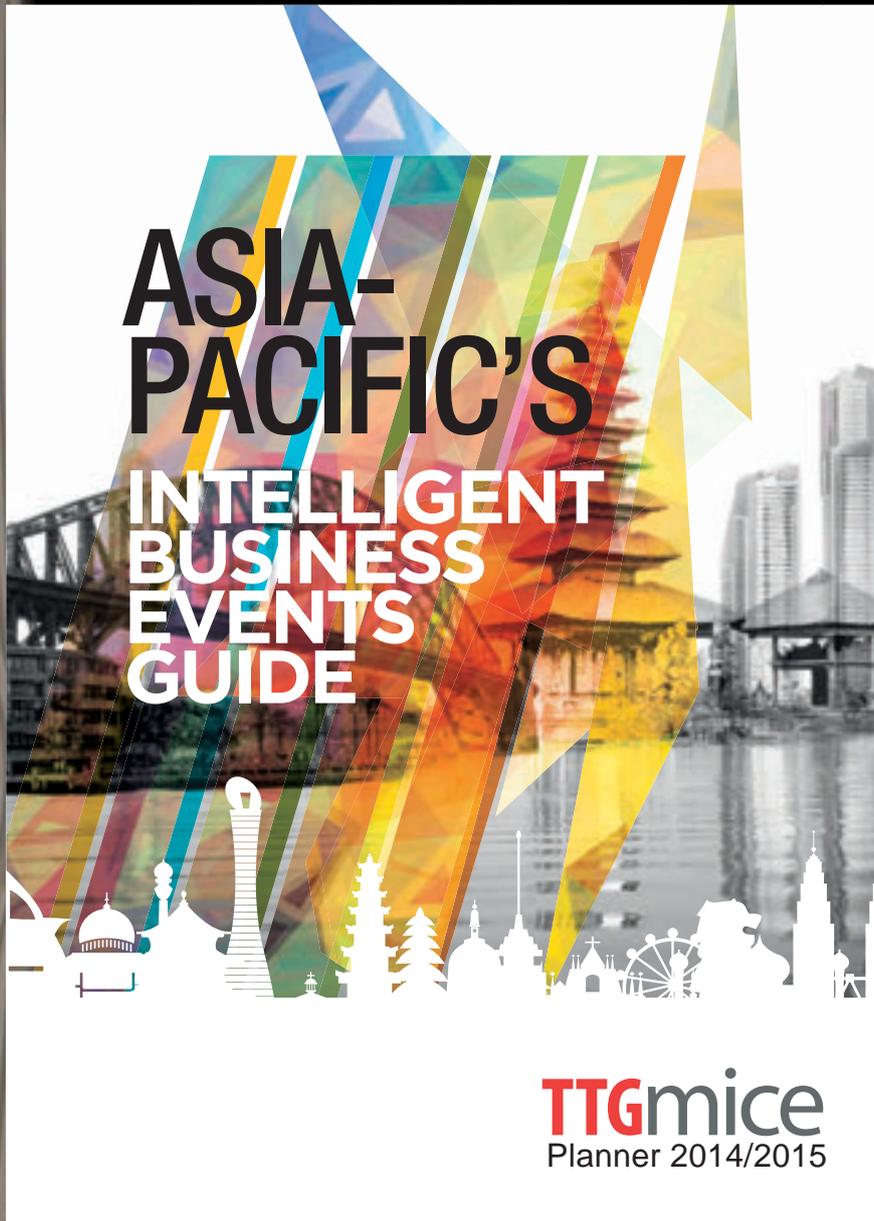
Drawing inspiration from the European Alps, the Evian Spa is equipped with its own

executive suite, a luxurious pool, a salt studio and six treatment rooms.

F&B options at the hotel include Top of Hanoi, the open-air rooftop brasserie featuring stunning city views and live kitchen; Tim Ho Wan, the first Michelin-starred Hong Kong dim sum house in Vietnam; while Pharaoh's Bar & Upper offers cocktails and views of the city on floors 63 and 64.

Being only 15 minutes by taxi from the Hanoi National Convention Centre, the hotel is also positioning itself as an attractive venue for meetings. Three large function rooms, including the Crystal Ballroom that can accommodate up to 1,200 pax, make up the hotel's MICE facilities.





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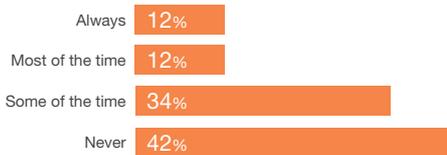
How well are mobile apps used at events?

Although many planners are including mobile apps in their events, driven by the need for communications and sustainability, not all have budgeted for it, discovers a survey conducted by IMEX Group and QuickMobile this year. *TTGassociations* captures a gist of the findings

Experience

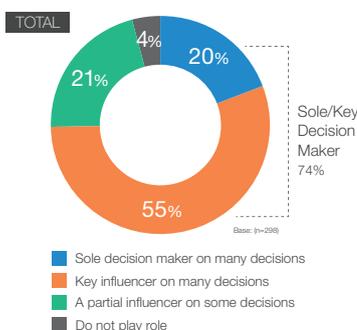
- Mobile event apps used significantly more at North American events.**
 Of the 60 per cent of respondents who included a mobile app in their events over the past two years, 69 per cent of them held their events in North America.
- Almost one-third of planners order a new app for each event.**
 Twenty-seven per cent of respondents who run more than two events a year said they would always use a new app, while 33 per cent had used both a common (multi-event) platform and new app.
- Three-quarters of planners rarely or never budget for an event app.**

Frequency of Budgeting for Mobile Apps



- Most planners have role in event budget decision-making, most commonly as a key influencer.**

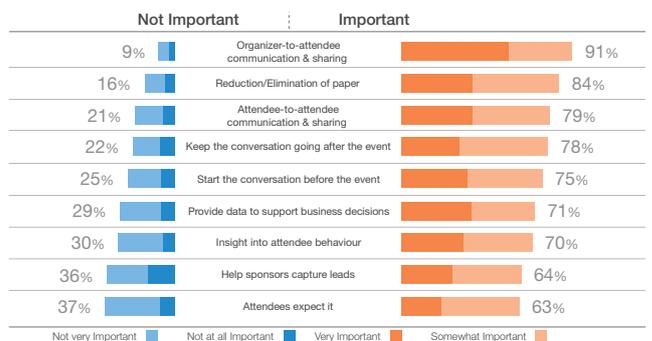
Event Planner Role in Budget Decision Making



Motivations, preferences and concerns

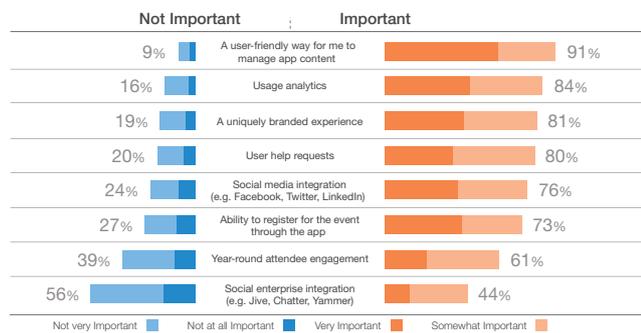
- Communications and sustainability are top reasons for using event apps.**

Reasons for having a Mobile Event App



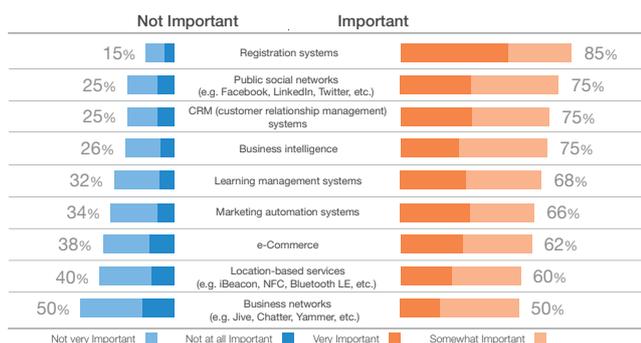
- Planners say it is very important to make app content management easy.

Event App Must-Haves



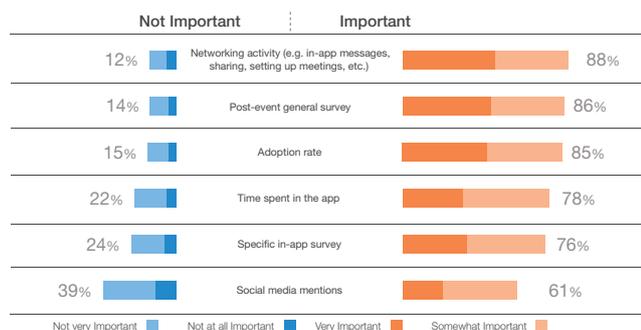
- Planners also say that integration of event app with other technology is key, especially as the use of technology for events rises.

Importance of Technology Integration



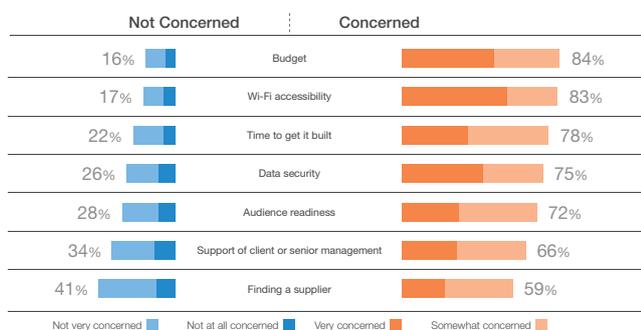
- Budget and Wi-Fi accessibility are found to be top-of-mind when integrating mobile apps into events.

Measuring Event App Success



- Budget and Wi-Fi accessibility are top-of-mind for new app users.

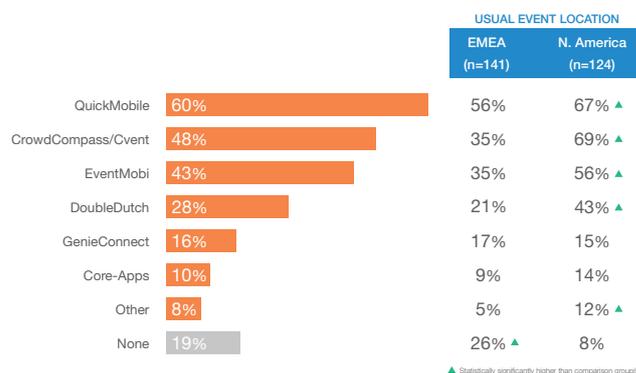
Concerns About Offering a Mobile App



Market awareness

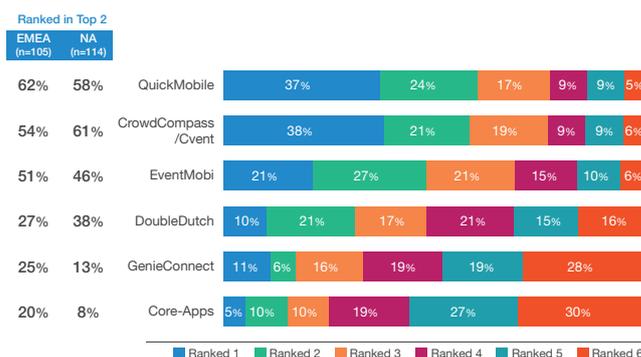
- North American planners are more aware of the various mobile event app vendors in the market.

Mobile App Vendor Awareness



- QuickMobile and CrowdCompass/Cvent are considered leaders of mobile event app market.

Mobile Event App Leadership



- Referrals and personal experiences are top information sources when considering an app for their event.

Sources of Information About Event Apps



About the study

Survey invitations were sent by IMEX to 14,066 event planners in its database, and the study was conducted online between April 1 and 14, 2014. A total of 298 event planners completed the survey. Seventeen per cent of respondents are association event planners, with the rest being agency/third-party planners (43%), corporate event planners (26%) and independent event planners (14%). Just over half of the respondents (54%) hold more than 10 events a year.

Janene Laird

Passing on the knowledge

Once a school teacher for almost 20 years and now head of the International Feng Shui Association – Australia Chapter, Janene Laird still holds education in high regard and believes that her association needs to actively conduct events to raise the standards and awareness of professional feng shui practice among members and the public. She talks to **Karen Yue**

Congratulations on your hosting this year's International Feng Shui Convention (IFSC). Is this the first IFSC for Australia?

It will be the first IFSC to be held in Australia. In fact, it will be the first IFSC to be held outside of Singapore, where the past 10 editions were hosted. It is a great honour, and a great responsibility.

So how did IFSC fall into the hands of the Australia Chapter?

We were invited to host this year's convention by the International Feng Shui Association (IFSA), and we accepted it.

The convention is being handled entirely by my team and I, and this is the first time that we are managing an event of such scale. Every year we have a meeting for the Australia Chapter and it is attended by 50 to 60 people. For the convention, we expect to have around 200 attendees from all over the world. They will be coming from countries like Holland, Romania, Japan, India, Indonesia, Canada, Brunei, and China.

Did you get any help from the Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB) in the execution of the convention?

Oh yes! The MCB scouted potential venues and made a shortlist for us. It even helped me put together a formal proposal which I submitted to the executive committee at IFSA just to reassure them that we were able to commit fully to an event of such scope. A representative of MCB came with me to help inspect the venue. The bureau printed marketing materials for us and referred us to suppliers. MCB basically helped us lay the groundwork for the convention.

We also had great help from Novotel Melbourne St Kilda which is used to running events. We've done smaller events before, so we know what we will need from a venue. We were able to pass on our requirements to the Novotel Melbourne St Kilda and it is handling everything for us.

Plus, the executive committee at IFSA has been a great help. Stephen Skinner, for instance, is helping us with all our printing needs.

Organising the convention is like a community project for us, where everyone comes in to help with different things.



What will be the highlights at this year's convention?

We are running two lecture rooms concurrently. We've got 25 speakers. And we are offering a much more diverse range of topics to attract and appeal to a wider audience. Not only are we catering to the feng shui industry, we also want to attract representatives from other businesses, such as architects, interior designers, and real estate agents.

In Australia, the real estate market has just boomed again. The most prolific clients are Asians and Chinese, so more and more real estate agents need to learn how to cater to Asian and Chinese clients. We will have presentations on feng shui and its influence on real estate. We think (that offering a more diverse range of topics) is a great way to attract more delegates and educate them on feng shui. That, in turn, creates demand for our members' expertise.

In lecture room one, we will have a 50-minute presentation by a grand master and sessions on traditional practices for serious-minded attendees. In lecture room two, we will have presentations on palm-reading, tarot, face-reading, Chinese astrology and health, and even yoga – a more eclectic mix.

You can see that we are keeping one stream of lectures on classical feng shui for the purists because essentially this is a feng shui convention, and offering more diverse coverage in the other stream to give us access to a broader group of people.

On Sunday, we will have a Super Real Estate Sunday with presentations on feng shui's impact on real estate, architecture, and sustainable design.

In addition to all that, we will have industry table meetings, private readings with the masters, etc.

We want to create a robust programme that isn't just all academic presentations that appeal only to my colleagues, but one that encourages the public to come and learn more about feng shui, and how it can help their business and support their clients.

I suppose this convention will be one of the main revenue sources for the Australia Chapter then?

Absolutely. By attracting a more diverse audience, not just our members, we will make more in registration fees.

Also, by educating the public, it supports the local feng shui industry. Most people in Australia (offer feng shui consultation) on a part-time basis or as a hobby. There's not much demand (for feng shui consultation) yet. It is increasing quickly though. So the best way to support our members is to increase awareness of feng shui.



Laird catches a moment with Vincent Koh at the 2012 IFSC in Singapore

So have preparations for IFSC been smooth so far?

Well yes, but it's time consuming. I do have a management committee which is the most wonderful, most supportive team around. But the bulk of responsibilities falls on my shoulders simply because I have the contacts and the vision (for the event). It is far easier for me to pick up the phone or fire off an email than to explain what needs to be done and how to someone else.

So are you game to host next year's IFSC then?

No.

That was a quick answer!

(Laughs) As much as I am looking forward to IFSC 2014, I've been having dreams about the convention not going right.

We are doing some pre-convention workshops, an annual general meeting, and a barbecue reception for all IFSA members and IFSC speakers on top of the convention over the weekend. On Saturday night we will have a delegate dinner. After the convention, we will have (more workshops until Wednesday). On Thursday, I think that's when I will have my nervous breakdown.

Having said that, should the event rotate to us again and we are invited by the executive committee to host the convention, we will certainly do it. Just not next year.

Can you tell me more about your online magazine, *Feng Shui Today*? How does it relate to the Australia Chapter?

Feng Shui Today has been a great mouthpiece for the industry. It is tied to the IFSA Australia Chapter and is a great way to reach out to everybody, not just to educate them through our wonderful

articles (many of which are contributed by grand masters) but also to tell them what's happening. We have readers from all over the world. We have reached 180 visits per day. When we did our special Chinese New Year edition, the site crashed from heavy traffic.

Feng Shui Today is free and it is online, so it works well as a means to educate the public about feng shui.

So *Feng Shui Today* makes its money through ads then?

That's correct. And the money goes back into the Australia Chapter for use on our activities.

Since we are on the topic of money, does the Australia Chapter seek sponsorships for its activities and events, such as the coming IFSC?

Yes we do, but we do not ask for the same level of sponsorship as other industry events which may range between A\$5,000 (US\$4,659) and A\$10,000 per sponsor each time. Our sponsorship model is a lot more modest, and we offer different benefits for different levels of sponsorships.

For instance, at IFSC 2014, the lowest level of sponsorship allows sponsors to place their brochures in delegate goody bags, and the next level gets them a product table, a logo placement on the sponsors page and brochure insert in delegate goody bags. Another level up grants sponsors all three benefits plus a free ticket to IFSC and an option to purchase the next ticket at a lower price.

Because of that we get good responses from sponsors inside the industry and outside.

Our industry-related sponsors include Sacred Keys, World of Feng Shui in Melbourne, doTERRA Essential Oils, and the Ministry of Feng Shui in Australia which teaches courses. There is no shortage of

“WE SEE INDUSTRY STANDARDS AS THE GREATEST LONG-TERM THREAT TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE FENG SHUI INDUSTRY, AND THAT IS WHY IFSA AND ITS CHAPTERS ARE SO IMPORTANT (AS THEY PROVIDE EDUCATION FOR THE TRADE AND PUBLIC).”

sponsors for us.

We’ve found that rather than rely on a few big sponsors, we get better results from asking for modest amounts from several small sponsors.

Our association is not-for-profit but we need to survive and to cover our expenses, so we do have to look for the best ways to make money. That money goes back to the chapter to fund membership benefits at the end of the day. For example, the barbecue reception (held a day before the start of IFSC 2014) is offered complimentary as a way of saying thank you to our association members.

The money is also used to fly international speakers in for our events to give our Australian members access to global expertise.

Before we sat down for this interview, you expressed your belief that associations need to hold regular events to engage their members and improve members’ professional capabilities. So how often does the Australia Chapter conduct member events?

We host an annual Chinese New Year luncheon that has become a firm favourite in Melbourne. When it was launched in 2011, it drew 40 participants. Next year, we expect numbers to grow to at least 100.

The programme usually features three

valued speakers who will present two streams of lectures, one for experts and another for the general public who has an interest in feng shui. It will also have various feng shui products on sale, with most of these products donated by grand masters and masters. Money made from the sale of these products are channelled back to the chapter. We need all sorts of revenue streams!

We also hold numerous seminars and workshops throughout the year, as well as regular member meetings.

Are activity fees priced differently for members and the general public to ensure that members feel they are getting value for paying a regular membership fee?

There are many benefits for an IFSA Australia Chapter member, which does indeed include a discounted price for any events we run. Other member benefits include the use of the chapter’s logo in their advertising, priority inclusion in any workshops or courses run by the chapter, and free listing on the IFSA Australia Chapter website.

What would you say are challenges to the well-being and survival of your association?

We see industry standards as the greatest long-term threat to the well-being of the feng shui industry, and that is why IFSA and its chapters are so important.

Consumers should never engage a master builder if he is not certified or a member of a building association. The same goes for feng shui consultants. We always encourage the public to ask their consultants if they are a member of the IFSA and what level of membership they hold, what their qualifications are, who they trained with, and how many years of experience they possess. We advise the public to never engage someone until they have asked these questions.

Feng shui masters hold great power to change people’s life. Their words can lead people to sell their house, tear down walls, change their career. It may not always be accurate (because they may be cowboy consultants).

So the association and its chapters strive to set proper industry standards, educate the public on feng shui and how to identify trusted consultants, and play the role of the educator to continuously enhance the expertise of members by giving them access to valued international masters and grand masters.

If you had all the resources in hand, what would you like most to do to/for the Australia Chapter?

I’d love to have a TV programme for the association. I did a pilot programme years ago, called *Feng Shui Angels*, which featured three girls, including me. Just like *Charlie’s Angels*.

We sought out a (troubled) family and used feng shui to improve its environment and had a post interview to show how the family’s life had indeed improved.

We promoted it to (a production company) in Australia but it turned us down. I think we were ahead of our time then! The show was eventually used to market our own business.

So if I had my way, I’d love to do this again, but this time using younger ladies. It’d be fun and informative!



A BUSY BEE

- Janene Laird was a school teacher for 20 years and is armed with a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Education
- During her time as an educator, Laird was also involved in the committees of kindergartens and schools
- In 2003, Laird started formal studies on feng shui, geomancy, Chinese astrology and space clearing with the Australian College of Environmental Studies, and holds certificates and a practitioner diploma in these fields. By the end of the year, she opened ShenChi–Feng Shui, a professional feng shui consultancy company that specialises in residential, business, and corporate sectors
- Laird furthered her education in 2007 when she travelled to Singapore to master traditional Chinese feng shui, Chinese

astrology, and the I-Ching under the tutelage of Raymond Lo. She was awarded Diploma of Feng Shui and Chinese Astrology in 2008, and Diploma of Advanced Practitioner Training in 2009

- In 2009, she studied with Vincent Koh at the Singapore Feng Shui Centre and earned Certificates of Practice in Feng Shui, IV Pillars of Destiny, and Zi Wei Dou Zhou
- Laird has been the president of the International Feng Shui Association - Australia Chapter since January 2010
- Laird is also the editor of *Feng Shui Today*, a free online magazine
- Today, Laird is an International Feng Shui Association Accredited Feng Shui Master

High-tech convention centres

Convention centres in Asia have been investing in technology improvements to enhance event delivery and delegate experience. *TTGassociations* spotlights a selection of those that have most recently powered up





Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

Profile Opened in June 2005, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre is Malaysia's premier and most technologically advanced facility with 22,659m² of flexible function space on a site within the iconic Kuala Lumpur City Centre.

Technology power-up

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre recently invested RM7.5 million (US\$2.3 million) in four IT infrastructure projects which were completed in August. They include upgrades to the data centre backbone infrastructure, introduction of a digital walkie talkie system, implementation of an Internet Protocol Closed-Circuit Television system and improvements to the virtualised server environment for the data centre.

Two other projects are slated for launch in 2015, one being the Automated Speaker Preparation Room System – iSpeak and the other, Interactive Mobile Mapping App.

While the current speaker preparation room support system sees materials being uploaded manually to the presentation server for dissemination to the respective room/hall via the venue's LAN, work is now being done with an international software designer to fully automate this procedure. The new soft-

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (above); Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre

ware, known as iSpeak, will also allow presenters to upload, review, adjust and rehearse their presentation in real time. When completed, iSpeak will be the first of its kind in Malaysia.

The other technology innovation is the Interactive Mobile Mapping App, which is being produced by the venue's own technology department with Google partners. It will enable clients to locate their whereabouts within the venue and serve as a path-finder and informative tool during events.

Charges As both iSpeak and the Interactive Mobile Mapping App are in the development phase, costs to event organisers/delegates have yet to be finalised. – **S Puvaneswary**

Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre

Profile Opened in 1996, the Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre (MCEC) offers a multi-functional plenary hall, 52 meeting rooms and 30,000m² of pillar-less exhibition space. It is also linked to



the Hilton Melbourne South Wharf via a private walkway.

Technology power-up A number of technology investments were made in 2013, among them new portable high-definition ultra-slim digital totems that provide extra branding and directional signage for events and attendees; improved multimedia systems; Live View capability which allows the customer to view mul-

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multiple video streams of their event rooms on a single screen from anywhere within their licensed event area; new audio consoles; on-site rigging solutions; an advanced slide advance system that allows the conference presenter to simultaneously control his PowerPoint slide shows via multiple computers using a fast handheld wireless device; and Visualisation Studio which enables event organisers to work side-by-side with MCEC's technology team to design, create and view a virtual three-dimensional representation of their event spaces.

This year, MCEC unveiled a new brand, *Imagine*, and a tagline, *Technology that brings your events to life*, to better market its event technology prowess.

Charges Costs vary depending on the feature or service. However, MCEC promises competitive pricing as it has an in-house technology department. Visualisation Studio is offered free of charge to organisers who book a venue in MCEC.
– Karen Yue

China National Convention Center

Profile Opened in November 2009, the China National Convention Center (CNCC) in Beijing is purpose-built for conventions and exhibitions. It offers 40,000m² of exhibition space, 23,000m² of meeting and function space including

a plenary hall, a divisible ballroom and 100 breakout rooms arranged in suites, and numerous support areas around the venue.

Technology power-up New to the centre is the CNCC Virtual Tour, an online tool that offers a panoramic view and video simulation of its interior and exterior. It uses a variety of videos and photograph-based media supported by sound effects, music, narration and text. Other benefits offered by CNCC Virtual Tour are access to venue guide, floor plans, location map and surrounding support areas.

CNCC Virtual Tour not only acts as a promotional tool for the venue, it also makes it convenient for the event organiser to take a quick look at the centre before coming down for a detailed site inspection.

Charges This is offered free on CNCC's website. – Paige Lee Pei Qi

Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

Profile Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) opened in 1988 to offer 91,500m² of rentable space for exhibitions, conferences, meetings, corporate functions, entertainment and hospitality events.

Located on a prime waterfront site

in Wanchai, HKCEC is recognised as an iconic landmark in Hong Kong.

Much convenience is offered to event organisers and delegates, as the centre is linked to two five-star hotels and is within walking distance to nearly 6,000 hotel rooms.

Technology power-up There has been continuous facility upgrade to HKCEC. Wi-Fi has been made complimentary since 2005, and the system has been continually upgraded since then. Its latest Wi-Fi upgrade came at the end of 2013, enabling up to 5,000 concurrent users to enjoy free-of-charge connections.

HKCEC has also installed additional Access Points to further improve reception. This is an on-going project and the venue will continue to monitor usage, users' comments and technology development for continued improvement.

Today, HKCEC's Wi-Fi access covers all exhibition halls and meeting rooms, including foyers of these spaces, all public areas and the centre's seven restaurants.

Charges Wi-Fi access is free. – Prudence Lui

AsiaWorld-Expo

Profile Opened in December 2005, AsiaWorld-Expo in Hong Kong offers over 70,000m² of rentable space. Its purpose-



Clockwise from left: China National Convention Center; Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre; AsiaWorld-Expo; IMPACT Muang Thong Thani

built arena, which can seat 14,000 pax, is Hong Kong's largest and most versatile indoor space of its kind.

Technology power-up With the emergence of cloud-based delivery models, such as Software as a Service (SaaS) and Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), real-time uploading of large amounts of data such as financial information or retail transaction details to a repository accessible to numerous users is now possible. To accommodate this requirement, AsiaWorld-Expo has equipped itself with high-speed Internet capability that comes with a built-in resilience system.

AsiaWorld-Expo also works with local telecom providers to provide seamless data connectivity for the growing number of 3G and 4G smartphone users.

Charges AsiaWorld-Expo offers competitive and tailor-made packages for users. – Prudence Lui



IMPACT Muang Thong Thani

Profile Opened in 1991, IMPACT is one of the region's largest MICE facilities with more than 140,000m² of usable



in-door space. Located in Bangkok's north, the complex's facilities include IMPACT Challenger, three halls which can be combined to form a 60,000m² column-free space; IMPACT Exhibition Center, six function rooms with a combined space of 47,000m²; and IMPACT Arena, a 11,000-seat concert hall. Novotel Bangkok IMPACT connects with the centre by way of a skybridge. The complex underwent its last set of renovations from 2012 to 2013.

Technology power-up In May, IMPACT invested 30 million baht (US\$1 million) in a new Wi-Fi service. Visitors can now connect to the 4Mbps @IMPACT Free Wi-Fi network for an hour each day. Those wanting longer access with a faster connection speed can opt for True Wi-Fi Maximum, which has a maximum bandwidth of 12Mbps. Three choices of prepaid Internet cards are available from the Business Center. The facility plans to launch the 200Mbps IMPACT Premium Wi-Fi service in the near future.

Charges Wi-Fi is free for the first hour of usage per day. Quicker connections cost 50 baht for 24 hours, 90 baht for seven days and 150 baht for a month. – **Greg Lowe**

Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre

Profile Since opening in 1995, Suntec Singapore has hosted more than 18,000 events including some of the world's largest exhibitions and conventions. It reopened its doors in June 2013 following a S\$184 million (US\$147 million) modernisation programme, and now boasts a modernised façade including a three-storey interactive digital wall, and amenities such as free Wi-Fi throughout its premises. The centre sits in the Central Business District and offers 42,000m² of customisable space.

Technology power-up The recent renovation integrated a high degree of advanced technology. Its free high-speed, high-density Wi-Fi, which can accommodate up to 6,000 simultaneous devices anywhere in the venue, is the star offering. The system is entirely location agnostic, which means that connection speed will not slow down even if all 6,000 people were to connect from the same location in the building. Likewise, users can move around the centre without having to reconnect.

The modern Wi-Fi operation is also used to deliver other services through-

out the centre. For example, it is used to update digital room signage and control room lighting, air conditioning and other environmental settings to deliver a better overall experience for clients and delegates.

Charges Free. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center

Profile Located in Bali's high-end enclave, Nusa Dua, the Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center (BNDCC) offers a convention hall that can be split into five smaller rooms, 17 fully equipped meeting rooms with a spacious foyer, the 1,758m² Singaraja Hall, a VIP room, a pre-function lobby, a business centre and outdoor venues.

BNDCC completed the construction of its second building in 2013.

Technology power-up At end of 2013, BNDCC invested US\$300,000 on a new digital signage system. It was done in response to clients' need to efficiently communicate event schedules/changes or meeting room information to participants in real time.

Some 38 LCD monitors were mounted outside each meeting room and eight movable LCD monitors were displayed in lobby areas. All information displayed on the LCD monitors are controlled from a central server, and information can be broadcasted instantly. Clients can choose to have a customised design/artwork for their displays.

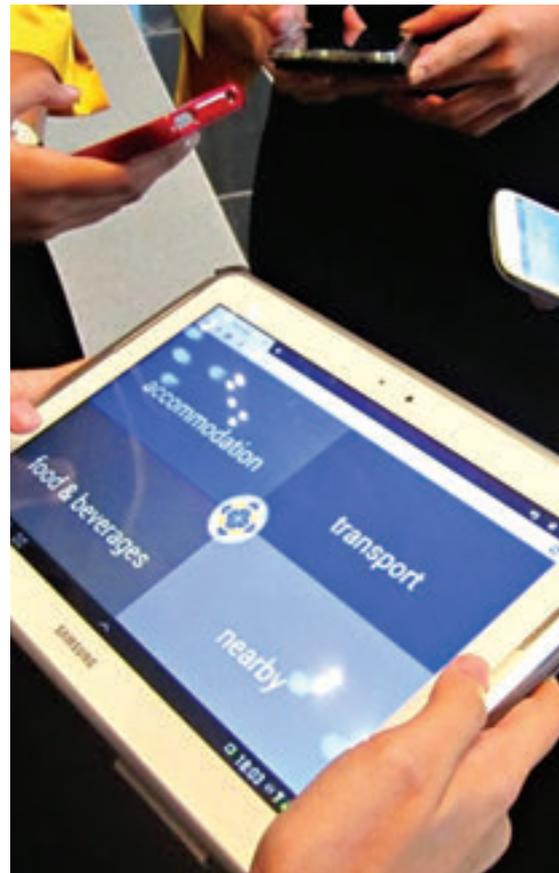
Charges Free. – **Mimi Hudoyo**

SMX Convention Centre, Manila

Profile Opened in November 2007, the SMX Convention Centre Manila is the Philippines' most modern and largest private meeting facility with 46,647m² of space. Facilities include four purpose-built halls, five function rooms, 14 meeting rooms, and a briefing room with elevated cinema seating for 50. Additional spaces are available in the pre-function lobbies on the ground and second floors.

By end-2015, a Conrad hotel will open behind the centre.

Technology power-up The centre recently launched SMX I-Connect, an event registration system that will generate QR codes on delegate badges which can be used by show organisers to track attend-





Clockwise from left: SMX Convention Centre, Manila; Lavasa International Convention Centre ; Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre

ance and to enable the exchange of business information between exhibitors and trade buyers at shows.. The customisable software also offers online programme guide, reporting and exhibitor lead retrieval which clients can access on their personal mobile devices.

Charges SMX I-Connect has three price options ranging from 100,000 pesos (US\$2,244) to 260,000 pesos, depending on the requirements of the event organiser. – **Rosa Ocampo**

Lavasa International Convention Centre

Profile Lavasa International Convention Centre (LICC), established in 2010, is the first purpose-built convention facility in Pune, India. The venue is managed by global hotel giant, Accor, and is designed to host meetings, conferences, incentives, exhibitions and social functions with 15 to 1,500 guests. It offers 18 event spaces, including eight convention halls, a board room and a business centre.

Technology power-up Recent technology upgrades include the Live Webcasting and 3D Projection Mapping capabilities which, although are widely used in developed destinations, are still at a nascent stage in India.

Webcasting enables media files to be broadcasted to a target audience either over the Internet or Intranet. With this technology, events can be covered and streamed live online to a wider audience. Large-scale webcasts can also be conducted on multiple networks like LAN, WAN, VPN and V-SAT.

LICC's 3D Projection Mapping, also known as video mapping, is a technology used to turn objects, often irregularly shaped, into a display surface for video projection. These objects may be complex industrial landscapes, such as buildings, or actual physical objects such as cars. The video can be combined with, or triggered by, audio to create an audiovisual narrative to enhance viewer's experience.

Both technologies are gaining much attention among LICC's clients, especially those who are organising specialised conferences and high-end product launches that require high quality real life experiences in a virtual environment.

Charges Cost varies on a case-by-case basis. – **Rohit Kaul**



VIBRANT, DIVERSE DUBAI

Named among the top three most vibrant cities in the world in the City Momentum Index 2014 by Jones Lang LaSalle, Dubai is also well regarded for its first-class infrastructure for business events and headline-grabbing attractions.

Dubai has established a strong international reputation as a vibrant destination boasting first-class infrastructure for business events and world-famous attractions. While the city is well known for luxury, it also offers great value for those travelling on a budget.

Getting there is easy — **Dubai International Airport** (DXB) is served by more than 145 airlines flying to 260 destinations across six continents. Accessibility is further enhanced now that Dubai's second

international airport, **Al Maktoum International at Dubai World Central** (DWC), has opened in October 2013.

Within the city itself, transport options abound. These include the Gulf region's first-ever **metro** system, as well as well-priced **taxis, water taxis, buses, chauffeured cars** and the soon-to-be launched **tram** network.

In terms of accommodation, there are currently over **85,000 hotel rooms** in stock ranging from seven-star luxury to pocket-friendly mid-ranged options. Estimates show that 20,000-30,000 hotel rooms will be



added to the market by 2016, increasing the options available to international visitors.

For business events, Dubai's many hotels also offer a plethora of **facilities** – whether that's simply a meeting room for 10 people or a convention for tens of thousands.

And of course, this is all supported with the expansive facilities offered at the **Dubai World Trade Centre** (DWTC) – the host for over 50 per cent of all exhibitions in the Middle East region.

Backed up by a **professional service** and a 'can do' attitude, business event organisers appreciate the opportunities on offer in the city, which goes some way to explaining why Dubai has been named among the **top three most vibrant cities in the world** in the latest City Momentum Index

released by the realtor, Jones Lang LaSalle in January 2014.

Dubai is one of the world's **safest** and **fastest growing** tourist destinations. For incentive delegates it offers an array of truly memorable experiences, with itineraries that can capture the essence of Arabia with **desert safaris, dune bashing, falconry** and **camel riding**; while adrenaline junkies can go **sky-diving** over Palm Jumeirah, **dive with sharks** at the Dubai Aquarium or go **skiing** at the world's largest indoor snow park. VIP groups, on the other hand, can take a **seaplane** or **helicopter ride** over the city and indulge in afternoon tea at the Burj Al Arab.

The possibilities are endless. Contact Dubai Convention and Events Bureau today for more details.



DUBAI

Dubai Business Events

Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing

P.O. Box 594, Dubai UAE

Telephone: [+971] 600 55 5559

Email: askdbe@dubaitourism.ae

Fax: [+971] 4 282 1131

www.dubaibusinessesvents.ae

WHERE INFRASTRUCTURE MEETS INNOVATION

The regional commercial hub and gateway between East and West, Dubai is a city built on innovation and infused with opportunities. The city's diverse knowledge base and community of trained professionals makes Dubai the ideal location for association conferences, corporate meetings and incentive events. Direct access from over 260 destinations worldwide, an array of venues, over 85,000 hotel rooms in all categories and numerous exciting activities in and around Dubai, makes this city the most remarkable destination for successful business events.





2014 World Ophthalmology Congress

Boasting a massive audience of 20,000 delegates, the congress offers Tokyo the best opportunity to showcase its most appealing sights and encourage repeat visits, writes **Karen Yue**

The 2014 WOC made a great event to leverage for destination promotion, as it was deemed to be the largest-ever international conference to be held in Tokyo. Sponsored by the ICO, hosted by the Japanese Ophthalmological Society, and co-hosted by the Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology, the event was held concurrently with the 29th Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology and the 118th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Ophthalmological Society.

Although healthcare and pharmaceutical events are governed by strict laws to ensure transparency in event organisation and delegate benefits, among other things, TCVB told *TTGassociations* that the regulations did not affect the destination immersion programmes.

“Since the objective of the tours and cultural programmes offered by TCVB and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government was solely for the promotion of tourism in Tokyo, the content was not restricted by the organisers,” said the spokesperson.

Besides the destination immersion programmes, delegates were also treated to a prized viewing of a cherry blossom tree that was brought from the Tohoku region and placed in an outdoor space at the Tokyo International Forum for the opening reception. The tree’s blossoms were timed to bloom during the five-day congress. Delegates also got to ride in a samurai ship from the venue to Tokyo Big Sight, where the Japan Night social function was hosted.

When some 20,000 ophthalmologists and members of the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO) descended on Tokyo in early April this year for the 2014 World Ophthalmology Congress (WOC), the Japanese capital rolled out the red carpet and concocted an extensive series of complimentary destination immersion programmes for delegates and their accompanying persons.

According to a spokesperson with the Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau (TCVB), 12 tour courses with five different routes and 12 cultural programmes with six options were offered during the congress period, primarily for accompanying persons.

Led by English-speaking guides, the sightseeing tours took participants to iconic tourist landmarks such as the Hama-Rikyu Gardens, Meiji-Jingu Shrine, Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo Tower and Tokyo Skytree, while the cultural excursions offered experiences in traditional mochi pounding, origami, ikebana, Japanese calligraphy, kimono dress-up and ukiyo-e (traditional woodblock

printing).

The programmes were offered on a first-come-first-serve basis, and each delegate and accompanying person could register for up to two courses.

Tour desks were set up in the registration area at the Tokyo International Forum and the Imperial Hotel, Tokyo – the two venues of the congress.

When asked if it was common for the city government and TCVB to develop such an extensive selection of complimentary tours for delegates of business events, the spokesperson said: “The Tokyo Metropolitan Government and TCVB select large-scale international conferences every year, based on the number of international delegates, to support by providing tours and cultural programmes. We also provide welcome desks at Narita and Haneda airports and fly welcome banners and flags around the event venue.”

And the investment is a worthy one, as it allows Tokyo to put its best foot forward in promoting itself as an attractive tourist destination for delegates to return to with their family and friends.

Event

2014 World Ophthalmology Congress – complimentary tours and cultural programmes

Organiser

International Council of Ophthalmology, Japanese Ophthalmological Society and Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology

Date

April 2 to 6, 2014

No. of attendees

20,000

Objective

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau wanted to showcase the best of Tokyo to delegates, in hopes of encouraging them to return in the near future with their family and friends for a holiday

The current board of the Philippine Retailers Association who will execute a good show when APRCE 2015 heads to Manila



17th Asia-Pacific Retailers Convention and Exhibition

The Philippine Retailers Association ousts Thailand and Australia to win the bid for the 2015 event by showcasing the fun side of doing business in the destination. By **Rosa Ocampo**

It was second time lucky for the Philippine Retailers Association (PRA) when it bid for the hosting rights to the Asia-Pacific Retailers Convention and Exhibition (APRCE).

While it lost to Turkey the first time round for APRCE 2013, PRA scored at its second try for the 2015 edition.

Held every two years, APRCE is one of the main activities of the Federation of Asia-Pacific Retailers Association. Each of the Federation's 17 member countries can bid to host APRCE.

PRA last hosted APRCE in 1993, for which it won the Kalakbay Award for Event of the Year.

"PRA, led by then-president Frederick Go of Robinsons, was intent to be the next host of APRCE which has established itself as the biggest and most important retail industry event in Asia-Pacific. PRA reasserted its bid vis-à-vis strong contenders such as Thailand and Australia," said Evelyn Salire, PRA secretary-general.

Bidders must make a presentation two years ahead of the event. Hence at APRCE

2013 in Turkey, each bidder for APRCE 2015 was given 15 minutes to showcase its video proposal. Convention members voted through a secret ballot.

During APRCE's turnover from Turkey to the Philippines, PRA rolled out a professionally produced song and dance number which involved its officers, led by current PRA president Lorenzo Formoso.

The group wowed the audience and cemented the country's *It's More Fun in the Philippines* theme as an invitation to the delegates.

APRCE 2015 will be held from October 28 to 30 at SMX Convention Centre Manila, and an estimated 3,000 delegates are expected, of which half are from abroad. It will feature two days of convention, focusing on education, with very good speakers tackling retail technologies, e-commerce, retail trends, store designs and other relevant topics. Simultaneously, the two-day exhibition will showcase suppliers of products and services in the retail industry.

PRA will promote the event regionally with the support of the Federation of Asia-

Pacific Retailers Associations (FAPRA). APRCE will also be a vehicle to promote Philippine tourism.

PRA has tapped the services of Media Blitz Group as convention organiser and publicity group, and GlobalLink for exhibition.

Hosting APRCE 2015 is a victory also for the Philippine Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) which has been rallying local associations to be more proactive in bidding for international events, said COO Domingo Ramon Enerio III.

While it does not offer cash subvention, TPB assists local associations in other ways. For instance, it ensured a warm welcome for the FAPRA Heads of Delegation who visited Manila from September 7 to 9 to understand the preparations for APRCE 2015.

This was well appreciated by the first delegates who arrived from Australia. In a thank you note to PRA, the delegates said they were so impressed by the welcome they received from TPB at Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), all the way to the PRA welcoming party who brought them to their hotel.

"They didn't notice that NAIA Terminal 1 was being renovated. They only saw and remembered the gracious and warm welcome they received from the time they arrived till they reached their hotel room," said Salire.

Salire is pleased that "everything is converging in favour of APRCE". When PRA made the bid in September 2013, the Philippines had not yet reached the 7.2 per cent growth in GNP. But now the political and economic situations are doing well and tourism is also growing.

The year 2015 also happens to be Visit Philippines Year so APRCE delegates are bound to benefit from the year-long festivities and events for both leisure and business tourists.

Furthermore, when PRA first hosted the event in 1993, the country was grappling with long-drawn power outages. Fortunately, the 2,000 delegates then did not notice the glitch, due to the availability of a back-up generator and a well planned programme.

Event

17th Asia-Pacific Retailers Convention and Exhibition

Bid initiator

Philippine Retailers Association

Date

October 28 to 30, 2015

Challenges

Outbidding strong contenders and hosting a big event without cash subvention from the tourism bureau

Unrest in capital city Bangkok had resulted in some association events being shifted to other Thai cities



pipopb/123RF.com

Thailand's tough run

It may be ASEAN's second hottest destination for business events but political strife is taking some shine out of the exciting kingdom this year, discovers **Greg Lowe**

Thailand's association congress sector continues to suffer from the effects of the country's protracted political crisis which has led clients to cancel events in droves over the past 10 months.

Specialists in this sector told *TTGassociations* that the political quagmire has clearly skewed the industry's performance for the year. Some said a recovery is in place, albeit a slow one. Others commented that while the country has one of the best business event infrastructures in the region, improvements must be made in terms of pitching for association congress events and upgrading the quality of professional congress organisers for the destination to deliver on its full potential.

"This year has been bad," said Alvin Wee, event manager at GAT International. "We've seen cancellations of associa-

tion business that had been in decline along with other business events for the past 12 months."

David Barrett, executive director events at Amari Watergate Bangkok and Amari Pattaya, agreed that the sector had taken a battering.

He said: "Winning international association congresses to Thailand can take three or four years of advance planning and investment. Losing business, due to social and political instability, can happen in a flash. Regrettably, earlier this year we have seen a considerable amount of business lost as congress organisers have boycotted Thailand.

"From a Bangkok perspective, we have also seen smaller local association events relocate to other parts of Thailand, away from the capital."

Anti-government groups led street protests and an occupation of Bangkok,

which sometimes resulted in deadly clashes with police and government supporters, from last November until army chief general Prayuth Chan-ocha staged a coup on May 22 and ousted the elected government. While the putsch ended the violence and returned a level of stability to the country, Thailand still remains under martial law – a fact which worries many business event groups.

Prayuth was appointed prime minister in August, however, elections are not expected to be held until the end of next year. As a result, political stability remains a long-term challenge for Thailand.

Commenting on the current state of affairs, Barrett said: "I do believe we're on the right track now. The good intentions of the interim junta are instilling confidence in the destination."

Thailand Convention & Exhibition

“Winning international association congresses to Thailand can take three or four years of advance planning and investment. Losing business, due to social and political instability, can happen in a flash.”



David Barrett

Executive director events,
Amari Watergate Bangkok and Amari Pattaya

31.25 billion baht (US\$975 million) of a total 88.49 billion baht, with convention delegates each spending an average 98,919.60 baht per trip.

TCEB's revised forecasts for fiscal 2013/14 show just how badly the industry has been affected. Overall MICE travellers are set to decline by almost 13 per cent to 888,210 delegates with revenue expected to slide by 1.5 per cent to 87.2 billion baht. Convention attendees are expected to fall at a faster rate of 16 per cent to 264,874 visitors, seeing the segment's market share reduce to about 30 per cent from one-third, although revenue will nudge up by about one per cent to 87.2 billion baht.

International Congress & Conventions Association, in its 2013 Country and City Rankings report, placed Thailand as ASEAN's top second market, after Singapore, for hosting 136 association meetings.

In terms of facilities, the destination is generally well regarded within the industry, however, it still faces a number of challenges.

“Thailand has one of the most complete infrastructures within South-east Asia to host large-scale business events in its five prime business event cities. (Its standing) can be improved in terms of value of intellectual and monetary support for winning and hosting international association events,” said Wee.

He said TCEB could help companies improve their ability to pitch and win congress contracts by producing value-added case studies of successful events.

Kirk Harbison, general manager of SAM Assist, said after domestic politics the main concerns raised by his clients were the need for a stable currency that was not too strong to enable the country to compete more effectively with China and Vietnam on costs, followed by security concerns relating to the on-going separatist insurgency in Thailand's south and regional flare-ups with China.

“(Thailand) could also make it easier (for us) to bring equipment into the country for events,” he said. “I have a medical conference with 600 doctors (and) they often bring equipment with them. It can be a hassle as customs agents are not sure about the processes and protocols.”

Perapan Angkhasuko, director of the PCO department at NCC Management & Development, said there is a clear need for more certified and experienced professional conference organisers (PCOs) in the local market. “As the industry grows there is more demand for experienced PCOs,” she said, adding that TCEB could help by bringing in training workshops conducted by business event industry associations such as IAPCO, UFI-EMD and ICCA.

Bureau (TCEB) said it has helped rebuild confidence in Thailand through “close communications with relevant stakeholders, including major industry associations, conference organisers and destination management companies,” enabling the country to secure events for this year and the next, including the 10th International Mycological Congress and One Young World 2015.

The bureau is currently focusing on three market segments for the congress sector: “focus market” which is India, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Korea and Indonesia; “maintain market” including Germany, UK and Canada; and “emerging market” including Russia and the Netherlands.

Thailand's MICE industry had been performing well, prior to the political crisis. In fiscal 2012/13, which runs October to September, the country welcomed 1,013,502 overseas business event visitors, according to TCEB. Conventions and association congresses made up the biggest sector in terms of delegates, accounting for about one-third of the market with 315,961 visitors, followed by corporate meetings (258,286), incentive travel (247,936) and exhibitions (191,319). Conventions were also the greatest revenue contributor, generating

Congress wins in 2014

- The 29th Annual Conference of Asia Pacific of Occupational Safety & Health Organization
- IUPAC World Polymer Congress 2014, The 45th International Symposium on Macromolecules
- International Conference in Sport and Exercise Science 2014
- The 7th International Conference on Frontiers of Information Technology, Applications and Tools
- The Fourth PT-ERC International Symposium on Personalized Medicine
- The 10th International Mycological Congress
- 50th International Youth Hostel Federation 2014
- The 7th Asian Oceania Human Proteome Organization (AUHUPO) Congress and the 9th International Symposium of Protein Society of Thailand
- The 7th International Forum on Public Relations and Advertising 2014
- International Nuclear Science and Technology
- International Congress of Pharmaceutical Sciences
- Asia-Pacific Airline Training Symposium 2014

Source: Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau

{ **Need to know** }

1 When it rains, it pours

Rainy season can put a spanner in the works for events held in Thailand, especially in Bangkok where roads can take up to three hours to drain after a deluge. It rains on and off from May to October with downpours at their heaviest from August. Venues such as Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre and Bangkok Convention Centre benefit from connections to public transport, namely the BTS and/or MRT. Others like BITEC and IMPACT are located out of town and can be difficult to get to during wet weather.

2 Manage transfers carefully

Most major events are held in Bangkok

which has the largest convention centres in the country. Connectivity and transfers to other destination in the country can be a problem due to the fact that the capital has two airports and if connections are not managed carefully, delegates may have to travel from Suvarnabhumi International Airport to Don Mueang International Airport, which will add at least four hours to the journey.

3 Consider Chiang Mai

Besides Bangkok, Chiang Mai is a potential destination for meetings and conferences, thanks to the opening of Chiang Mai International Convention & Exhibition Centre in 2012. The centre is world-class and offers

60,000m² of space. However, Chiang Mai is still lacking in terms of large internationally branded four- and five-star hotels and event specialists also complain about the relatively low flight capacity from Bangkok for large-scale gatherings.

4 Watch the peak

Thailand's tourism peaks from November to early February. Hotel rates can increase by more than 50 per cent while room availability diminishes. Thai public holidays are a major catalyst for domestic tourism. Be especially wary of organising events outside of Bangkok in the weeks before and after the Songkran (Thai New Year) break, which runs from April 13-15.

{ **Pre/Post** }



A garden escape

The newly opened Botanica Khao Yai is a 116-room resort which offers a perfect location for congress delegates to decompress in the lush surrounds of Khao Yai National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, two hours drive north of Bangkok. The property counts two swimming pools, two F&B venues, a spa and a library among its features.

Contact

www.botanicakhaoyai.com



A taste of the destination

Enjoy a street-level experience of Thai food in Bangkok with Taste of Thailand Food Tours which takes small groups on foot around some of the capital's best hawker stalls and shophouse restaurants while filling visitors in on the city's culinary and architectural history.

Contact

www.tasteofthailandfoodtours.com

Art of sleep

Indigo Pearl in Phuket has developed a package aimed at helping high-level delegates recharge their batteries before or after events. A range of special spa treatments, in-room aromatherapy, meditation, yoga and tai chi classes, herbal teas and group sleep sessions have been put together to help send guests off to the land of nod.

Contact

www.indigo-pearl.com

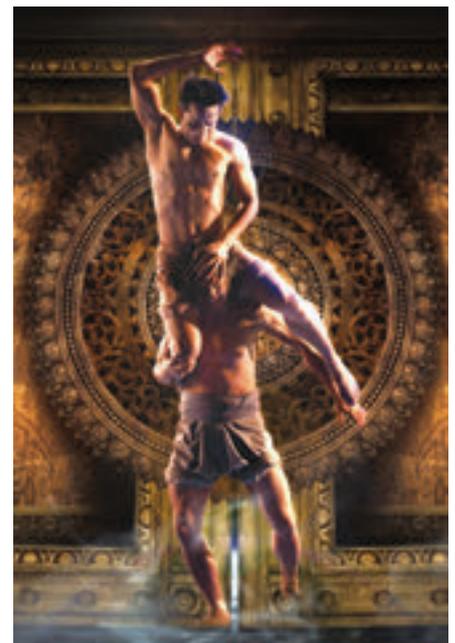


An evening of graceful moves

Muay Thai Live: The Legend Lives packs in plenty of punches, kicks and other stunts into a highly choreographed and well-produced performance detailing the 300-year history of Thailand's uncompromising martial art, Muay Thai. The show is performed daily at 20.00 at Asiatique, the city's main riverside attraction, which has numerous bars, restaurants and market-style stalls and makes a perfect accompaniment to the main show.

Contact

www.muaythailive.net



All that jazz

Located in what was allegedly the underground vault of the East India Company Bank, Maggie Choo's is a cabaret club styled around a 1930s Shanghai theme. It is home to some of the best jazz music in the city and has a reputation for serving very strong cocktails. It doesn't get going till late. Bookings are advised for groups.

Contact

Tel: +66 (0)2-635 6055



Macau's numerous historical sights, such as the Ruins of St. Paul pictured here, can add an element of fun to solemn congresses

Much work to be done

Shedding a gambling city image and raising service standards and accessibility may boost Macau's fortunes in winning association events. By **Prudence Lui**

While Macau, which sits across the border of commercial hive Hong Kong and boasts a strong collection of swanky hotels armed with convention facilities, has been a hit with corporate meetings and events, data from the destination's Statistics and Census Service showed that association gatherings made up only 13 per cent of 263 meetings and incentives hosted in 1Q2014.

According to a spokesman with the Macao Economic Services, association events make the "second largest contributor" to Macau's total event count and the government is keen to further sharpen the destination's appeal in the minds of associations.

The ongoing *Convention and Exhibition Stimulation Program*, initiated by the Macao Economic Services, offers confirmed meetings a series of financial support, such as 10 per cent off accommodation costs at local hotels for a maximum of five nights, and round-trip transporta-

tion coverage for no more than four key decision-makers who are travelling for event bids, with the amount capped at MOP40,000 (US\$5,010) per person.

Paul Kwok, general manager of the 791-key Grand Hyatt Macau – a property that is no stranger to corporate meetings and association congresses, thanks to its extensive selection of meeting spaces – acknowledged that "more business associations are being established in Macau, so this is a very important segment for us".

Kwok pointed out that business events in general "constitute a big slice of our annual events revenue and this is seen to grow as Macau (expands)".

However, in Kwok's opinion, two key challenges can thwart Macau's courtship of more association meetings. Firstly, most associations regard budget as their top priority when choosing and booking an event space, and therefore most do not consider five-star hotels – a category of hotels in abundance in Macau.

"The next challenge – and the biggest – is Macau's ability to bid and win association events (away from) Hong Kong. Because of Macau's (proximity) to Hong Kong, many associations have chosen (the latter)," he said.

For Peter Hassall, managing director of MCI Group Macau, an association management, communication and event management company, Macau's reputation as a gambling city poses an obstacle as such destinations are avoided by associations.

"Therefore, it's vital to change the perception of Macau and the Macau Government Tourist Office is working to educate the market," said Hassall.

While Hassall applauds Macau's compactness, which means numerous hotels, venues and attractions are within walking distance to each other, he admitted that the "city is not quite there yet for large association meetings, in terms of service level".

"Meanwhile, Macau's accessibility will improve in the next few years when the Hongkong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge is completed and high-speed trains connect Zhuhai with Macau. I would also like to see more push for direct flights, especially from longhaul destinations," he added.

Like most major tourist destinations, Macau is also burdened with a manpower shortage. To remedy this issue, Macau's Institute for Tourism Studies has been nurturing graduates specialising in business events. The institute also informed *TTGassociations* that the government has funded numerous training programmes in this area to prepare the workforce in meeting the demands of this event sector.

{ Need to know }

1 Avoiding night charges

Due to a persistent manpower shortage, labour intensive services such as entertainment and venue decoration can cost more in Macau than in other cities. One way to keep costs minimal is to define exactly the schedule for set-up and tear-down and avoid overnight works between 23.00 and 08.00.

2 Support is available

The Macau government has in place two programmes that support international association gatherings: the *Convention and*

Exhibition Stimulation Program and the *International Meeting and Trade Fair Support Program*. Support can come in the form of financial subsidies for event marketing and promotion activities, travel arrangements for keynote speakers and head of delegations, and dining for delegates, etc. Always check with the Macao Economic Services to see if your event qualifies for help. Contact sp.info@economia.gov.mo.

3 Hot meeting deals abound

New hotels and meeting venues are mushrooming across Macau, and with these

openings come attractive promotions on meeting packages. Always shop around for what's on offer.

4 March and April are best

Macau's weather in March and April is pleasant and room rates and venue prices are reasonable, making these two months the best time to take events to the destination. On the other hand, if you must host your event in Macau in November, avoid the Macau Peninsula where the F1 Grand Prix is held. Hotels in this area are booked out and rates are high.

{ Pre/Post }



Drumming for support

Macau Tower offers an engaging twist to its skywalk: drumming on the skywalk platform!

Offered in partnership with Human Rhythms Macau, the solution engages groups to make music together, even at towering heights. Participants have to play the drums – harnessed to the sky walk too – as they make their way from one corner of the platform to the other. As tension and anticipation rise, the facilitator will direct the group to step up the drum tempo to ramp up support and excitement for the jumper who will leap off the building.

Guests watching the experience from within the building and the launch decks will be given drums to play in sync with their sky-walking colleagues.

The group will play until the jumper has landed and then share in their collective success.

Contact

info@macautower.com.mo

It's cool at the top

For an easy way to see some of the best sights of Macau, hop on the Macau Open Top Bus operated by Goldspark Macau Tours.

Departing every 45 minutes, the service takes passengers on a 75-minute tour of the destination, covering 10 famous attractions such as the Macau Science Center, Kun Lam Statue and The Red Market.

An audio commentary, available in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Italian, French, German, Japanese, Russian and Spanish, offers an insight into Macau's history and culture.

Contact

info@goldspark.com.hk



Make time to go back in time

Macau, despite its slew of modern tourism infrastructure, boasts a UNESCO World Heritage Site status. The Historic Centre of Macao comprises of two core zones: first, the central area of the historic settlement of Macau, which includes iconic landmarks such as the A-Ma Temple, Moorish Barracks and the Mandarin's House; and second, the Guia Fortress on Guia Hill. These sights offer many valuable photo opportunities.

Top eats at Sofitel

Sofitel Macau At Ponte 16 has launched Le Chinois Cantonese Restaurant on its top floor, allowing guests to not only feast on delicacies created by chef Ho Wah but also take in the sights of Macau's inner harbour.

Chef Ho Wah brings almost four decades of culinary experience to Le Chinois, promising outstanding Cantonese cuisine that are presented creatively. Apart from seasonal specialties, the menu also features dim sum, organic specialty teas, rare artisanal teas and an extensive collection of wines.

Contact

www.sofitelmacau.com/en/le-chinois.html



Make your own wine

Perfect as an ice-breaker ahead of conferences, the Wine Making Academy by Smallworld Experience offers delegates a chance to create a unique wine by blending different grape varieties. Working in teams, participants will also be required to come up with a brand and label for their wine, develop a marketing strategy and conclude the project with a presentation.

Participants will also learn about the different types of grapes under the guidance of a wine expert. The best wine creation will eventually be chosen through a blind wine-tasting session.

Contact

www.smallworldexperience.com



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www.economia.gov.mo

Sunny days ahead

Business and association events are on the rise for the Philippines, but not all cities in the country are getting a piece of the action, discovers **Rosa Ocampo**

The Philippines is enjoying a new resurgence in business and association events this year, thanks to the combined effects of good economic performance, improved governance and increasing awareness about the destination.

Even as the local economy continues to be one of Asia's fastest growing, the World Economic Forum hosted by Manila this year, the APEC Summit 2015 and the visit of Pope Francis in January next year "had brought much awareness and exposure for the Philippines as an alternative destination to the oft-visited neighbouring Asian countries", said Dexter Deyto, vice president and general manager of SMX Convention Specialist Corp.

"A growing number of international exhibition companies have started launching specialised tradeshows in Manila. Due to the migration of events from other continents to Asia, the Philippines...has been included in the destination search", Deyto explained.

The business and association event boom is expected to last for several years as the Department of Tourism (DoT) is aggressively bidding to host a number of international events from Europe and North America, in line with the Visit Philippines Year 2015.

The travel trade agrees that the country is likely to exceed its performance in 2013 when the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) ranked it 13th in Asia-Pacific and Middle East for hosting 53 international meetings. In terms of city rankings, Manila takes 18th spot with 28 meetings.

The business growth is commendable especially as this sector does not enjoy cash subvention unlike other destinations. What it lacks in cash is compensated for by a more aggressive private sector in bidding for international events, creating their own international events and the emergence of new associations with international affiliations.

"The local associations...are highly regarded in the international community so (we want them) and their executives to be the magnet to pull in (association events)," said Jose Domingo Enerio III, CEO of Tourism Promotions Board (TPB).

PCO Ex-Link Events Management responded by creating its own International Beauty, Health and Wellness Expo, now on its second year, with participants from Asia. The Philippine Retailers Associa-



Tropical Boracay's air accessibility earns it more business event interest than some other sister destinations

tion (PRA) won the bid to host the 17th Asia Pacific Retailers Convention and Exhibition next year.

Enerio said TPB is focusing more on promoting business and association events in the Philippines. It is understood that TPB will also launch a new *Philippine MICE Manual* as part of the effort to tap more of this high-yield sector.

The majority of association meetings and events are held in Manila as it is the most developed in terms of having the largest convention centres in the country, the most number of quality hotels, and the highest number of direct flights from other countries.

While the city wrestles with the issue of inadequate airport and road infrastructure, new hotels and venues cropping up in the Manila Bay area, Makati CBD, Bonifacio Global City, Ortigas and to as far as Quezon City help ease the shortage during the high business event season of September to December.

Unfortunately, accessibility and connectivity is a big challenge for other Philippine destinations desiring a slice of the market. Example, while Davao has already the SMX Convention Centre, which is the biggest privately owned venue outside Manila, it still has a long way to go in attracting more foreign events as it has only one direct regional flight – Singapore to Davao via SilkAir.

"Davao City is overshadowed by the popularity of Boracay, Cebu and Manila" which have more direct flights, said Kennedy Kapulong, hotel manager, Seda Abreeza Davao.

Davao is also hobbled by a misperception that it is unsafe, owing to its location in Mindanao, said Annie Lopez, assistant director of sales, Park Inn by Radisson, although this is already being addressed by the DoT by working closely with local government units.

Cebu, on the other hand, lacks a big convention centre so destination promotion is focused on attracting incentive groups and delegates on pre- and post-

{ **Need to know** }

1 Share delegates' profile early

For better and faster results, give your Philippine travel consultant the delegates' profile beforehand. The consultant will recommend pre- and post-congress activities and experiences based on the delegates' demographics, their venue preferences, what they want to see and do, length of stay, etc.

2 Peaks and troughs

Best time for events is during the first half of the year when there's less domestic and foreign tourists and hotels are better priced. Avoid summer, long weekends and peak periods like Holy Week, Christmas and New Year.

3 Good for foodies

Don't pass up the chance to savour the vastly underrated Philippine cuisine. After all, its endless bars, buffets, grills and nightclubs make Manila the country's gustatory capital. Food strips that dot Greenbelt in Makati, The Fort in Bonifacio Global City and elsewhere in the metro tempt with authentic native dishes, east-west fusion, exotic food, healthy concoction, and sinfully rich desserts.

4 Out of the metro

Metro Manila is the gateway to varied attractions. Just a few hours away from the hustle and bustle of the metro are cool and scenic Tagaytay with its quaint boutique hotels and health and wellness spas; bucolic Laguna, Batangas and Quezon provinces with their treasure trove of hot springs, endless beaches and resort getaways; Mount Pinatubo whose eruption years ago created a lake in its crater; eco-nature reserves in Subic, plus a lot more.

conference tours.

Boracay reaps the benefit of better accessibility with the ongoing upgrade of the Caticlan airport and more direct flights from abroad via Cebu Pacific and AirAsia.

"Business event travellers from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur now reach Boracay via Kalibo gateway," said Amit Oberoi, general manager of Shangri-La's Boracay Resort and Spa.

"We are also optimistic about Cebu Pacific's direct flights from Australia (to Manila), in addition to the existing routes and frequencies of Philippine Airlines and Qantas," said Oberoi.

Patty Escobal, tours manager in charge of business events at Travel People, said a perennial problem is the high hotel rates in the Philippines, many times even higher than their counterparts in Thailand – and even in Hong Kong.

High airfare is also an issue considering that there are fewer direct flights from abroad and many island destinations are reachable by plane.

{ **Pre/Post** }



Take a dive

For lovers of marine wildlife, Philippines has several community-based sustainable tourism programmes including the whale shark interaction and conservation in Donsol, Bicol and Pamilacan Island, Bohol. The programme ensures the protection of the marine wildlife like dolphins, whales and sharks while cascading the benefits of tourism to the local community.

Contact
www.kirschnertravelmanila.com

Do good after the congress

Congress delegates can engage in 'voluntourism' at the sustainable community of GK Enchanted Farm in Angat, Bulacan, just a few hours overland from Manila.

GK, which stands for non-profit Gawad Kalinga or 'give care', aims to raise social entrepreneurs, help farmers and create wealth in the countryside.

The farm offers a slew of activities, from building houses for the poor and teaching to lending a hand in farming and social enterprises like making stuffed toys, gourmet cheeses, etc. Overnight stays are available too.

Contact
info@gkenchantedfarm.com



Enjoy a picture-perfect view of Batanes

On the bucket list of every Filipino is Batanes in the northernmost tip of the country. It has an out-of-Philippines feel to it: craggy hills and mountains not unlike the Scottish highlands; cows grazing on undulating pasturelands; thatched houses of coral and thick limestones made; misty seascapes and arresting sunsets; and rugged islands with no sea shores.

Contact
www.bluehorizons.travel



Take in the best sights of Banaue and Sagada

One of the best ways to enjoy views of the Philippines' ancient Banaue rice terraces – testament to the ingenuity and engineering prowess of the indigenous Ifugaos – and the remote highland settlement of Sagada, with its stunning landscape, waterfalls and ancient caves, has to be by helicopter. Pair the ride in the sky with a luxurious picnic comprising local delicacies from Manila, but only after a trek to the terraces, visits to the hanging coffins of Sagada and a cultural performance.

Contact
info@islasphilippines.com



Changes in the wind

All eyes are on two upcoming convention and exhibition venues which are expected to remedy Jakarta's current lack of event space, writes **Mimi Hudoyo**



photosoup/123RF.com

The opening of two new convention and exhibition centres in Tangerang's BSD City and Alam Sutra, close to Jakarta, is expected to boost the performance of the Indonesian capital's association events sector.

First of the two upcoming infrastructure is the Indonesia Convention Exhibition (ICE) centre, which is due to open by early 2015. It is operated by Indonesia International Expo (IIE), Media Sinar Global (MSG) and Hannover Fairs International, a subsidiary of Deutsche Messe.

ICE, currently under construction in BSD City on the outskirts of Jakarta, will be the biggest convention and exhibition centre in Indonesia, spanning 50,000m² in indoor space, 50,000m² in outdoor space, and 33 meeting rooms that can

accommodate up to 10,000 people.

Danny Budiharto, president director of IIE, which also owns and operates three other venues in Indonesia, said that the growth of MICE and economic stability in Indonesia is drawing many convention and exhibition operators to the country, who will in turn bring in international shows, in addition to local exhibitions and conventions.

"Jakarta needs more convention and exhibition space to cater for these shows as the existing Jakarta Convention Centre and Jakarta International Expo are already very packed with events," he said.

Over in Alam Sutera, a 30-minute drive from Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, work is underway for the Jakarta International Congress and Convention Centre. The venue is expected to open

in 2016, adding 60,000m² of exhibition space, a 6,000m² ballroom and 66 meeting rooms to Jakarta's stable of business event hardware.

Indra Sukirno, director executive of Jakarta Convention and Exhibition Bureau (JCNEB), also acknowledges that the city's existing event facilities are stretched. She revealed that Jakarta Convention Centre "is busy year-round" and it is "hard" for event planners to secure a space in the venue. The Jakarta International Expo faces the same space constraints, and is presently expanding its facilities to better cope with rising market demand.

Indra added that traffic congestions in the city centre pose yet another problem for Jakarta's business events sector.

Fortunately, the two new venues are placed outside of the bustling city centre and have direct access from the airport. Tangerang, where they are located, has a growing middle- and upper-class satellite city, where numerous new hotels, shopping malls, F&B facilities, hospitals and universities have emerged over the last five years.

"Event participants do not need to enter the city centre and can therefore avoid the traffic," Indra said.

Rizki Handayani, director of MICE and Special Interest Tourism Promotion, believes that both the ICE and Jakarta International Congress and Convention Centre will "improve the positioning of the city for association meetings".

According to Indra, Jakarta is already seeing stronger interest from associations.



"Jakarta needs more convention and exhibition space to cater for these shows as the existing Jakarta Convention Centre and Jakarta International Expo are already very packed with events."

Danny Budiharto
President director,
Indonesia International Expo

Jakarta's city centre may be the commercial nerve centre of the country, but traffic jams, seasonal floods and a lack of convention space is hurting growth potential for business events



“This year alone we have supported two site inspections for association events planned for 2016. We have also just (secured) a medical association conference,” she shared.

To ensure the interest remains high, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has partnered JCNEB in hosting a gathering with business event players in Paris and Brussels, held in conjunction with IMEX Frankfurt 2014 to promote Jakarta as a destination.

Indra said: “Our plan next year is to bring (local) industry (suppliers) along to (these gatherings).”

While ICE and Jakarta International Congress and Convention Centre may satisfy event planners hoping to escape Jakarta's notorious traffic jams, Susilowani Daud, president director of Pacto Convex, feels that the capital city still pales in comparison to sister destination Bali when it comes to available attractions.

“Congress delegates usually bring their spouses and families with them, and Bali has everything, from beaches, nightlife, culture and arts. Jakarta does not have these things to offer,” Susilowani lamented.

However, Rizki begged to differ, saying: “Jakarta, as the capital of Indonesia, has accommodation, venues and good (international air) accessibility. It has plenty of entertainment, nightlife, golf courses and shopping complexes. With these elements combined, Jakarta has the potential to become a destination for association congresses.”

{ Need to know }

1 Watch the skies

The rainy season hits Indonesia in mid-January to mid-February, causing some areas in Jakarta to flood. At such times, gridlocks are common. Event planners should avoid taking large events to the city during this period.

2 Consider unique venues

Besides the convention and exhibition centres and hotels with meeting facilities, Jakarta is rich with unique venue options. The Ciputra Artpreneur, for instance, is a complex comprising an art museum, exhibition galleries, a theatre and multifunctional rooms. It can support meetings and exhibitions for 300 to 1,500 pax. Another option is the Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperatives (SMESCO) Building, which has a 22,000m² exhibition hall

and a convention hall that can accommodate 1,250 seats, theatre style.

3 Have street food brought to you

There's a way to enjoy Jakarta's popular street food without having to battle the city's notorious traffic to get to them. When hosting delegate functions over meals, ask your local event planner to bring famous food stalls to your venue – yes it can be done! These stalls can add a unique touch to banquets or buffet lines.

4 Support is available

The Indonesia Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy supports qualified international business events with souvenirs, cultural performances or a hosting dinner. Conditions apply, so do check with the ministry to see if your event is qualified for support.

Ciputra Artpreneur



{ Pre/Post }

Jakarta Tourism and Culture Office



Textile delights in the capital

The Jakarta Textile Museum offers visitors a chance to learn how to make hand-drawn batik under the tutelage of an expert. During the short course visitors will get to use the *canting*, a pen-like tool, to draw batik patterns on a white cloth with liquid wax, apply colour and then wash off the wax in boiling water. Visitors can later take home their creations as souvenirs.

Congress delegates who are extending their stay in Jakarta with family members may also take their children here, as batik painting classes are available for young visitors. Children will get to learn how to make batik with copper stamps and liquid wax.

The museum also features a collection of different local textiles.

Contact

www.museumtekstiljakarta.com

Jakarta Tourism and Culture Office



Unravel those stress knots

After an intensive congress, make time for a relaxing session at one of Jakarta's many day spas. These venues offer Indonesian massage and herbal remedies based on centuries old recipes. Day spas that come highly recommended include Martha Tilaar Salon Day Spa, Taman Sari Royal Heritage Spa and Gaya Spa Wellness.

Contact

www.marthatilaarspa.com

www.tamansariroyalheritagespa.com

www.gayaspa.com

Opportunities to flex those muscles

The Citarik River and Citatih River in Sukabumi, a three-hour drive from Jakarta, is loved by adrenaline junkies who seek some action on grade three plus rapids. The rivers offer good scenery along the way, including visions of rainforests, paddy fields and locals going about their daily chores.

A number of local tour operators are able to put together a trip to Citarik River and Citatih River, with transfers from Jakarta. Cherokee Arung Jeram and Caldera Indonesia are among them.

Contact

www.cherotheadventure.com

www.calderaindonesia.com

Glittering gemstones

The three-storey Jakarta Gems Center in Jatinegara, East Jakarta, is home to more than 1,000 traders selling various local and international gemstones such as rubies, sapphires and emeralds.

These gemstones are priced from 25,000 rupiah (US\$2.10) to more than a million rupiah each, and can be bought separately to be custom-made into a piece of jewellery on site.

Visitors can also see how the gemstones are processed by workmen who form and polish the beauties by hand or with polishing machines made from bicycle wheels.

Contact

Unavailable



Head to Cirebon in style

Cirebon, a historical and cultural city, can be reached via a three-hour luxury train ride from Jakarta. Offered by Kereta Api Pariwisata, also known as Indorailtour, the train experience will include visits to local attractions such as Trusmi, which is known as the centre of batik home industry, and a feast of local culinary delights such as *empal gentong* (beef soup) and *tahu gejrot* (fried tofu with spicy sweet and sour sauce).

Contact

www.indorailtour.com

Check out the museums

Take a tour of Jakarta's varied museums to gain a deeper understanding of the city. Bank Mandiri Museum, Bank Indonesia Museum, Wayang Museum (dedicated to Javanese puppetry), Fine Art and Ceramic Museum and Jakarta History Museum are all worth a visit.

While these museums are within walking distance, visitors can choose to rent a bicycle to get around. Alternatively, a local tour agent can be used to tailor an itinerary for a day of sight-seeing.

Contact

Any local tour agent



Jakarta Tourism and Culture Office

Membership renewal tactics

Making members stay is more than an administrative function. **Tony Rossell** suggests 10 strategies with a marketing focus for boosting the numbers

To obtain and retain members, associations must always begin the conversation with delivering value and encouraging engagement. But they would be remiss if the conversation ended there.

Membership and marketing professionals are also responsible for managing an effective renewal system to maximise the number of members who stay with the association.

Here are 10 tactics for improving the results of a renewal programme:

- 1 **Frequency:** The days when an organisation could send out one, two, or even three renewal notices are gone. Research shows that associations with better-than-average renewal rates have seven to 15 renewal contacts in their system.
- 2 **Timing:** When the renewal series begins and ends also has an impact on renewal rates. The most effective series starts more than three months before expiration, often with an early-bird special offer. Similarly, organisations that do not end their renewal efforts until at least three months after the members' expiration date also see higher renewal rates.
- 3 **Channels:** Marketing technology now allows for an array of channels to use for renewals. Options include mailed notices, email, phone calls from staff, volunteers or states as well as tele-marketing, Google Remarketing and website interstitials. Some organisations are now requesting an opt-in for texting in order to alert a member that his/her membership is nearing expiration. All of these tools have value, but direct mail remains the single most productive renewal vehicle.
- 4 **Conversion:** Associations with a high level of new members should con-

sider creating a separate strategy for first-year members. Almost always, these members are the least likely to renew. Efforts to retain new members are often called conversion strategies, since the new member is often 'trying out' the association. A good conversion programme begins the moment a new member joins.

- 5 **Budget:** Most organisations under-budget for renewals. However, a member retained is as valuable as a new member. Calculate how much is spent for each renewing member by each step of your renewal series. You might be surprised how high your ROI is even on your last effort.
- 6 **Payment:** Renewals are designed to collect dues revenue. So, creatively thinking through payment options needs to be part of the marketing equation. Automatic credit card or EFT instalment renewal is probably the most important payment option. These methods turn renewals from an opt-in decision to an opt-out action. Offering a monthly credit card instalment option can be very powerful for members who are not reimbursed for dues from an employer.
- 7 **Offers:** Gaining members' attention with special offers in the renewal communication can incentivise greater response. Try offering a free report that can be downloaded after renewal or a renewal sweepstakes through a postcard to members. Offers prompt members to act now instead of putting renewals off to a later time, which may never come.
- 8 **Personalisation:** Individualising your renewal communication with members can be done fairly easily both in email and mail using the information held

in your database. For example, one powerful message is "because of your membership, you saved \$50 on your product purchases this year". A trade association might also highlight a regulatory or legislative issue of concern to the member by saying, "we had success on the legislative issue that you told us you were most concerned about this year."

- 9 **Testing:** Trying new renewal tactics and verifying their effectiveness through statistically valid tests keep a renewal programme fresh and optimised. However, take care; renewal payments are a critical revenue stream for most associations, so it is wise to try changes with a segment of your members first before rolling out a new concept to everyone.
- 10 **Analytics:** No association has a monolithic membership. Different segments of your membership renew at different rates. So it is important to track which members are the most likely to renew and which are least likely to continue with you. This analysis allows you to allocate your resources in the most efficient way. The best members may only need a few contacts while more contacts and more expensive channels may be needed for lower-responding segments.

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The right strategy for global meetings

Robin Lokerman, group president of MCI, unlocks the seven keys for expanding your international meeting successfully in new markets

As associations continue to expand and grow globally, meetings become a key strategy for organisations to open and penetrate international markets, especially the emerging ones which show a huge thirst for latest content offered through multiple products and services.

Meeting revenues mainly come from two sources – participants and industry partners in terms of sponsors and exhibitors. However, with more and more meetings taking place, content being made available in digital forms and through various online portals, and shrinking travel budgets, it becomes extremely important that associations have the right strategy behind their meetings when expanding in international markets, especially when they are new markets.

Here are the seven key areas to look into when planning international meetings:

Content: While working in international markets, organisations need to ensure their content is more locally relevant. Having the same content might not be a successful strategy as it might not address the needs of the local audience. A good strategy will include customisation of content or having content presented with local relevance and connections so that participants find it most useful and wish to attend the meeting.

Marketing and promotion: One of the major challenges faced by many associations when expanding into new markets is developing a locally relevant marketing and promotion strategy. From print marketing to social media, each industry and market responds differently and it is crucial to understand the triggers of that market before launching the strategy. One way to do this is to connect and discuss with counterpart organisations, local suppliers or, at times, even international members.

Pricing strategy: While most markets can adapt and work with a consistent and similar pricing strategy, there are certain countries where organisations need be careful in defining the sponsorship/exhibitor values and registration prices. It is essential to look into this at the start when working on the event plan. If there are reasons for having lower prices, then the event costs have to be managed accordingly to ensure financial objectives are met and there is no last-minute compromise.

Stakeholder involvement and support: No meetings are successful in international markets if the local/regional stakeholders are not sufficiently engaged. They need to be involved in defining content, pricing strategy and in gathering the right support from local authorities and industry. This will not only help in bringing in direct revenues but also in assisting in elevating the meeting brand that eventually will attract more participants, leading to increased revenues.

Audience engagement: Having the potential participant engaged right from pre-event is the best way to ensure they attend the meeting. Audiences today can be engaged in developing content. For example, they can choose event speakers through voting. Social media and digital tools also help connect them and form a community, so today it is very easy to have your audiences engaged at a reasonable cost. These communities can then be used to generate revenues by connecting industry partners to them in various forms post-event to start an industry conversation.

Partner involvement: When working in international markets, having a local on-the-ground partner helps associations to address local challenges. Costs are reduced through better contracts, and knowledgeable management of local stakeholders and partners. These could be conference organisers and/or destination management companies who can also provide insights into the marketing mix and local market relevance.

Value-added services: A lot of organisations do not pay attention to the value-added services desired by participants. Services like offering accommodation, industry meetings or offsite activities do influence the decision of a participant to attend the meeting.

Based in Singapore, **Robin Lokerman** is responsible for the strategic and business development of MCI's services to association and government markets. He is a member of the INCON Executive Committee and a regular guest speaker at international business events.

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