



GUIDE TO
Guide to new hotels
and resorts



DESTINATIONS
Thailand,
Philippines,
Australia

Alain Khaiat, an active leader in South-east Asia's cosmetics industry, says that a close-knit community where the big boys uplift smaller players is key for the industry's prosperity and survival

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Choices, oh, choices

As an editor producing trade titles that advocate quality business travel and business/association events, I receive countless press releases every day that announce new hotels being built or opening somewhere around the world.

Increasingly, these press releases include considerable information on meeting and banquet spaces as well as in-house event support capabilities, besides the usual spiel on interior design, room count and types, variety of restaurants, and range of recreational facilities.

Clearly, property developers and hotel companies are giving meetings greater consideration when drawing up their blueprint, eager to cash in on the burgeoning market that is business events.

With this, meeting planners no longer have to limit their venue choices to traditional convention and exhibition centres – although even these venues are exploding across Asia-Pacific. According to the *Trade Fair Industry in Asia* annual report for 2019, published by UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, venue capacity in Asia will be over 9.6 million square metres by the end of 2019, and the number of purpose-built exhibition venues operating in Asia will reach 232.

Mind you, these figures captured by

UFI exclude centres that are built solely for conferences, so the extent of venue choices available to meeting planners is truly wide.

But that's a story for another time.

Hotels are also getting savvier with the kind of event spaces they offer. Ballrooms compete on size, design and technical capabilities. Meeting rooms are now flexible spaces that can be combined, divided and transformed to cater to all types of events. Unique spaces are also carved out elsewhere in the hotel, such as landscaped gardens, rooftop pool decks, oceanfront lawns and wine or cheese cellars that double up as memorable venues for social functions within a solemn business programme.

For associations like the Cosmetic, Toiletry & Fragrance Association of Singapore (whose president is featured in this issue; *Stronger together*, pages 12-14), the growing option of beautiful hotel venues is a boon, as it needs venues that reflect the type of business its members and speakers are in – beauty and well-being – and be able to provide memorable settings for sponsors to connect with the top-level speakers attending its conferences.

In our Guide to new hotels and resorts (*Cool spaces*, pages 15-20), we pick out some of the latest openings in the region that promise imaginative spaces for events.



Karen Yue
Group Editor

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Stronger together

Alain Khaiat, an active leader in South-east Asia's cosmetics industry, tells **Karen Yue** that a close-knit community where the big boys uplift smaller players is key for the industry's prosperity and survival



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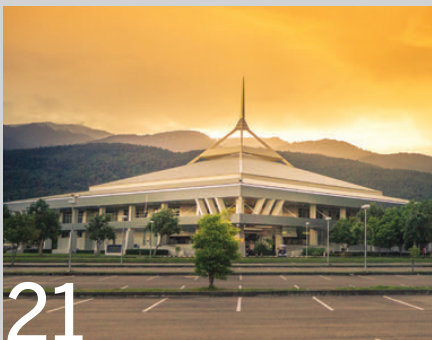
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Cool spaces

New hotels and resorts across Asia-Pacific are offering imaginative spaces with sensory experiences for events. Think indoor starry-night ceilings, outdoor private gardens, and expansive beachfronts



DESTINATIONS



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Thailand // A northern city on the rise

The number of international meetings coming into Chiang Mai is rising, thanks to positive destination promotion and good events hardware.

By **Suchat Sritama**



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Philippines // A different world

With the modern business infrastructure that spans Bonifacio Global City, a destination that is fast gaining planners' favour, who would have thought it was once a military base? By **Rosa Ocampo**



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Australia // Reaping the fruits of their labour

Various private and public initiatives are helping to set a positive tone for the future of Brisbane's associations sector, writes **Adelaine Ng**

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Bigger and better KLCC

Completed in July, the expanded Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre creates room for larger association events, while new flexible spaces provide more innovative and experiential meetings and networking opportunities

The addition of 11,000m² of meeting space, on top of its existing 22,659m², makes the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) the ideal choice for meeting planners looking for a larger, centrally located venue in Malaysia.

Not only can KLCC comfortably accommodate bigger events and more concurrent meetings, the new Exhibition Halls 6, 7 and 8, each with an adjoining expansive foyer, allow meeting planners to create new event designs and networking hubs, and customise experiences to suit any occasion.

The new exhibition halls are also designed with two Hospitality Suites each, which can be used as offices, VIP rooms or for meetings.

These improvements create opportunities for KLCC and its partners to confidently bid for and grow larger national, regional and international conventions.

The upgraded venue enhances

KLCC's world-class reputation as Malaysia's premier purpose-built convention centre and strengthens the country's attractive and affordable business events proposition.

A better F&B experience also awaits after the meetings are over. With natural light streaming into the new spaces, delegates can enjoy eye-catching views while tasting the centre's culinary expertise at live-cooking stations.

For association meetings with an exhibition component, KLCC's excellent infrastructure and high-quality facilities at its existing exhibition halls means it can better meet evolving business objectives and increase its value proposition. With ease of flow from all corners of KLCC, connectivity and collaboration are never disrupted.

Email: info@klccconventioncentre.com for more information

About the new spaces

- Exhibition Hall 6 is located on Level One; Exhibition Hall 7 on Level Three; and Exhibition Hall 8 can be accessed via the escalator at Exhibition Hall 7.
- Each exhibition hall has flexible space of 2,862m² and can be divided into three sections.
- The new live-cooking stations at KLCC are part of a recent investment of close to RM1million (US\$238,550). Artisanal food can also be prepared a-la-minute and adds to the ambience and engagement in a very relaxed and interactive environment.



Indonesian capital move a boon for East Kalimantan

By Kurniawan Ulung

Indonesian travel industry members are predicting a rise in quality business travel and events infrastructure in East Kalimantan once the destination becomes the country's new capital.

President Joko Widodo had made clear plans to move the current capital from Jakarta to the Indonesian portion on the island of Borneo, straddling the two regencies of North Penajam Paser and Kutai Kartanegara. The two regencies will become the centre of administration, while Jakarta will remain the country's business and economic centre.

Sudarsana, general manager of business development of Santika Indonesia Hotel and Resorts, said the relocation would boost the reputation of both regencies among the business community, and raise their potential as business events destinations.

He believes that the relocation of the presidential palace, ministries, house of representatives and Bank Indonesia will drive the emergence of new star-rated hotels and meeting facilities across East Kalimantan, in order to meet the government and businessmen's need to hold business events.

Santika itself has plans for a new hotel in an undisclosed location in East Kalimantan.



Sudarsana: investing in East Kalimantan



Jakarta will remain the country's business and economic hub

Sudarsana also predicted that Kutai Kartanegara and North Penajam Paser will follow in the footsteps of Balikpapan, East Kalimantan's largest city that the government has named as one of the country's top 16 MICE destinations.

Haryadi Sukamdani, chairman of Indonesia Hotel and Restaurant Association, has also expressed confidence in East Kalimantan's future potential for business and association events. He opined that convention centres will soon be built in the destination.

Many industry players who spoke to *TTGassociations* agree that the capital city move will spread development across the Indonesian archipelago, and raise the infrastructure standards for Kutai Kartanegara and North Penajam Paser. International access to the future Indonesian capital can come through the

Sultan Aji Muhammad Sulaiman Airport in nearby Balikpapan.

However, with the relocation costing a hefty 466 trillion rupiah (US\$33 billion), Sudarsana is worried that the central government may issue a ban on all government bodies from renting meeting halls in hotels in a bid to cut costs.

ICCA picks new director for the Middle East

After an intensive recruitment which attracted major industry interest, Anju Gomes has been appointed the new director Middle East to helm International Congress and Convention Association's (ICCA) fastest-growing region.

Gomes is an accomplished events strategist and director of business



Gomes: new head of ICCA Middle East

development with over two decades of experience in the international events sector in the Middle East.

She has been based in Dubai since 1996, where she built her career working in senior positions across both the association and corporate meeting industries, specialising in local and international stakeholder relations, sales and service optimisation, and event management.

As the former MENA head of events, finance and administration for the International Association of Public Transport, Gomes is a skilled communicator and strategist with in-depth knowledge of regional market conditions and local business culture.

She will continue to be based in Dubai, where ICCA is registered with the Dubai Association Centre.

IFFS goes on a break after 36 years

The International Furniture Fair Singapore (IFFS), a massive sourcing platform and design-led exhibition that is highly regarded in the global furniture and furnishings industry, will take time off in 2020.

The decision, announced by IFFS chairman Ernie Koh, was made to allow the event to take a year to "rethink, review, revitalise".

Koh said in a press statement: "The global furniture and furnishings industry is changing rapidly as new technologies and new lifestyles have ushered in new challenges and spawned new opportunities.

"For IFFS to remain the most distinctive channel for regional and international companies – to penetrate the global

market with alternative solutions and meet the ever-changing needs of tomorrow's urban living, we need to transform (soon)."

Koh shared that "new, exciting and relevant themes" will be conceptualised to "elevate IFFS to the next level".

As its key objective is to serve creative enterprises, IFFS will need to embrace transformation to help it survive economic gyrations and attract talented people to come on board. It will also need to capitalise on the technology revolution that is disrupting traditional business formulas and breaking established design mindsets.

The last IFFS was held from March 9 to 12 this year at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre.

Nine associations join hands to advance events business in new era

By Caroline Boey

The Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (SACEOS) has kicked off the next chapter of its Asia-Pacific Community Building Manifesto, which was developed after the association's annual signature Singapore MICE Forum (SMF) last year and completed in October.

This year, SACEOS created the industry's equivalent of the Davos World Economic Forum at SMF2019 with the participation and partnership of nine

international organisations.

They were JMIC (Joint Meetings Industry Council), UFI (Global Association of the Exhibition Industry), PCMA (Professional Convention Management Association), SITE (Society for Incentive Travel Excellence), BestCities Global Alliance, AIPC (International Association of Convention Centres), MPI (Meeting Professionals International), IAEE (International Association of Exhibitions and Events) and IAPCO (International Association of Professional Congress Organisers).

SACEOS president, Aloysius Arlando, explained that the intention was to "develop or deepen partnerships with global and adjacent associations with their respective communities so that collectively we can realise the full potential of the business events industry in today's digital and globally connected era".

On the thinking behind the manifesto, Arlando, who is also CEO of SingEx Holdings, said "businesses, partnerships and value creation are now being determined by the global interplay of digital, networks and talent".

He sees business events as an important enabler for this interplay.

Recognising that SACEOS needs to "stay abreast, share key and relevant issues impacting the industry", the association has restructured its executive committee to focus on the key thrusts of future business events in line with the spirit of the manifesto, which focuses on people, technology, relationship, destinations, sales, business models and ecosystem.

Arlando said: "SACEOS will be rolling out initiatives along these thrusts and in partnership with both global and adjacent associations.

"For instance, we have developed a total security programme covering both physical and cyber security with the support of UFI. We have also inked key partnerships with Alibaba and Tencent-WeChat to leverage on cloud-based and mobile services respectively for our SMEs, which make up the bulk of our industry, to adopt.

SACEOS worked with Oscar Cerezales, COO of MCI Group, to spearhead the manifesto initiative.



Caroline Boey

Global Wellness Summit moves 2019 conference out of Hong Kong

The Global Wellness Summit (GWS), the foremost gathering of international leaders in the US\$4.2 trillion global wellness economy, has decided to move its 2019 conference from Hong Kong to Singapore, with the event maintaining the same dates from October 15 to 17.

"In an effort to ensure travel is as seamless as possible in and out of the Summit, our GWS leadership, advisory board and partners felt this shift in location was important for the collective well-

being of everyone involved," said Susie Ellis, chairman and CEO of GWS.

The decision was made against a background of continued anti-government demonstrations in Hong Kong, some of which had escalated into violent clashes with the police.

"We are working closely with event organisers and the host sponsor to ensure the event remains first-class and there is little interruption for all attendees and presenters."

Grand Hyatt Singapore will host the event.

In a press statement, Ellis remarked that Singapore "is a storied destination and financial centre that will be an exciting home for the 2019 Global Wellness Summit, offering delegates a unique opportunity to gain first-hand insights into the many opportunities available in Asia's exploding wellness markets, including China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia and more".

Ellis' statement added that the Summit is a traditionally sold-out event.

Past Summits were held in the US, Switzerland, Turkey, Indonesia's Bali, India, Morocco, Mexico, Austria and Italy.

{ Bureau brief }

Dubai's ambassador programme grows

Dubai Business Events, the city's official convention bureau, has signed six MoUs this year, further strengthening its AI Safer Congress Ambassador Programme, which has grown to become a strong network of over 320 members and continues to play a vital role in elevating Dubai's status as a knowledge hub in key sectors and industries. The signings are with Professional Communication Corporation, Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation for Distinguished Academic Per-

formance, Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Award for Medical Sciences, Dubai Multi Commodities Centre, Emirates Medical Association and Dubai Sustainable City.

Hangzhou targets meetings in roadshow

Some 18 Hangzhou-based conference companies and hotels, led by Hangzhou Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, TV and Tourism, participated in the Hangzhou PLUS: MICE Roadshow on August 27 in Beijing, to promote the city for business and association meetings. Beijing was chosen for the roadshow as it is a major source market for meetings bound for the capital of Zhejiang province.

The event played up Hangzhou's academic and technological research strengths, which are critical in attracting association meetings, as well as events and tourism infrastructure.

Malaysia sets new targets

Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) is intensifying efforts – with strong backing from the government – to attract more Asian business events through the promotion of new events infrastructure and creation of more trade events. MyCEB has also committed to greater tradeshow presence. It aims to be in ICCA's top five destination ranking in Asia-Pacific by 2020.

Insurance coverage for event registration fees now available

Malaysian event technology specialist, Evenesis – Y Us, has introduced a protection and coverage plan for business event organisers and attendees who use the Evenesis platform.

The plan guarantees a 100 per cent refund of the event registration fee to the insured attendee within 14 working days, subject to

submission of required documents, should the attendee or the event be affected by flight delays, natural disasters, riots, war or government intervention.

Yusno Yunos, the company's CEO and founder, noted that event registration fees are "not protected in the event of any kind of

cancellation".

He said attendees would have to spend time trying to get a refund from the event organiser, who might not be protected from license revocation, key equipment breakdown, transport delays, riots, war and other factors that could cause the suspension of their event.

The insurance plans protect event organisers too, with the refund based on the collected amount from online registration.

Yusno added that his product is the first of its kind in Malaysia, built specially for the business events industry.



Lofty experience with Bistecca Tuscan Steakhouse

Bistecca Tuscan Steakhouse, situated on Singapore's Mohamed Sultan Road, has unveiled a new private dining event space, La Soffitta.

Aptly titled 'the loft' in Italian, La Soffitta sits on the second floor of the Bistecca shophouse. The room features exposed original red brick and timber beams against a chapel-like vaulted ceiling with Bistecca artwork designed by photographer Scott Woodward.

The space is available for bookings seven days a week, and has a capacity for eight to 26 guests at one table, or 30 guests seated at three tables. It is an ideal setting for work events, small parties, and special occasions.

La Soffitta's private dining menus are available with variable minimum spends for lunch or dinner, weekdays and weekends. Minimum spend starts from S\$3,500 (US\$2,530) for Mondays to Thursdays.

Meanwhile, Bistecca itself is also available for buyouts, and can accommodate 150 in a cocktail reception, or 60 guests for a sit-down dinner. Minimum spend for the restaurant starts from S\$6,000 for Mondays to Thursdays.

Bistecca Tuscan Steakhouse opened in 2012, and was the first steakhouse to offer the Bistecca alla Fiorentina in the Tuscan style.

FCC Angkor reopens as Avani-managed hotel

An extensive renovation of one of Siem Reap's most iconic colonial sites has transformed the FCC Mansion into FCC Angkor, managed by Avani Hotels & Resorts.

Located across the Royal Independence Gardens and Royal Residence, FCC Angkor was once the residence of the French colonial governor as well as the Foreign Correspondent's Club – a favourite haunt among journalists during the war years which later became a popular meeting place for travellers from around the world.

In the latest makeover spearheaded by Dutch-born, Bangkok-based talent Malee Whitcraft, alongside Phnom Penh-based Bloom Architecture, the rebranded FCC Angkor now boasts the restored Mansion restaurant, the Scribe bar, Visaya Spa, and two outdoor salt-water pools.

The 80 revamped guestrooms and suites feature vintage typewriter, rotary dial phones, Khmer carvings and framed front pages of regional newspapers among its decor, plus large windows and terraces that open to lush greenery.



Oakwood opens in Sanya

Oakwood Apartments Sanya has opened with 163 units in the coastal city's Tianya district on China's Hainan Island.

Accommodation options range from studios to three-bedrooms, with all units equipped with a kitchen featuring a Nespresso coffee machine, and in-room entertainment via a home theatre sound system. Every unit also has a private balcony offering panoramic views.

Guests can make use of the property's range of facilities, such as the outdoor swimming pool, fully-equipped fitness centre, 24-hour launderette, and kids' club. Café O is

Oakwood's all-day dining restaurant, serving up hawker-style South-east Asian specialities and international dishes.

For a full cultural immersion, Oakwood Apartments Sanya organises monthly heritage excursions. Some highlights include a visit to the Areca Valley Aboriginal Culture Spot where the Li and Miao tribes reside, neighbourhood tours, golfing, and watersports activities.

Oakwood Apartments Sanya is the first internationally-branded serviced apartment in the city.



New Kambri precinct sharpens Canberra's MICE edge

Following an A\$260 million (US\$175.8 million) redevelopment, Canberra's Kambri precinct now boasts modern and versatile conference and event venues that are available for hire.

Located a 12-minute drive from Canberra's city centre, Kambri offers two multipurpose spaces – one with 500 retractable seats and the other with 220 retractable seats, a 300-seat cinema, a 150-seat drama theatre, and an exhibition space with a large outdoor balcony overlooking the precinct.

These are located within the Culture and Events buildings, where there are also a lobby bar and kitchen facilities to support catered functions. A list of preferred caterers are available for planners' choosing.

Offering a new spin to catering are Kambri's catering duo Sammy and Bella, sisters who first rose to fame as the winners of TV show, My Kitchen Rules, in 2011. They've since gone on to appear as guests and resident chefs on a dozen TV shows, as well as open-

ing restaurants, plus writing, photographing and blogging about food.

In addition to the Culture and Events buildings, the six-floor Marie Raey Teaching Centre building offers a multitude of rooms and cutting-edge technology for programming opportunities outside of University teaching hours.

This includes the top level 'Superfloor' with high ceilings, uninterrupted views across Canberra, an outdoor balcony, and a flexible collaborative environment for up to 300 people.

For those wanting a dynamic non-traditional space, there is an Amphitheatre with tiered seating adjacent to Sullivans Creek, as well as a range of other hireable outdoor options including University Avenue, The Lane, and The Lawn.

While business events are welcomed to use the facilities, Kambri's calendar of events will also be kept packed with concerts, comedy shows, sporting action, and art exhibitions.

Wine and dine in private at Txoko

Txoko is the newest Spanish restaurant to join Jakarta's Senopati area, a bustling restaurant hub in the south of the Indonesian city.

The restaurant is owned by Spanish chef Oskar Urzelai – formerly the executive sous chef at Gran Melia Jakarta – and serves up Basque cuisine, tapas and pintxos.

Urzelai's signature dishes include grilled octopus with boletus cream, and lamb shank with sweet potato. Guests can choose from 50 handpicked wines from countries such as Spain, France, Australia, Chile and Argentina to pair with their choice of tapas and mains.

Set menus for groups range from IDR225,000++ (US\$16++) to IDR445,000++, and includes tapas, main course, dessert and non-alcoholic beverages.

The two-storey restaurant offers a private room on the upper floor that can seat 20 people, and is equipped with a TV for business presentations. The entire second floor can also be closed for private events, and can accommodate 50 to 60 guests.

The main dining hall seats 40 people and is where the open kitchen and bar are located.

A restaurant buyout is possible with a minimum of one week's notice. Partial venue hires are welcome too, specifically for the upper level spaces.

Meeting packages and menus can be customised.



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Pullman opens outpost in west Shanghai

Pullman Shanghai Qingpu Excellence has opened in the heart of the Qingpu Industrial Zone in Shanghai, offering 292 keys and a strong product offering for business events.

The hotel offers more than 1,600m² of banquet space, with the largest ballroom in Qingpu supported by seven function rooms. The 800m² Grand Ballroom is pillarless, and boasts a eight-metre high ceiling, and technology including an 80-inch LED screen and advanced audio-visual equipment.

An outdoor terrace that is connected to the Grand Ballroom can facilitate activities such as evening cocktails, small parties, and even yoga or tai chi sessions.

The brand also presents its new Meet & Play meeting concept through the Pullman Shanghai Qingpu Excellence. Meet & Play, as its name suggests, combines work and play through memorable events in an energised setting imbued with cultural elements and fun interactions. Through the concept, Pullman hotels provide engaging breaks, icebreakers, and team activities that stimulate performance and enhance wellbeing.

Other facilities include Fit Lounge with



its heated indoor swimming pool, a business centre and an executive lounge. In addition, the second floor's communal space showcases Pullman Artist Playground series of exhibitions in partnership with local artists, photographers,

sculptors, painters and designers, to offer guests art experiences.

The hotel is 40 minutes by car to Shanghai Hongqiao Airport and 60 minutes to the city's CBD.

Sheraton Manila joins Resorts World Manila's stable of brands

Marriott International has expanded its portfolio in the Philippines with the opening of Sheraton Manila, located just across the road from Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3.

Part of Resorts World Manila's integrated complex, the 390-room hotel offers a range of accommodation from two-level lofts to deluxe guestrooms with a private garden and Jacuzzi.

The Sheraton Manila also aims to cater to business travellers, by being the first in the country to have a co-working space located in a hotel. The ColLab is a modern high-tech hub featuring six private rooms and a 415m² common area, suitable for product launches and networking events. This is in addition to nine other meeting spaces, including a ballroom that can accommodate up to 570 people.

Other facilities onsite include all-day dining and buffet restaurant S Kitchen, Korean barbecue Oori, The Lounge, a 24-hour fitness centre, Shine spa with six relaxing treatment rooms, a heated outdoor pool, and an executive lounge.

Four Seasons Resort Langkawi opens traditional fish house

Four Seasons Resort Langkawi has unveiled a traditional fish house, offering guests an opportunity to learn about traditional methods used to harvest fish and shellfish from the Andaman Sea.

The private Rumah Ikan Fish House, designed by a local fisherman and crafted with locally-grown wood, seeks to sustain Langkawi's indigenous fishing traditions and pay tribute to the island's vibrant fishing legacy, according to the luxury resort.

The fishing method practised at the fish house is said to be "a rare art" that is fast disappearing as modern, mechanised equipment gains popularity. It involves fashioning a complex structure out of wood splints and extending it out into the sea.

Since last year, the resort has been working with Pak Din, a local fisherman, to bring back this traditional style of fishing.

Situated at a secluded spot along the resort's mile-long coastline, the fish house will enable guests to observe Pak Din at work as he goes about his business or try their hand at fishing the old-fashioned way using locally-sourced equipment.



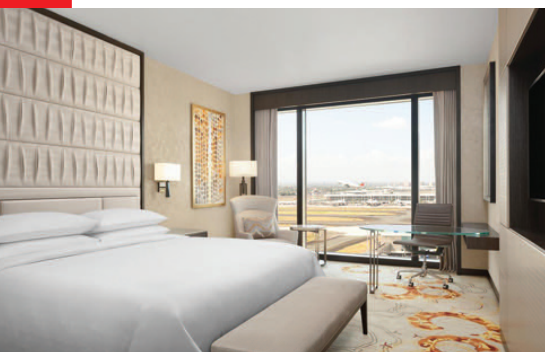
Vietjet adds more connections between Vietnam and India

This coming December, Vietjet will fly from Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi to New Delhi.

The Ho Chi Minh City-New Delhi route will operate four return flights per week (every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday) starting from December 6. Flights depart from Ho Chi Minh City at 19.00 and arrive in New Delhi at 22.50. Return flights take off from New Delhi at 23.50 and land in Ho Chi Minh City at 06.10.

Meanwhile, the Hanoi-New Delhi route will operate three return flights per week (every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday) starting from December 7. Flights depart from Hanoi at 19.10 and arrive in New Delhi at 22.50. Return flights take off from New Delhi at 23.50 and land in Hanoi at 05.20.

Flying time for both flights is around five hours per leg.





No fee, more gains?

A free association for corporate travel managers has been formed, challenging the traditional paid membership model.

Caroline Boey finds out if this idea is sustainable

The traditional model of trade associations based on membership subscription, sponsorship dollars and registration fees is being challenged with one organisation dangling free carrots to attract members with purchasing power.

In June 2019, the Corporate Travel Community (CTC) was formed to only target corporate travel managers – a community that generates an estimated annual US\$1.3 trillion spend – with free membership, free event attendance and access to other free services.

CTC is backed by Informa – which owns UBM, the organiser of international events in many business sectors, and intelligence and scholarly research brands. The aim is to create a large and vibrant travel buyer community, help travel managers progress in their day-to-day work, fine-tune their travel programmes and take them to a new level in their professional careers.

A month later, UK events organiser Connections, formed

in 2014, announced it was launching an invitation-only international private community for senior executives in the high-end travel industry in 2020.

Leveraging on signature events around the world, the new exclusive Connections community will be offering a range of opportunities to interact at events, online and via social media, according to a company statement. No other details were available at press time.

Corporate travel managers polled welcomed CTC's formation.

Peter Koh, Asia strategic sourcing manager, Travel and Professional Services, Corning Singapore Holdings, commended CTC for being a “very innovative idea” and described its “neutral” stance with no sponsorship bias at events as a “good” thing.

However, a US-based director of global events of an association in the finance industry, who did not wish to be named, questioned the sustainability of the CTC model.

“What’s in it for Informa apart from the recognition of bringing value to the corporate travel community?” she asked.

In the scientific field, B V R Chowdari, president of the



“I think the traditional model will attract serious members while associations that are free (the new model) can attract more people.”

Perry Shum

Conference council chair, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Photonics Society

Materials Research Society of Singapore (MRS Singapore), said for the past 20 years, the entry of private organisers running conferences had made it tougher for the association.

Chowdari, organiser of the biennial International Conference on Materials for Advanced Technology (ICMAT), commented that the association had “to make some money” from its signature event in order to offer grants to local universities to conduct research.

“The number of conferences has increased by a lot and every week I get an invitation to take part, perhaps to leverage on what MRS Singapore has achieved and ICMAT event content,” he said, adding that getting the numbers, offering quality content and organising financially sustainable events were issues the association had to manage.

Perry Shum, conference council chair of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Photonics Society, which has 4,000 global members, believed the CTC model would be sustainable because its membership data was valuable.

He believes that both new and traditional association models can survive.

“I think the traditional model will attract serious members while associations that are free (the new model) can attract more people,” said Shum. “In our case, what is most important to our Singapore members is to make it to the senior member grade, become a fellow and be recognised.”

In a recent commentary, Martin Sirk, the new international advisor of the Global Association Hubs Partnership, said: “Members are not economically-rational shareholders. As long as their association is financially stable, ‘profit’ is not what they are looking for.

“I suggest that associations need to come up with new metrics to determine their strategic investment decisions, especially when it comes to expanding their presence and influence globally.”



What's in a representative panel?

The meetings industry is paying attention to imbuing gender diversity on conference panels, but association heads say diversity should go beyond gender and content must take priority, writes **Rosa Ocampo**

More women are taking on leadership roles and membership in associations. At the Australian Society of Association Executives (AuSAE), for instance, women make up 50 per cent of the membership; women dominate the Philippine Council of Association and Association Executives (PCAAE) Board of Trustees with a 4:9 male/female ratio but less so at the Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia Pacific (ADFIAP) with an 8:5 male/female ratio of the Secretariat staff.

So as women become more visible in their industry, meetings delegates expect more of them featured on conference panels, speaker line-up and even in the organising committee, a tough challenge for associations including the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA).

CEO Mario Hardy said PATA has an internal goal of having at least 30 per cent female leaders on every event panel. "We obviously are trying to get

as much as we possibly can but it also depends on the topics, on the part of the world," he pointed out.

At the leadership debate during the PATA Annual Summit 2019 in Cebu City in May, Hardy said there was "one (woman) out of four panelists, but 50-50 would have been better."

"As you know, there is that diversity already at the top level so trying to attract the right individuals is always a bit of a challenge. But we try to make greater effort and I think we will achieve that this year," Hardy added.

AuSAE CEO Toni Brearley said her association does not have a specific gender mix on conference panels, "but we are conscious to ensure that we are reflecting our membership (which is 50 per cent female) in all of our conference programmes".

Brearley added: "In Australia we have a strong focus on ensuring that conference panels and speakers are balanced and there are some organisations that have been

established to promote female speakers. However, I will say that I think women need to come forward, be confident and volunteer for as many opportunities that they can."

Agreeing, PCAA founder and CEO Octavio Peralta said that while his association doesn't have specific goals on male/female speaker percentage, "we consider it ideal to have a 50-50 gender balance".

"There is a conscious effort to ensure equal gender representation in conference speaking and organising committee roles. But more than conscious effort, I think there is need to eventually set written policies in this regard," he said.

Jane Vong Holmes, Gaining Edge senior manager - Asia, however, cautioned that "the quality of the programme should not be compromised in order to appear politically correct".

"In conferences and meetings, content is always king, and therefore the emphasis is on getting best in class to present or speak," she pointed out.

"Speakers and panelists, to the best of my knowledge, have always been selected based on their merits. In some industries, there are more male practitioners than female, and vice versa. In our own meetings industry, there are more female professionals in this field. Naturally, there can be more female speakers and panelists in this business," Vong Holmes shared.

Gender balance is just that – balance – and not a competition between genders. As Hardy explained: "I think what's important is to make sure we have the voice of both male and female represented but also in terms of age diversity, ethnicity, etc. It's not only male versus female, it's not competition. It's a question of having the right individual to share what is important to the industry".

Vong Holmes added: "All convention organisers and event owners want to reach out to every participant as much as possible. As such, there should be equal focus whether it is age, gender, or physical attributes. To neglect any one segment will mean a lower level of inclusion."

Added AuSAE's Brearley: "As event organiser and leaders of industry, it is our duty to ensure we are accurately representing all those voices in the

industries that we represent.

"We must strive to gather opinions and voices from all of our members no matter what gender, race or stage of career. If we only seek voices from one demographic, we are not doing our jobs as leaders".

Peralta noted that "gender equality has been a mainstream topic" in both the West and Asia, and associations are now responding more openly and being more inclusive.

"Even the term 'gender' has itself evolved from only male/masculine and female/feminine to now being more than 50 from what I have read somewhere. Gender is now determined by the norms and culture of a society and this varies across the world," Peralta said.

So, does the level of attention given to gender equality vary from the West and Asia?

"If you are referring specifically to speakers and panelists, I don't think the variances are geographical, but profession-related," said Vong Holmes.

Aptly, Mary Lizabeth Lu,

said that the Game Developers Association of the Philippines, of which she is executive director, rarely attracts women as leaders or members. But that does not detract her from gracing conferences as a speaker and panelist despite the male-dominated nature of her industry.

"More than anything else, it is profession-related," Lu averred.

Vong Holmes said: "If you mean attention to the need for gender balance generally in society, then yes, there is a difference, and also a growing awareness. Some cultures – be it East or West – are more conservative and it will take time, and will power (to change)."

Hardy observed that in many countries in the western world, there has been more pressure to add more female voice at the senior level than in Asia.

And it's cultural. "If you go back into histories and certainly to countries like Japan, South Korea and China where the female voice is less represented for a long time, it takes time to change people's habits or assumptions. It doesn't change overnight," said Hardy.

"There's a lot of history behind it and history builds up but I think it is improving, maybe fast enough and maybe not. There's more talks about it, more consciousness on having the female voice

at board levels, on the association levels and industry levels, not only in tourism but other sectors as well," Hardy said.

Brearley offered a parting shot on this topic: "We recognise that diversity extends beyond gender and ensuring we have speakers that cover a range of demographics – including emerging leaders. It is also important to encourage women to speak. We are in a privileged position to provide these opportunities and therefore ensure that we do so.

"As has often been said, 'you can't be what you can't see'. We have the ability to provide a platform for women to be seen – and to encourage the next generation."

"As event organiser and leaders of industry, it is our duty to ensure we are accurately representing all those voices in the industries that we represent."

Toni Brearley

CEO, Australian Society of Association Executives



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Alain Khaiat

Stronger together

Alain Khaiat, an active leader in South-east Asia's cosmetics industry, tells **Karen Yue** that a close-knit community where the big boys uplift smaller players is key for the industry's prosperity and survival

Please tell me about the core work of the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association of Singapore (CTFAS) and the ASEAN Cosmetics Associations (ACA).

CTFAS was founded in 1991 to bring industry players together to harmonise the cosmetics regulations within South-east Asia. ACA was founded for the same purpose. It is an association of associations. The founding members of ACA were Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Vietnam joined us two or three years ago, and we are waiting for Myanmar to be ready. We hope to have representation from all 10 ASEAN member countries.

The formation of ACA led to establishment of the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive (ACD). ACA has been instrumental in bringing the industry and regulators together to discuss the various ways to move forward and to create a unified cosmetics regulation that would allow products to go from one country to another.

What is your role in both associations?

CTFAS is staffed by volunteers. I was asked to volunteer for CTFAS presidency in 2001 and have not been able to pass the baton to anyone else since (laughs).

ACA leadership, on the other hand, is by rotation. The country association becomes the chairman of ACA for a

period of two years, by reverse alphabetical order. The local association head can choose to chair ACA himself, or nominate someone else from his association to that position. Because I think it is good to have an Asian face to represent ASEAN in front of the regulators, I nominated Le Chau Giang as ACA president in the last Singapore term.

Was standard setting the main reason for the formation of both associations?

It was, and we are beyond that now. Today, we spend a lot of time training our members on how to implement standards and abide by regulations. We also participate in tradeshow where we promote some of the companies we bring along.

I assume these are more SMEs than established players.

You are right. The big boys know what to do, they don't need ACA or CTFAS. That said, there is a valuable relationship between the big and small players. They help by being the trainer. It is very important to have both working together for the benefit of the industry.

Does ACA act as the voice for the region's industry on a global level?

We do. There is the International Association Collaboration, which covers all industry associations around the world. We attend the IAC meeting twice a year

– and soon to be three times a year – to represent ASEAN. In between meetings there are projects which we participate in to contribute to the discussion. The end objective is to have a statement on a topic that matters to us, for example, plastics in the environment.

As an industry association, we ask our members to voluntarily eliminate plastic microbeads from their cosmetic products. That has been in place for three years. The last time I checked, 95 per cent have been removed globally. Today we are close to 100 per cent.

You said earlier that both associations have passed the stage of setting standards, but it seems to be very much part of what you do today.

Countries are always issuing new regulations. For example, by 2025, all cosmetic products heading into Indonesia must be certified whether they are Halal or not.

Companies must be prepared for this. We had the head of the Halal agency from Indonesia to come and talk to our members about the progress of this new regulation and what the agency's stand is on it.

Is the Indonesian market important?

It is a country of 265 million people but there are only about 20 million people in the upper income bracket, and 20 to perhaps 50 million people with purchas-

An experienced industry champion

Alain Khaiat has 40 years of experience in the cosmetics industry, having served as vice president, R&D and QA with Johnson & Johnson, Yves Rocher and Revlon. He went on to create SEERS Consulting in 2006.

He was awarded the first in-cosmetics Lifetime Achievement Award in Paris in April 2010.

Khaiat, who holds a PhD in biophysics, is an active contributor to the cosmetics industry. He is the president of the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association of Singapore, chairman of the ISO TC 217 (cosmetics), past-chairman for the ASEAN Cosmetics Association (2009-2011 and 2017-2019), member of the ASEAN Cosmetic Scientific Body, as well as member of the International Dialogue for the Evaluation of Allergens (IDEA) Supervisory Group, a joint project between IFRA and the EU commission.



ing power. These people are concentrated in just five cities.

While Indonesia is not yet the market everybody is talking about, it is growing and may become a big market in South-east Asia one day.

In South-east Asia, the biggest market in terms of spending per capita is Singapore – four times bigger than number two, Thailand – although the population of the city-state is just 5.5 million. Singapore represents seven per cent of total sales in South-east Asia, equivalent to a market of 15 million people!

Where did all those people come from, you wonder? Some like to shop for cosmetic products in Singapore because they know that they are not going to find counterfeits here.

The time to place a cosmetic product in Singapore is extremely short – just a few minutes. In Indonesia it can take a company up to six months due to lengthy regulation checks. So, a consumer who wants the latest cosmetics will find them all in Singapore.

Every year, some 60,000 new cosmetics, toiletries and fragrances are placed on the market in Singapore. That's about 200 new products a day. The average lifespan of a product is about two years.

So a new mascara launched by a company will be replaced with a new one after two years?

More or less. Some products are meant to last much longer because they have no reason to change. I used to work for Johnson & Johnson. Some products have been there forever! Baby powder was launched in 1893, and it is still there. Of course, there are new variants (such as scented versions) and the original has had some changes due to new regulations. It is common for product formula to change over time due to ingredients that have become banned, restricted or hard to source.

Are there scientific members who bring attention to ingredients that require a second look?

The ASEAN Cosmetics Committee (ACC), formed by delegations of the 10 member countries plus ACA and the ASEAN Secretariat, is tasked with making decisions on regulations and the adaptation of the ACD. It also looks at how to better train regulators.

The ACC went on to establish the ASEAN Cosmetics Scientific Body (ACSB). I represent Singapore in the ACSB, and in the country delegation there are members from the industry, the academe and regulators. The objective of the ACSB is to evaluate ingredients based on new technology and new scientific results. It also looks into the process of determining the safety of ingredients.

Photos: Richard Caleb Lai / Location: Parkroyal on Pickering, Singapore





Before, we looked at an ingredient in one product. Now, we look at the same ingredient that is used in all products. Some ingredients are safe when used in just one product but not in 20 different (complementary) products. If the consumer were to use those 20 products every day, the exposure could be dangerous. Such a probability is low but we take the worst case scenario to be safe. In such cases, we may allow use of the ingredient in just 10 complementary products, or reduce concentration across the board.

Our work to ensure consumer safety is extremely important. That's why many of the MNCs are allowing their people to conduct trainings for the industry. It is the whole industry at stake.

Some companies are very small, with just two or three people who may not have scientific background. Somebody has to guide them on how to stay within regulations and educate them on why safety is important.

How do you ensure small, new companies can get all the training they need?

Membership fees for CTFAS is extremely low, S\$380 per year, so that there is maximum engagement. Members attend free quarterly meetings that feature valuable speakers such as Euromonitor researchers who present trends, technical presentations and demonstrations of how products are made. We also answer any questions members have about processes or ingredients, as long as they are general in nature. When questions become too specific about their product, we direct them to consultants who can help them for a fee.

What's your membership composition?

CTFAS members are suppliers, consultants, retailers, manufacturers and others across the whole spectrum, with SMEs making up 30 per cent of the community.

“OUR WORK TO ENSURE CONSUMER SAFETY IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. IF CONSUMERS ARE NOT SATISFIED, IF THEY GET SICK, IF THEY DIE FROM THE USE OF A BAD PRODUCT, THE IMAGE OF THE ENTIRE INDUSTRY WILL BE TARNISHED.”

The SME composition varies across the region. In Indonesia there are more micro companies – outfits with just five people making products to sell only in their kampung.

At ACA, SMEs make up half of the regional membership. It also has associate members that are associations from outside of South-east Asia. They get access to information that is important for their members, while we get to have a global dialogue.

With such a diverse composition, is it hard to determine what to offer your members?

Not really. We always ask our members what they want. SME members usually want education on regulation, safety processes and claims – how can they claim to offer a certain benefit through their product and prove that claim. We then build our workshops around these needs.

Our big members simply want to be speakers and trainers.

What else worries and excites your industry peers?

Changing consumer habits is our biggest challenge. Today, many products are

bought off the Internet. We had Lazada and Facebook tackle this at our ACA Leaders Forum in July. This presents a challenge for regulators. How do they control what products are sold? They could control if the products originated from a warehouse in Singapore, but that is not always the case.

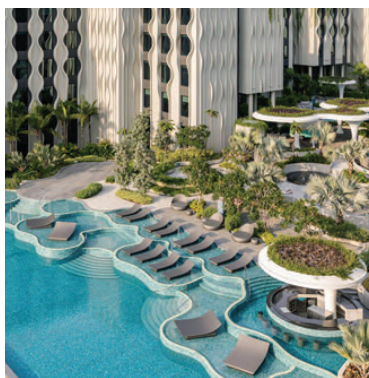
Consumers are also becoming more environmentally conscious, wanting more natural ingredients, less environmental footprint, etc. However, there are factors to consider in the replacement of what seems to be less environmentally-friendly. For instance, many consumers today want palm oil (as production damages peatland, which increases global greenhouse gas emissions) to be replaced by olive oil. One hectare of olive tree is needed to yield the same amount of oil from one palm tree, so it is not possible. However, it is possible to support responsible palm oil sources that do not cause deforestation.

So these are things that we need to communicate to consumers.

Lastly, tell me how your recent ACA Leaders Forum went.

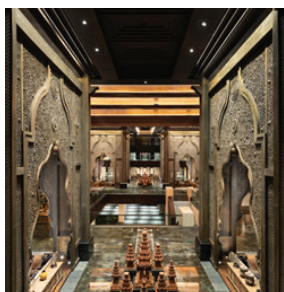
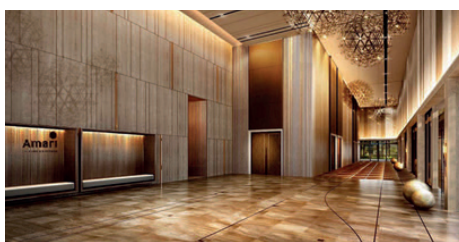
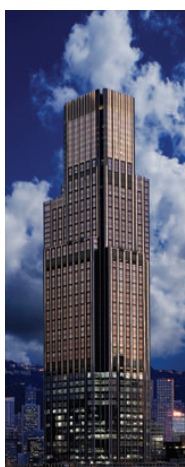
The 2019 edition is our fourth. We had 85 attendees. We would have liked to see more attendees from outside of Singapore; 90 per cent were from Singapore. What I've learnt is that the mid-July event date was not ideal because many Caucasians would go on vacation then. Furthermore, companies have budget constraints and Singapore isn't a cheap destination.

This time, we brought in a social benefit. We donated S\$10,000 to Duke-NUS Medical School and NUH-Singhealth to fund a project on Asian Women Breast Disease. It started with CTFAS donating S\$30,000 from its own fund to the project last year.



COOL SPACES

New hotels and resorts across Asia-Pacific are offering imaginative spaces with sensory experiences for events. Think indoor starry-night ceilings, outdoor private gardens, and expansive beachfronts



AUSTRALIA

W Brisbane

An unapologetic nod to 'Brisvegas', the 312-key W Brisbane marked the re-entry of the W brand in Australia after a 13-year hiatus when it opened in June 2018.

Expect the unexpected with decor colours that pack a punch, a pool dominated by zebra patterns and spa beds that glow. It is full of fun and thoughtful details with motion-sensitive neon room numbers that change colour as you pass by and a concierge reachable by WhatsApp. The Extreme Wow Suite showcases a limitless panoramic vista of the Brisbane River and mountains.

The hotel also boasts 1,100m² of event space, including the 595m² Great Room with a starry night ceiling, reminiscent of a Queensland outback evening full of stars. The statement lighting and four-metre LED wall panels are perfect for presentations. The W also offers a versatile Studios and Strategy Room with river views and floor-to-ceiling windows, allowing natural light to flow in.

United Places Botanic Gardens

Billed as a new concept in luxury boutique accommodation, United Places is designed to combine the idea of a hotel and a home. There are just 12 suites boasting spacious and opulent rooms with premium amenities and a personalised concierge service.

Every room is a 'suite', allowing for meetings in the room with living spaces that are separate from the bedroom. United Places is also the only hotel in Victoria with a two-hatted restaurant, Matilda, where one floor can be transformed into a meeting space for up to 80 people. And yes, it serves in-room dining.



W Brisbane



TTC Hotel Premium - Angkor

United Places Botanic Gardens



CAMBODIA

Courtyard by Marriott Phnom Penh

Following hot on the heels of Courtyard by Marriott's first Cambodian outing in Siem Reap, a sister property opened in Phnom Penh in January.

The long-awaited international brand's appearance in Phnom Penh is appealing to business travellers seeking globally renowned hotels, which are scarce in the capital. It has two meeting rooms catering for up to 48 pax, as well as outdoor function spaces, including a rooftop swimming pool area, deck and rooftop bar offering views of the city. An Executive Club Lounge overlooks the Mekong River and features its own private meeting room space.

TTC Hotel Premium - Angkor

Building on Siem Reap's growing collection of properties geared towards business events, TTC Hotel Premium-Angkor has been hosting regional events since opening in May 2018.

It boasts an intricately designed conference hall and accompanying facilities in Khmer style that contain five flexible spaces, depending on the event

or meeting. At full capacity, the largest space – the theatre – houses up to 200 pax, with a cocktail or banquet setting hosting 100 pax across 10 round tables. Outdoor events and cocktail evenings can also be arranged around the pool.



CHINA

The Middle House

Located in the heart of Shanghai's Jing'an district, The Middle House is Swire Hotels' latest addition to The House Collective group of hotels.

The 111 modern studios range from 50m² to 100m² in size, with interiors designed by Piero Lissoni, who blends his minimalist style with classic Shanghainese elements. For intimate events, there is also the 110m² Gallery Suite that comes with its own private terrace, separate bedroom and living room.

For larger events, the Penthouse, occupying an impressive 660m² on the 14th floor, features an inviting living area perfect for entertaining, and outdoor terraces with views overlooking Nanjing Road West. The Penthouse even boasts an outdoor area, and its own 208m² indoor room that can be converted further into two smaller spaces for more intimate events. It can hold up to 200 people for a cocktail party.

InterContinental Shanghai Wonderland

As the world's first underground hotel, the 336-key InterContinental Shanghai Wonderland is an 18-storey resort that is built into the wall of a once-abandoned quarry in the Sheshan Mountain Range.

Sixteen floors are underground and two floors are submerged underwater into a 33m-deep aquarium, where guests can watch marine life and enjoy round-the-clock butler service.

Event planners will find the 900m² Wonderland Grand Ballroom impressive. The space is divisible into three function rooms, features sky lighting and can accommodate drive-in displays. The light and water theatrics are spectacular, and can be customised for events.



InterContinental Shanghai Wonderland

HONG KONG

Hong Kong Ocean Park Marriott Hotel

The 471-room Hong Kong Ocean Park Marriott Hotel is the park's first hotel since it opened in 1977. The first-ever city resort hotel in Hong Kong offers a full suite of resort and business facilities with nature-themed decor, a 16m-high aquarium in the main lobby, a large lagoon pool, and four dining spaces.

For business events, the hotel offers more than 2,000m² of meetings space across nine function venues, as well as outdoor spaces. A 1,200m² pillar-free grand ballroom can cater for 960 guests banquet style, and up to 1,200 guests for a cocktail reception.

Rosewood Hong Kong

With 322 rooms and 91 suites, Rosewood Hong Kong has made its first foray into the city. Standing on the Kowloon waterfront and overlooking Victoria Harbour, this ultra-luxury property is situated within the Victoria Dockside arts, design and conceptual retail district.

Guestrooms here start at 53m², while suites start at 92m² making them among the largest in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the 1,000m² Harbour House and The Garden House suites feature wraparound Victoria Harbour views from their private sky terraces on the 57th floor.

For events of all sizes, the hotel offers 3,200m² of meetings space which includes a 1,000m² ballroom; a 300m² Pavilion Hall with floor-to-ceiling windows; and The Orangery, a private garden with gorgeous views overlooking the harbour.

INDIA

ITC Grand Goa

ITC Grand Goa further reinforces ITC Hotels' exclusive partnership with The Luxury Collection brand in India. This 252-key village-styled resort is set amid 18.2 hectares of lush landscape, with direct access to the pristine Arossim beach in Cansaulim, South Goa.

Each of its rooms and suites feature private outdoor spaces in the form of a balcony or patio providing picturesque views of the Arabian Sea, landscaped gardens, lagoons or the multi-level swimming pool.

The hotel offers perfect outdoor spaces with the Seaside Lawns for 500 people; the Forest, a tropical garden for 350 people; the Boathouse overlooking shimmering lagoons for 25 people and private beachfronts. Indoors, the hotel features the Salcete Ballroom that seats up to 370 and can be divided into three separate sections. It also offers the Benaulim for smaller meetings of 30 people; and the Cansaulim Room for informal networking events for up to 40.



ITC Grand Goa

INDONESIA

The Apurva Kempinski Bali

Standing atop the cliff of Nusa Dua, with views of the Indian Ocean and tropical gardens, The Apurva Kempinski Bali features 475 luxurious guestrooms, suites and villas.

The resort is designed for meetings, where the Candi Ballroom offers ocean views and 1,076m² of pillar-free space; while the smaller Ocean View Grand Ballroom and Cliff Boardroom bask in abundant natural light overlooking the beach; and a spacious 2,200m² oceanfront lawn is a unique outdoor venue for gatherings and events.

The property also offers unique, bespoke experiences for groups who are looking for outdoor and cultural interactions. Customised experiences on offer include classes in Balinese dress and cooking, a temple ceremony, or yoga on the beach.

JHL Solitaire Gading Serpong

This 144-room property is the first five-star hotel in the Gading Serpong area in South Tangerang, West Jakarta. It stands approximately 10 minutes away from the Indonesia Convention Exhibition.

Located on the top floor of the hotel, the pillar-free Sky Ballroom can accommodate up to 800 people theatre-style, and offers a 180-degree view of the city.

The hotel also features seven meeting rooms, including the Sky Garden Room. Other indoor venues can accommodate up to 20 pax theatre-style and when combined with the open-air garden, the space can host up to 80 people for standing receptions or product launches.

For a casual corporate dinner party, the Empress Chinese Bar near the swimming pool is a great outdoor venue for up to 150 people. The hotel's all-day dining venue, Mangan Restaurant, is also available for event buyouts.



KOREA

Grand Hyatt Seoul

After a renovation that lasted three years, Grand Hyatt Seoul now sports all-new guestrooms and suites that show off the hotel's stunning city view. New, open layouts allow maximum daylight into the rooms. Korean touches are injected into the interior design, such as geometric patterns found in traditional Korean *bojagi* wrapping cloth, for a memorable sense of place.

Besides fresh accommodation options, the luxurious hotel also serves up new looks and updated event hardware for its Grand Ballroom and Grand Salon. The ballroom continues to be one of Seoul's largest venue of its kind, capable of accommodating 1,500 guests in a standing reception.



MALAYSIA

W Kuala Lumpur

Perfectly situated in the city centre, the 150-key W Kuala Lumpur overlooks the Twin Towers. One of its most distinct design features is the pixel or dot, which is integrated throughout the hotel and symbolises a multicultural Malaysia.

All of the guestrooms feature a mix of the city's heritage and modernity with indigenous "Wau" tassels and pixelated recreations of batik designs.

For events, W Kuala Lumpur offers 1,475m² of meetings space and unique setups with beanbags and sofas. Even non-traditional meeting spaces such as a bar or suite can be transformed for small gatherings. Attendees can break the mould in a bold conference space, or host a celebration in the Great Room, which can cater for 700 people and features an impressive, 11-meter-high HD LED wall.

After a day of meetings, guests who want to explore the city can approach a W Insider, who recommends places and crafts itineraries.

Banyan Tree Kuala Lumpur

Organisers looking to get away from crowds may consider the 55-room Banyan Tree Kuala Lumpur.

Occupying the top seven floors of the Banyan Tree Signatures Pavilion Kuala Lumpur Building, the hotel boasts stunning views of the Petronas Twin Towers and Kuala Lumpur Tower.

Rooms and suites here start from 51m² and go up to 200m². For events, Banyan Tree offers three fully equipped boardrooms to hold meetings for up to 16 people each. The property's two restaurants are versatile and can be used for private functions.

With Pavilion Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur City Centre Park and Kuala Lumpur Eco Park within easy walking distance, organisers can also incorporate recreational activities in the evenings after a day of heavy discussions, or delegates can also make use of the spa. Best of all, the entire property can be bought out by meeting planners.

MYANMAR

Rosewood Yangon

Rosewood Yangon marks the brand's first outing in Myanmar and seventh in Asia.

Located in the city's historic core on The Strand, Rosewood Yangon is housed in a heritage 1927 building – originally the New Law Courts – that has been lovingly restored inside and out.

The 205-key property boasts five dining venues, a spa, rooftop infinity pool and a fitness studio. Meeting and function facilities include a Ballroom, Heritage Salon, Bridal Suite, Event Studio, three meeting rooms, and a Terrace Suite boasting a large outdoor deck.

Awei Metta Yangon

Since opening last December, Awei Metta has proved a popular Yangon venue for business events.

Located in the leafy western suburbs, halfway between the international airport and downtown Yangon, the modern 46-key resort overlooks the Gary Player-designed Pun Hlaing Golf Club. It features a 315m² ballroom, which acts as a conference room and can seat up to 250 people. There are an additional two meeting rooms, for up to 20.

Other amenities include a small business centre, restaurant, lobby lounge and bar, cigar room, fitness centre, spa, swimming pool and tennis courts.



PHILIPPINES

Grand Hyatt Manila

This new hotel set within the Bonifacio Global City in Taguig literally takes luxury to new heights. Taking full advantage of the building's height – at 318 meters or 62 storeys, the tallest in the Philippines – the hotel occupies the top floors above luxe residences and commercial areas.

All of the 461 spacious rooms feature unobstructed views of the metro's skyline. Meanwhile, business events venues also dazzle with the latest technology, modern equipment, and luxe decor including the pillar-free jewelry-box inspired Grand Ballroom that features a show kitchen facility.



SINGAPORE

The Capitol Kempinski Hotel

Taking over the heritage icon Capitol Theatre, The Capitol Kempinski Hotel marks Kempinski's debut in Singapore, presenting 157 keys and a collection of luxurious meeting and ballroom spaces.

Intimate gatherings or board meetings of up to 20 can be hosted in one of the elegant meeting rooms or The Private Dining Room, which affords high ceilings, natural daylight, an integrated LED screen and a chef's table for the option of a bespoke dining experience.

Larger events of up to 220 guests can be hosted in the event salon, which is equipped with state-of-the-art conference technology; in the open show kitchen; or even in the directly linked Capitol Theatre next door, whose multi-functional space features a rotational floor system.

Village Hotel at Sentosa

Newly opened in April, this latest addition to Far East Hospitality's Village brand is Sentosa Island's next big draw for meeting and incentive groups thanks to its more affordable and egalitarian price point.

The 606-key property features outdoor event spaces by the pool and various ballroom spaces from 88m² to 778m². These include Village Square – a 330m² space able to host up to 190 guests in banquet seating – which can be combined with the all-day dining space to form the The Commune (778m²), and accommodate up to 400 banquet guests.

Other remaining venues are located in the carefully restored Events Centre heritage building, which comprises more than 800m² of flexible spaces for smaller-sized celebrations to mid-scale gatherings.

SRI LANKA

Hotel Marino Beach Colombo

The 300-key Hotel Marino Beach Colombo is the country's newest five-star hotel situated in the heart of Sri Lanka.

The hotel's rooftop is home to an infinity pool and garden that affords panoramic views of the Indian Ocean and city skyline, while all of its rooms and suites feature balconies and range from 35m² to 137m² in size.

For events, the hotel boasts the city's trendiest Banquet Hall featuring the latest technology, a state-of-the-art lighting system, large screens, and a data projector. The banquet hall can cater for 900 people, while the two function rooms – Ruby and Pearl – can cater for smaller group sizes.



Wyndham Legend Halong Bay

THAILAND

Waldorf Astoria Bangkok

Hilton's Waldorf Astoria debut in South-east Asia is an exercise of sophistication and glamour, backed by renowned names such as Andre Fu, who melded contemporary lines and Thai artisanal touches into the interior décor, while AvroKO has kitted out a trio of dining outlets on levels 55 to 57 – Bull & Bear, The Loft and Champagne Bar – each offering sweeping views that make them ideal for C-suite meetings and gatherings in their private rooms.

Standing across from the Royal Bangkok Sports Club in the Ratchaprasong district, the 171-room hotel is also home to the 730m² Magnolia Ballroom, whose statement staircase and soaring eight-metre ceiling make the backdrop for events of up to 700 guests.

Amari Pattaya

Fresh out of a major revamp as part of Onyx Hospitality Group's US\$100 million investment for the North Pattaya property, this 45-year-old hotel is a standing testimony of Pattaya's changing vibes and character in recent years into a more business-oriented destination.

The re-launched 20-storey Amari Ocean Tower now features a 620m², state-of-the-art ballroom that can accommodate up to 1,000 pax; 297 brand new guestrooms and suites; an upgraded Horizon Club executive lounge and the Amaya Food Gallery – an innovative market-style dining concept inspired by Asian street food – which together with the new mid-scale 406-room Ozo Hotel and the premium 49-suite Amari Pattaya Ocean Suites wing now offer 752 keys altogether.

VIETNAM

Wyndham Legend Halong Bay

As an increasing amount of investment is ploughed into Quang Ninh province, hopes are being pinned on Halong City becoming a hot regional business destination, where Wyndham is one of the latest hotels to open.

The 217-key property, which boasts views across iconic Halong Bay, has recruited a top team of event planners to help organise all kinds of business meetings. The hotel boasts more than 3,000m² of space spread across six rooms. Guests who book an executive suite receive access to the hotel's exclusive club lounge.

InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort

Since opening its doors in June 2018, InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort's impressive meeting facilities have helped cement the rising island as one of Vietnam's major business events players.

The resort's conference centre features more than 2,300m² of indoor events space, including an 870m² pillarless ballroom that can host up to 600 pax and theatre for up to 130 pax. Outdoor offerings include the Beachfront Garden, poolside and Lava Beachfront. The resort is also home to INK 360 – the island's highest rooftop bar – and boasts a team-building programme.



InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort



Amari Pattaya

A northern city on the rise

The number of international meetings coming into Chiang Mai is rising, thanks to positive destination promotion and good events hardware. By **Suchat Sritama**



Bundit Sritama/istock.com

Chiang Mai International Exhibition and Convention Center has helped to draw more meetings and events

Chiang Mai, one of the five business event destinations designated by the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), was recently given a promotional boost to encourage meeting planners to consider the northern province for events during the Green Season, running from May to October.

The MICE Events in the Rain programme, conducted by TCEB and the private sector, highlighted Chiang Mai's array of creative ideas, unique cultural assets and modern facilities during the annual rainy season.

Chiruit Isarangun Na Ayuthaya, TCEB president, said Chiang Mai is an attractive destination for international meetings.

"The province itself has so much value. It is the second city after Bangkok be ready to handle business and association events due to its inventory of venues,

hotels and attractions.

"Chiang Mai also offers many soft-eco activities that meeting delegates can participate in before or after their meetings," he said.

Since the opening of the Chiang Mai Convention and Exhibition Centre in 2013, the number of events held in the province has doubled from 10 to 25 in 2018. This has helped to raise Chiang Mai's standing in the annual ICCA top meetings city rankings.

In 2018, Chiang Mai ranked 25th in Asia, up from 27th place in 2017. In South-east Asia, Chiang Mai is the seventh top meeting city.

Within Thailand, Chiang Mai is the second most popular meeting city among association planners, right after Thai capital city Bangkok.

Three of TCEB's 10 supported bid wins for the 1H2019 fiscal year (October

2018 to March 2019) were confirmed for Chiang Mai. These included Routes Asia 2020 which will expect 1,000 international and 500 local visitors; the Association for Woman's Rights in Development Forum 2020 which will see 2,000 international and 200 local delegates in attendance; and the 14th Meeting of Asian Society of Cardio-thoracic Amnesty which will welcome 1,000 delegates from around the world.

Although the MICE Events in the Rain programme was aimed at attracting meetings during the softer, rainy season, La-iad Bungsrithong, president of Thai Hotels Association Northern Chapter, emphasised that Chiang Mai is ready for events all year-round.

She said: "Chiang Mai is home to several of TCEB-endorsed Thailand MICE Venue Standard, including 57 meeting rooms in 16 venues, one special venue and one exhibition hall."

Meeting planners are supported by a plethora of hotels. There are today 2,500 hotels operating in the province, offering a total of 60,000 rooms. New international brands have entered the scene, such as Novotel, joining existing ones like Shangri-la, Le Meridien, Dusit and Anantara.

Besides the hardware, Chiang Mai also enjoys good accessibility. Chiang Mai Airport, which operates 18 hours a day, serves 26 airlines the fly over 200 domestic and international services for more than 40,000 passengers every day. There are plans for the airport to operate round the clock soon, as well as a possible second airport, according to vice governor of Chiang Mai, Komsan Suwanampa.

Within the destination, three train line are coming up to improve internal commute, which will benefit meeting delegates who wish to extend their trip in Chiang Mai for leisure.

{ Need to know }

1 Secure your venues in advance

Chiang Mai has only one large convention and exhibition centre, which makes it a hot property. Planners should contact and book the venue in advance, and pay attention to the destination's peak period for meetings which falls in the last quarter of the year.

2 Easy connections

While there are limited direct flights from overseas to Chiang Mai, foreign delegates can easily get to the destination via connecting flights in Bangkok. Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang airports are main gateways to Chiang Mai, and flights are just an hour long.

3 Give unique hotels a chance

Chiang Mai has many boutique hotels that are lovely and creatively-designed. They make memorable accommodation options for meeting delegates hoping to avoid the pricier international chains or to experience something different. Most of these boutique hotels offer city tours.

{ Pre/Post }

**A trip into town**

Lhong Him Kao is a local town where visitors can pop into handicraft and fabric shops, catch a cultural show, explore the weekend market, dine at coffee houses and restaurants, and take a peek into Lanna-style houses. Open daily, Lhong Him Kao is great for a day outing as part of a meeting programme. Make time to visit the nearby temple and village just outside the town.

Serene stop at a temple

Wat Phra That Doi Suthep is a Buddhist temple located near the peak of Doi Suthep Mountain. Built in early 19th century, it is regarded as the most important temple in Chiang Mai. Visitors will find a beautiful copy of the Emerald Buddha as well as great spots for photos where Chiang Mai town flows out in the background. Access the temple by an electric tram available from 06.00 to 18.00.

**Stop and smell the flowers**

Chiang Mai Bloom is an extended edition of the Royal Flora Expo taking place in Chiang Mai every February. This annual event is a crowd-drawer, as it showcases a wide variety of flowers alongside activities such as parades and workshops. The weather is mild in February, which makes participating in the festival very comfortable.



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

TTG Travel Trade Publishing is proud to be the travel trade media partner of the ASEAN Tourism Competitive Committee,

A night out in the wild

Chiang Mai Night Safari is considered one of most beautiful night safaris in the world, home to more than 400 animals including white tigers, jaguars, leopards, tapirs, monkeys, camels, miniature horses and koalas.

Three animal shows are offered daily, at several timings.

The walking trail is also open from 11.00 until 22.00 daily.

**Dine well and healthily**

Located within Lhong Him Kao, Meena Rice Based Cuisine serves up Thai fusion dishes and healthy beverages in a lovely, rustic setting. It has earned itself fans with its opportunity for diners to whip up their own meal. The owner and chef, who grew up in Australia, leads the hands-on experience.

**Patan Village**

Located approximately 30 minutes by car from Chiang Mai, Patan Village is home to a 106-year temple and a community of elderly people called Yong who are believed to have migrated from China's Yunnan province. This ethnic village offers interesting cultural tours and home-stay opportunities.



rancio Arman/shutterstock

Bonifacio Global City signage at the Fort Strip

A different world

With the modern business infrastructure that spans Bonifacio Global City, a destination that is fast gaining planners' favour, who would have thought it was once a military base? By **Rosa Ocampo**

A former military operations base, Bonifacio Global City (BGC) in Taguig has been transformed into one of the most modern and best-planned business and lifestyle hubs in the Philippines.

This upmarket and self-contained community is pulling in a growing number of corporations and hotels while its safe and well-planned environs are a haven for expatriates and upwardly mobile Filipinos.

All that and BGC's accessibility – not far from Manila's international airport and a stone's throw away from the Makat financial district and the metro's main EDSA thoroughfare – have captured event planners' attention.

As Colliers (Philippines) International reported, BGC “remains a strong business/corporate as well as MICE destina-

tion” buoyed, among other things, by outsourcing and traditional businesses in the area.

JLL Philippines, meanwhile, noted the “robust space demand” in BGC where building rentals tend to be in “the higher end of the spectrum” due to more construction of Grade A developments”.

BGC is just right for a medium-sized convention centre – the SMX Convention Center Aura, which accommodates up to 1,550 pax in a theatre-set up.

Walid Wafik, vice president and general manager, SMX Convention Center, said SMX Aura hosts events mostly from the consultancy and insurance firms and multi-level marketing industries. Meetings are most common at the venue, followed by conventions and exhibitions.



“Demand for premier venues are also increasing with the fast evolving business landscape in the area.”

Walid Wafik,

Vice president and general manager, SMX Convention Center

Walid expects business events in BGC to “grow in a couple of months or within the next year....as the demand for premier venues are also increasing with the fast evolving business landscape in the area”.

Another advantage BGC boasts is its green community with well-planned, wide pedestrian streets, parks and trees. It is a great destination for event delegates to hang out post-meeting, with a long list of some of the metro's best restaurants, bars and night clubs to choose from apart from shopping malls, yoga studios and wellness clinics for the chic crowd.

TTG Travel Trade Publishing is proud to be the travel trade media partner of the ASEAN Tourism Competitive Committee, working together to support the ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy and promote ASEAN destinations for tourism and business events.

Reaping the fruits of their labour

Various private and public initiatives are helping to set a positive tone for the future of Brisbane's associations sector, writes **Adelaine Ng**

Despite current challenges in growing the associations sector, Brisbane is noticeably confident when asked about its outlook on winning conferences and business travellers to the city.

The capital of the Australian state of Queensland has carved a niche as an Asia-Pacific associations specialist that connects members from across the region. Its convention centre was also named the world's best by the International Association of Congress Centres for 2016-2018. That, plus a host of new infrastructure and services in the city may only serve to help seal its leadership position in this space.

Currently, more than A\$15 billion (US\$10.3 billion) in development is unfolding through major projects either under construction or planned to 2026. These include a new parallel runway at Brisbane Airport that will double its capacity, and a Queen's Wharf integrated resort designed to change the city's

skyline when it raises an arc-shaped skydeck to echo Singapore's famed Sands SkyPark Observation Deck.

Also, some 30 new hotels will dot Brisbane's cityscape between 2014 and 2024, including at its new Queen's Wharf which will offer 1,000 new rooms and a grand ballroom space to seat 1,000 people when it is unveiled.

"We've always done well in associations conferences but our infrastructure growth spurt is making (us) even more attractive," said Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre's (BCEC) sales director Alison Gardiner. "The kind of value add, that we've been working on together with the convention bureau to make sure that the delegate experience is strong, is starting to pay off."

"There's a free city ferry network so delegates essentially have free transport around the city centre, a free city loop bus, discounts in all the cafes and restaurants around the convention centre, and discounts on our air train which

goes direct from the international and domestic terminal right into the convention centre and the city centre," she said.

Associations constitute about 80 per cent of business events for Brisbane Marketing and for BCEC, Asia-Pacific represents a weighty 95 per cent of international events hosted. This underlines why the city's economic development board is serious about maintaining and improving its attractiveness for corporate tourism and conferences.

But how is Brisbane responding to trends in the associations space that point to overall slower growth, while more growth is expected in smaller meetings?

"I guess we'll see the effect of that potentially in the coming years," said Juliet

{ Talking numbers }

A\$3.8 billion

The cost of Brisbane Airport's redevelopment – equivalent to US\$2.6 billion – of which A\$1.3 billion is for the new runway

91

The number of business events secured last financial year, almost 20 per cent more than the previous year

A\$145 million

Total estimated economic value to Queensland of all conferences won during the last financial year

BCEC had a bumper year in 2018; a plenary session being held in the Great Hall



{ Need to know }

1 New technology at the airport

Brisbane Airport is introducing Smart Traveller Initiatives that use automation and biometrics aimed at making the journey through terminals as seamless as possible. Expect a significant expansion in security screening areas.

2 Where to get support

Brisbane Business Events (choosebrisbane.com.au) provides a one-stop resource for advice and support in planning, promoting

and staging meetings. The free service assists event organisers from bidding for a conference to organising post-conference tours.

3 Best season to visit

The best time to visit Brisbane is in the drier autumn season from March to May, when top temperatures hover between 15°C and 30°C. It's also off-peak, which should mean better rates for hotels and less crowds at attractions. However, it's always best to check Brisbane's events calendar.

Alabaster, general manager of business events for Brisbane Marketing. "(But) last year was a bumper year, the biggest year the business events team here had".

A check at BCEC confirmed that it hosted a record 165 conferences in the last financial year, and the future is looking bright with 29 international conferences inked, of which about 30 per cent are Asia-Pacific regional conferences. An additional 115 national conventions were also confirmed during the period.

Also recently announced was the securing of the Asia Oceania Otorhinolaryngological Head and Neck Surgery (ORL-HNS) Congress which will return to Australia for the first time in 40 years in 2023, adding to several other wins in major events that will move BCEC towards its goal of 20 per cent growth in hosting events by 2023.

"We are a little unusual in Australia because we are a bidding convention centre," said Gardiner. "So while we have a very strong bureau and we partner with them on most of our international (efforts), it means we do all of (our) project management and have (our own) representatives overseas.

"Our growth strategy is looking at where our markets are strong and its anticipated growth, and also particular industry sectors where we see there is more potential in the future," Gardiner continued, adding that the venue is keeping a keen eye on emerging areas like bio synthetics and new materials development.

But BCEC is not the only one playing strategy. Australian associations have been bidding for cities like Brisbane to host regional conferences that can strengthen their ties across Asia and Oceania, as will be the case with the Asia Oceania ORL-HNS Congress. And similar moves have been seen from associations headquartered farther away.

"We're seeing opportunities in new regional meetings as American associations start to (consider) spin-off meetings in the Asia-Pacific so there's interesting growth in that space," said Alabaster. "We are looking at what inaugurals or new rotations we can develop in partnership with associations to continue this growth".

{ Developments to watch }

1 Brisbane Airport's new runway to be completed next year has been compared to Singapore's Changi Airport and Hong Kong's airport for capacity. Already airlines from China, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand have launched new or extra flights, and more services are expected to be added when the runway is complete. The airport is also building a A\$300 million (US\$205.8 million) Auto Mall located next to the International Terminal that will be available for test drives and corporate events.

2 A business case for a Brisbane Live entertainment area has been submitted to the state government. If approved, the A\$2 billion precinct will reinvigorate the Roma Street railyards in the Brisbane CBD where plans include a world-class 17,000-seat indoor arena, restaurants, bars and cinemas. It will enable short commutes or walks from the inner city to various entertainment venues in the area.

3 Brisbane is building an International Cruise Terminal which will triple the size of its current cruise industry and allow large mega-cruise ships to dock when the A\$158 million project is completed next year. Although the bureau's traditional focus is to fill hotel rooms, Brisbane Marketing have indicated the possibility of future talks where association meetings might fit.



Brisbane has numerous developments up its sleeve that will attract international interest

Gardiner added that for American associations that want to increase their profile in Asia, Australia is seen as an easier cultural place to start.

And who can argue with Brisbane,

a city that offers an array of iconic Aussie experiences like close encounters with kangaroos, sand islands and rainforests within an hour of the CBD?

"We're seeing opportunities in new regional meetings as American associations start to (consider) spin-off meetings in the Asia-Pacific..."

Juliet Alabaster

General manager, business events, Brisbane Marketing



Third time's the charm

Dubai shows how its persistence to win eventually paid off, and how it upped the ante by making the congress an even more meaningful one. By **Rosa Ocampo**



Event brief

Dubai finally won the bid to host the prestigious 57th ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association) Congress last year, after two failed attempts in 2012 and 2015.

The city made the cut this time by presenting its formula which focused on how ICCA and associations could benefit from holding the congress in Dubai; an effective CSR component; and involving other neighbouring states in the United Arab Emirates too.

Challenges

As this was the first ICCA Congress to be held in the Middle East, Dubai set up ambitious and high targets with the aim to create the best congress ever, revealed Steen Jakobsen, assistant vice president, Dubai Business Events & City Operations, under Dubai Tourism.

These ambitious targets were then met with resources that the city already possessed, such as exciting tourist attractions and ultra-luxe hotels.

Solution

Adding value to the congress is the Dubai Association Centre (DAC), the global hub for international association meetings formed five years ago.

With DAC's formation, international

associations are now able to open regional representative offices and regional chapters in Dubai – especially in the field of trade – thanks to perks like assistance in obtaining trade licenses, centralised office facilities, and networking with local counterparts.

Jakobsen further shared that DAC is a positive move, as it gives ICCA members the opportunity to form stronger and closer relationship with global associations.

And in keeping with ICCA's goal to incorporate a strong, meaningful CSR element, Dubai picked the donation of eyeglasses and funds to the Noor Dubai Foundation.

Noor Dubai Foundation is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation, that aims to eliminate all types of avoidable blindness and visual impairment worldwide. The foundation's international outreach includes mobile eye camps across low-income countries in Africa and Asia.

"We wanted to conduct the CSR initiative in a way that is very simple for people to take part and which could benefit the wider communities.

"Many people wear eyeglasses and know others who wear glasses. It's so simple to take out their glasses and bring them to the congress. It's very straightforward and easy but still has a huge impact," Jakobsen explained.

The congress not only involved

stakeholders, but countries in the UAE such as Abu Dhabi, as well Bahrain and Oman in the wider Gulf region.

Key takeaways

Determination pays off. Undeterred by losing the bid twice, Dubai's third try was a success. What's more, the 2018 Congress collected a couple of firsts in ICCA's history: It was the first held in the Middle East, and achieved record attendance for a ICCA Congress held outside Europe.

The chosen CSR was simple but effective. Noor Dubai Foundation received 5,555 euros (US\$6,139) raised from close to 200 delegates who joined the Charity Run 'N' Walk. The Gift of Love project that encouraged delegates to donate old glasses collected 591 pairs of prescription glasses and sunglasses which were relensed with Al Jaber Optical before they were distributed to those in need.

The cooperation between stakeholders. "It is important for us that this congress will not only be for Dubai, but also open up this opportunity to other parts outside Dubai," emphasised Jakobsen. Part of Dubai's involvement included generous sponsorship and delegates including top officials of governments and corporations.

"We have a huge number of attendees from the Middle East and that is very important for us," he said, without disclosing the numbers.

Event

57th ICCA Congress

Organiser

Dubai Business Events

Venue

Dubai World Trade Centre

Date

Nov 11-14, 2018

Number of participants

1,156 industry experts from 79 countries

Challenges

To create the best congress ever by setting up ambitious and high targets on maximising the value to delegates; a CSR that's really effective; and persuading stakeholders to get involved



Proceed with utmost care

Unique circumstances surrounding this conference didn't put any damper on plans, writes **Julian Ryall**

Event brief

The World Parkinson Coalition (WPC) organises the WPC every three years to discuss the scientific advances and care initiatives in the fight against the disease. It brings together physicians, movement disorder specialists, neuroscientists, nurses, rehabilitation specialists and people with Parkinson's disease, along with family members.

Key themes of the 2019 meeting were advancing science, promoting community and inspiring hope. The previous congress in 2016 was held in Portland, Oregon, and the next one will take place in Barcelona in 2022.

Challenges

Given a number of unique challenges – primarily ensuring the wellbeing of people with Parkinson's while travelling in Japan – planning for the Kyoto event started three years in advance, said Elizabeth Pollard, executive director of the coalition.

Broadly, the challenges fell into three categories, she said; ensuring those with Parkinson's could get the very most out of the event; uniting Japan's medical experts in this field; and navigating Japan's cultural norms.

"Parkinson's disease itself presents some challenges, regardless of global location," Pollard told *TTGassociations*. "It creates barriers for some patients due to the physical challenges of moving from one point to another. It's also a complicated disease that can cause patients to feel depressed, anxious or fatigued, and these symptoms can also prevent participation.

"Also, in many parts of the world where medication is costly, people with Parkinson's may struggle financially, so attending a global conference would not be possible without travel grants and financial support."

The WPC's unique congress model of a congress is designed to bring all the delegates in a fully-integrated meeting, not siloed, which was a new concept in Japan.

Finally, Pollard knew that the success of the event would rest heavily on establishing relationships well in advance. Hence, the first

thing she did was to plan multiple visits to Japan to build strong relationships with local experts they would be working with.

Pollard and her team quickly discovered, however, that companies and organisations in Japan had a habit of transferring staff to different departments every few years, making it difficult to ensure continuity.

Solution

To assist people with Parkinson's, junior clinicians and researchers, and health professionals from developing nations who wished to attend the congress, the WPC works with a number of supporters to create a travel grants fund. Grants are based on need, but also require recipients to help educate people upon return home.

To encourage the participation of Japanese health experts, a local organising committee was set up. "This group of Parkinson's leaders live across Japan and are highly regarded, both inside and outside Japan for their scientific and clinical knowledge," Pollard said. "Their support helped elevate awareness and recognition of the WPC."

To ensure that everyone was prepared for the cultural differences, the organisers kept discussions and training ongoing and speaking with as many people as possible in the run-up to the congress.

A major part was the *Make the City Parkinson's Ready* campaign that has worked well at previous events. The programme trains and prepares all front of house staff who will be coming into contact with people with Parkinson's, such as convention centre teams, security officers, hotel staff, police, and airport customs officials.

Some examples of things to be aware of when working with PwPs – People with Parkinson's – is to make sure that there are plenty of places to rest, ensuring that water is readily available and understanding that PwP have a high rate of falls due to their uncertain gait and balance. Local police were briefed that PwP often have soft speech due to muscle weakness in their throats, can appear

to be slurring their words and may appear to stumble. That behaviour can be misinterpreted as intoxication.

"While only 25 per cent of our delegates are people with Parkinson's, ensuring they have a positive experience is important for the success of the congress," said Pollard. "Education is the key and we take that responsibility seriously. We believe it is part of our legacy and what we leave behind in the host city and country."

Key takeaways

Given the unique nature of the WPC, it is important to build relationships with local experts – including medical professionals, patients' organisations and local vendors – well in advance. That helps to increase the level of service and delivers better outcomes for the delegates.

"Our congress is unusual and unique and it requires a lot of interaction and education ahead of time," Pollard said.

Event

5th World Parkinson Congress

Organisers

The World Parkinson Coalition, Japan Parkinson's Disease Association, and the Kyoto Visitors and Convention Bureau

Venue

Kyoto International Conference Center

Date

June 4-7, 2019

Number of participants

2,777

Challenges

Ensuring the wellbeing of people with Parkinson's who were travelling for the congress; obtaining support grants; and navigating cultural norms



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