

December 2016/January 2017

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TTGmice

Asia-Pacific's intelligent business events resource

Finland heightens courtship
of Asian MICE groups

Qatar muscles up
for Asian business

Sven Bossu reveals how
Sibos picks its host cities

THE FUN ISSUE

TTG Asia Luxury • TTGmice
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BUSINESS ARTICLE
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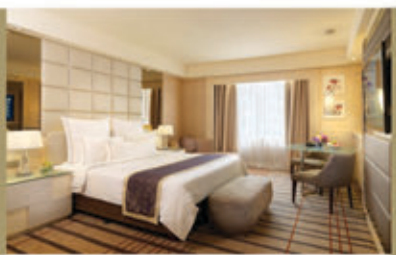
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The art of having fun

As the year 2016 draws to a close and we begin to ease into a lower gear – thanks to the festive mood and a desire to recharge in preparation for a new journey ahead, we find this an opportune time to focus on the fun side of business events.

So, welcome to *The Fun Issue*, where we've got a mix of event planners and venue providers to discuss very seriously why and how business events can and should actually be lots of fun; how creative event planners have been in the past year with their projects; and what corporate end-users would have done for their events should resources not be an issue.

As attendees of countless business events ourselves, the *TTGmice* editorial folks are also naming their one favourite assignment this year.

We have also poked our noses into the holiday plans of CVB chiefs in the region to get some inspiration for our own year-end fun.

We hope that you will have fun digesting this issue – we recommend doing that with a flute of bubbly or a mug of hot, spiced chocolate, and possibly with a contented cat on your lap.

Meanwhile, we would like to take this chance to thank all our friends in the industry who have gifted us generously with their time during our content research and all our readers for their unwavering recognition of *TTGmice* as the region's intelligent business events resource.

Happy holidays!



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COVER STORY

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In the final cover story of the year, *TTGmice* reminisces about the fun had in the past year – where industry veterans teach us how events can have that element of fun, event planners share the most creative project they've done, and corporate clients dream up their wildest event

COUNTRY REPORTS

21 Primed for performance

With a weak ringgit, affordable hotel rates and better hardware, the stars are aligned for Kuala Lumpur's MICE sector to prosper.

By S Puvaneswary

24 Muscling up for Asia

More programmes and mid-tier accommodation are surfacing in Qatar as the trade hones in on new and traditional MICE markets.

By Caroline Boey

26 The call of the Nordics

While Finland is no stranger to MICE groups, it has been dealing mainly with a European clientele. This, however, is set to change with a recent heightening of efforts to court Asian markets. Rachel AJ Lee reports

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Close encounters of the Kiwi kind

Digi's business partners had a heart-thumping adventure in natural playground New Zealand, where the action is non-stop and always conveniently close by.

Adrenaline-pumping thrills and a once-in-lifetime adventure—that's what a top Malaysian company wanted during its incentive trip to New Zealand, and the destination delivered fresh and the destination delivered.

Digi Telecommunications was planning to reward its best-performing business partners with an overseas trip in June. Head of partner management, Lanny Yap, said: "We aimed to excite our partners with uniquely-New Zealand activities they don't usually do during their holidays. Since we ran with a 'breakthrough' theme at our business conference earlier this year, we hoped for our partners to have an adventurous experience."

New Zealand, with its myriad adventure options, was the destination of choice. Digi engaged ICEM Regional Planner to draw up a special itinerary for its delegates, resulting in a 7D5N "Let the adventure begin" tour of Auckland and Rotorua that also included visits to top-billing attractions of the nearby Waikato region.

Between June 20 and 26, the group sped across Auckland's waters on a jetboat ride and a sailing regatta, ventured through thick New Zealand native forest in Rotorua on a self-drive 4WD bush safari and monster truck ride at Offroad NZ, and scaled new heights with the Auckland Harbour Bridge climb and bungee jumping.

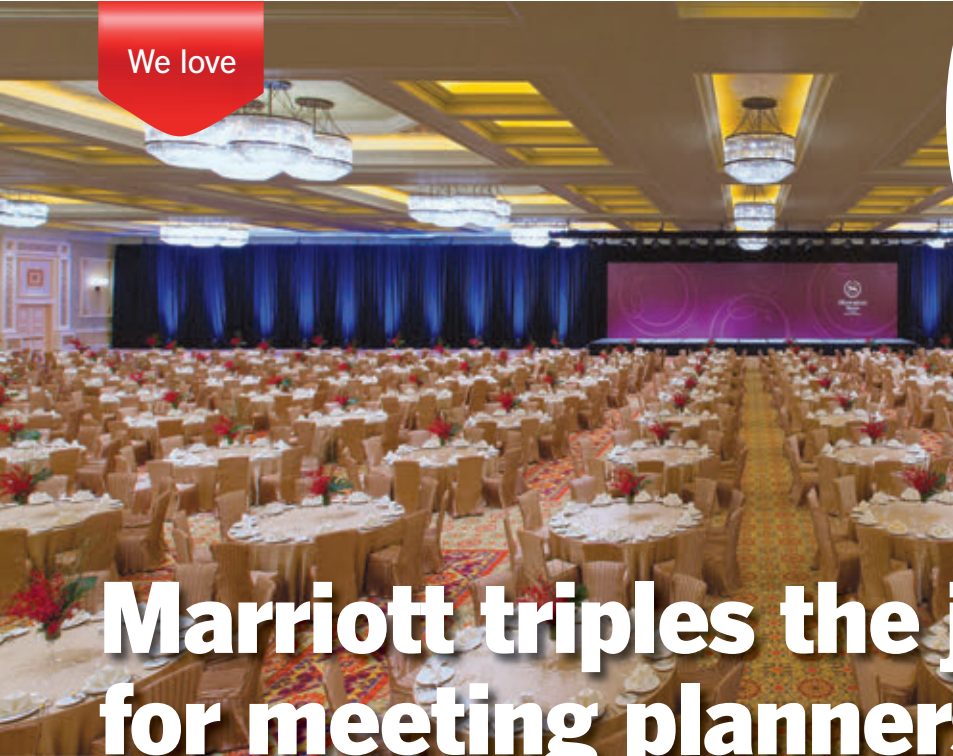
The close proximity of a whole range of gastronomic and experiential delights made it easy for Digi's top business partners to enjoy the other treats New Zealand has to offer. The group spent a morning marvelling at the Waitomo Glowworm Caves, the afternoon exploring the Hobbiton™ Movie Set, and the evening unwinding in Rotorua at the Polynesian Spa.

Food-wise, Digi delegates got to try dishes cooked in the naturally heated geothermal pools at Te Puia and sample wine at the Soljans Winery. But the highlight was tucking into the fruits of the ocean at Harbourside Seafood Restaurant in Auckland, said Digi's Yap.

"Our partners loved everything we arranged for them, and the feedback was that the trip had been great and memorable for everyone. We will definitely return to New Zealand."

Lanny Yap, Head of Partner Management, Digi Telecommunications

For information, please contact Edward Kwek, Business Events Manager South & South East Asia at Edward.Kwek@tnz.govt.nz



We love

Marriott triples the joy for meeting planners

Swiftly extinguishing concerns event planners have about reduced perks following Marriott International's acquisition of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, the former has debuted a joint meeting offer in Asia-Pacific that applies across its three loyalty programmes: Marriott Rewards, The Ritz-Carlton Rewards and Starwood Preferred Guest (SPG).

Peggy Fang Roe, chief sales & marketing officer, Asia Pacific, Marriott International, said: "We want to invite our members to celebrate with us as we unlock a world of destinations and opportunities with our new

combined portfolio... With this offer, we bring more options and consistent benefits to all members across three loyalty programmes."

Members can now choose from over 500 hotels across 19 brands and 20 countries in Asia-Pacific, she added.

From November 7 to December 31, 2016, members who book a meeting or event at a property in Asia-Pacific for use by December 31, 2017 can receive benefits including five per cent off master-billed rooms, double loyalty points on eligible revenue and a

complimentary hour-long reception.

They can earn loyalty points in the currency of the loyalty programmes that the hotel is part of, and have the points transferred to another programme they desire a redemption from.

Customers can link accounts and receive Elite Status Match and reciprocal benefits, points transfers and access to money-can't-buy events and experience.

While this is a limited-time offer, it sure heralds more attractive arrangements for meeting planners to come.

A sweet way to see Melbourne

Chocoholic Tours' new Chocolate, Queen Victoria Market, Doughnut and Coffee Tour offers a 2.5-hour tasting experience in Melbourne.

Operated on Sundays, the tour begins at The Block Arcade which houses chocolate boutiques lined with sweet treats, and continues on a tram ride to one of Melbourne's most hidden cafes for a coffee brew, and onward to Queen Victoria Market for a taste of a famous hot jam donut.

Eight chocolate tastings are included and guests are given a bag to fill up along the way.

The tour is ideal for groups of up to 12 people.



Amadeus launches online tool for corporate travel managers

Amadeus Cytric Travel & Expense, an end-to-end solution for corporate travel managers, is now available to businesses in Asia.

According to Albert Pozo, president at Amadeus Asia Pacific, this is the first fully integrated travel management tool that incorporates the entire corporate travel process, including hotel and flight booking, duty of care, travel policy, reimbursement, expense reporting, and more, under one platform accessible via desktop and mobile devices.

With Cytric, corporates can directly access Amadeus' GDS inventory without having to go through an agent or TMC.

Travel managers can also enable their travellers to book trips themselves while using Cytric to ensure bookings are made within standing travel policy frameworks.

Essentially, the solution empowers companies to be able to cost-effectively self-manage their work trips. The ability to cancel bookings, compare fares, alter flight seatings, input corporate negotiated rates, and more, can all be done within the system.

Quick to address the continued need for TMCs is Frederic Saunier, head of corporate IT at Amadeus Asia Pacific, who said: "Amadeus will never become a TMC. The ability to serve the traveller who is on the road is something we will never do."

Saunier points to the fact that corporates can choose to merely utilise the expense management portion of the solution while still allowing TMCs to manage travel bookings for them.



Good, great, greater stays in new Singapore hotel

Hotel G Singapore made its debut on November 17, offering 308 guestrooms under three room types – Good, Great and Greater. All are outfitted with free Wi-Fi, flatscreen Internet TV, as well as Handy smartphones.

Facilities at the Middle Road hotel include Ginett, a restaurant and wine bar, and a fitness centre. Burger bistro 25 Degrees is slated to open in January 2017.



Grand Hyatt Singapore satiates MICE appetites with sustainable options

Healthier dishes made with sustainably sourced seafood and organic low carbon footprint vegetables will feature more prominently on the dining event menus of Grand Hyatt Singapore, which has since mid-2016 been procuring greens from cooperative growers from the nearby Cameron Highlands in Malaysia and seafood from suppliers accredited by the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) and Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). ASC and MSC certify and regulate members of the supply chain to ensure responsible farming and fishing practices are maintained.

The usage of these ingredients further reinforces the hotel's core dining philosophy: to have "Food. Thoughtfully Sourced. Carefully Served."

Other environmentally friendly corporate initiatives successfully launched include digital newspapers and magazines, and the Biomax waste-to-fertiliser converter which keeps food wastage from the hotel at zero.

Unleash your inner pop star at the top of Sydney Harbour Bridge

Sydney Harbour Bridge's BridgeClimb has created a summer activity package that allows participants to climb to the top of the iconic landmark for a karaoke experience like no other.

Groups of no more than 14 people can take up this challenge, and pick a pop song from a set list for a solo or group performance. The performance will be captured in an eight-second video which will make a memorable keepsake.

The Karaoke Climb lasts two hours and 25 minutes, and is available only from January 21, 2017 to March 6, 2017. Each ticket to the top includes a Climb group photograph, a BridgeClimb cap, a certificate of achievement and a free pass to The Pylon Lookout.



Wyndham opens latest Indonesian flagship in Bali

Wyndham Hotel Group's 100th hotel in South-east Asia and the Pacific Rim has opened in eastern Bali.

The 222-room Wyndham Tamansari Jivva Resort Bali, positioned as Wyndham's newest flagship hotel in Indonesia, is located on the beachfront in Klungkung where rice paddies are abundant.

Away from the city's hotspots and close to the heart of nature, the resort offers guests an environment that is designed with natural elements made of wood, stone and water that blend cohesively into its surroundings.

Besides rooms and private pool villas, Wyndham Tamansari Jivva Resort Bali also welcomes corporate groups with four meeting rooms – one with capacity for 20 delegates, and the other three can be combined to accommodate up to 30 delegates.

Other facilities at the hotel includes unique dining destinations such as Bumbu Restaurant by the beach and which offers gourmet lunch-boxes for guests looking to venture out to sea or the nearby villages; and Tirta Spa which utilises ancient Balinese traditions in its treatments, delivered in eight beachside garden huts.

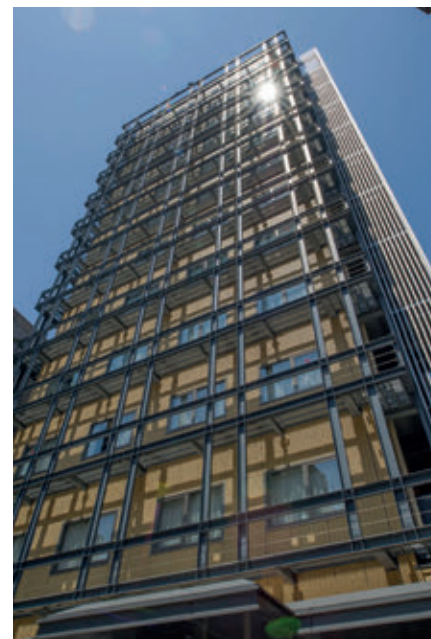
The hotel is a 10-minute drive to world-class surf break, Keramas. Meanwhile, Wyndham Hotel Group is furthering its expansion in the region with a pipeline of more than 30 properties, the majority of which are new-builds, due to open by 2020. These new hotels will add a further 8,776 rooms to the Wyndham portfolio in the region, bringing the total number of rooms to 24,030.

Holiday Inn comes to Osaka

InterContinental Hotels Group has opened its first Holiday Inn in Osaka, located a 40-minute train or car ride away from Kansai International Airport. The hotel, boasting 314 rooms, is located near Dotonbori street – famous for its wide range of local restaurants, nightlife and entertainment activities – and the Shinsaibashi shopping area.

Guests get to enjoy free Wi-Fi as well as facilities such as an on-site restaurant and a convenience store.

This marks the fifth Holiday Inn in Japan following properties in Sapporo, Sendai, Kanazawa and Miyazaki.





Japan makes more heritage sites open for event hire

Two UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Japan have joined Kyoto's Nijo Castle in welcoming private events in a bid to offer MICE planners a greater variety of unique spaces.

Kagoshima's Sengan-en traditional gardens, which are attached to a former Shimazu clan residence, set up a MICE office in April 2016 to reach out to MICE buyers. On its grounds are a traditional teahouse that can accommodate 100 guests for a tea ceremony and a 400-seat restaurant specialising in dishes using locally-sourced ingredients.

Sengan-en also lends itself to demonstrations of Japanese culture, ranging from traditional dance and martial arts to music recitals. It once hosted a Louis Vuitton event, with a runway laid down for a fashion show.

Okinawa's 13th-century Katsuren Castle (pictured above) has been made available as a MICE venue through Uruma City Tourism

and Products Association. By coordinating the use of the site as a MICE venue, the local association aims to offer experiences tailored to each group's needs, while protecting the site's historical and cultural assets.

Groups of up to 200 people can enjoy dining and entertainment in the third enclosure, the inner part of the castle. Performances on offer include the Eisa, Lion and Ryukyu dances, to symbolically honour ancestors, drive away evil spirits and express love respectively.

Another option for event planners is the musical, Kimutaka no Amawari, which is performed by local junior and high school students as part of a project to support youth, promote cross-generational work and revitalise the area.

Meanwhile, Nijo Castle which began welcoming MICE groups in 2014, is looking to make more of its spaces, such as Ninomaru Palace, available to event planners.

An advisory panel to the Kyoto city government has recommended that more effective use be made of the castle, particularly given the expense of protecting the castle and conducting restoration work.

The city has committed 10 billion yen (US\$93.7 million) over the next 24 years to restoration works but needs to find new revenue sources to cover those costs.

Nijo Castle's Ninomaru Palace was used in mid-October to host an exhibition related to the World Forum on Sport and Culture. Masahiro Hirade, who is with the MICE division of the Kyoto City Culture and Citizens Affairs Bureau, hopes the history and design of the palace would attract MICE buyers as soon as the proposal is approved.

It is likely that rooms in the palace can be used for concerts and demonstrations of traditional Japanese culture, as well as banquets or parties, Hirade opined.

New MICE portal to help sell Thailand to international buyers

Image Asia Events has launched what is said to be Thailand's first and only in-depth, interactive online portal for the MICE industry, a platform that promotes the country for business events, connects suppliers with buyers, and aggregates MICE news content from other sources.

According to Grenville Fordham, Image Asia Event's founder and managing director, the meetinthaland.com portal will debut first with Phuket. Work has started on phase two which covers Koh Samui, Krabi and Khao Lak, before moving on to Bangkok.

Fordham said: "The trial Phuket content is representative of what this website can be, to both buyers and suppliers in the MICE and wedding sectors."

MICE suppliers can access and update their product information in a secure back-end environment, while buyers can search for and contact suppliers using an automated RFP feature while being guided by an interactive checklist to ensure no detail is forgotten in the event planning process.

"I've seen event buyers waste time and money on inspection trips to Thailand, armed with inadequate information – often a local DMC's interpretation of what they might want," said Fordham.

"The idea behind meetinthaland.com is that no buyer should need to leave the office and travel to Thailand without a meaningful shortlist of venues, suppliers and opportunities preselected on the basis of comprehensive, up-to-date information."



All party hands on deck at ICC Sydney

International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney) has unveiled its latest outdoor venue, Event Deck. With 5,000m² of open air space, Event Deck can cater to cocktail-style events of up to 5,000 people.

The expansive Event Deck provides additional flexibility to the venue, and can be used in a variety of ways, including the assembly of large-scale marquees accommodating up to 1,800 pax banquet-style or 3,750 pax cocktail style.

Jeju's Seogwipo welcomes Ramada and Days Hotel

Ramada Encore Jeju Seogwipo and Days Hotel Jeju Seogwipo Ocean have opened in the second-largest city on Jeju Island.

The former offers 172 rooms including 15 suites, a buffet restaurant, a business centre, a 30m² meeting room that can accommodate 100 banquet guests, fitness rooms, as well as a sauna and spa.

Sister property Days Hotel Jeju Seogwipo Ocean boasts 281 rooms and suites, some of which offer views of the sea and the nearby Halla Mountain. Amenities include international and local cuisine establishment Haru Restaurant, a bakery and café, a business centre, three meeting rooms which can be arranged to accommodate 180 conference or banquet guests, and a 24-hour convenience store.



HRS signs Blacklane on as driver service partner

HRS has made Blacklane its first professional driver service provider for registered "My HRS" members, allowing them to enjoy the Berlin-based company's service network in more than 50 countries, 250 cities and 500 airports.

"Travellers trust HRS and Blacklane for the same reasons: quality, duty-of-care and the best rates in the industry," said Jens Wohltorf,

CEO and co-founder of Blacklane.

"Thanks to this new partnership, business and leisure travellers can now reach their destinations with new confidence and ease around the world."

Customers registered with "My HRS" on HRS.de can access a ten per cent Blacklane discount for each of their global travels.



HOT DEALS

Millennium Hotels and Resorts

Millennium Hotels and Resorts is offering meeting planners a number of value-adds when they host an event at Grand Copthorne Waterfront Singapore, Orchard Hotel Singapore and M Hotel Singapore.

Options from the *Pick-A-Perk* list includes: upgrade to next room category for 10% of room block; complimentary Internet in conference centre; complimentary breakfasts, one per 50 pax; complimentary welcome signature cocktail for an hour; one suite upgrade; one staff room at 50% off contracted group rate.

The access to perks are incremental, from two perks for consumption of 25 to 50 room nights to a maximum of six perks for 151 to 250 room nights.

Promotion is valid for bookings made from

December 1, 2016 until March 31, 2017. Other terms and conditions apply.

Email sales@millenniumhotels.com

Regent Singapore, A Four Seasons Hotel

Lunar New Year banquet lunch or dinner packages are now on offer at the hotel, priced from S\$768 (US\$538) per table of 10 persons for lunch and S\$858 for dinner.

The banquet can be hosted in the hotel's private function rooms or at Summer Palace restaurant.

With a minimum booking of 14 guaranteed tables (140 guaranteed attendees per event), groups can enjoy one bottle of the hotel's selected wine (red or white) for every two guaranteed tables (20 guests).

Packages are available from January 3 to February 28, 2017.

Email rsn.catering@fourseasons.com.

Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel Singapore



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IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2017 will be held from 26 – 28 September in Bangkok, Thailand.

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Hybrid meetings are the future for association events

By Caroline Boey

Members of Singapore's elite Conference Ambassador Programme (CAP), set up by the Singapore Tourism Board to bring association events to the city-state, have raised the possibility of creating "hybridised" meetings that cross-pollinate industries.

The panellists who spoke on the topic *Keeping Up The Pace: What's Next For Association Events?* during CAP's 10th anniversary celebration on November 21, represented varied fields.

Kenny Eng, president of the Kranji Countryside Association and deputy president of the Royal Agricultural

Society of the Commonwealth, said the Singapore brand was synonymous with "talent, knowledge and finding solutions for the world... people see Singapore as the future".

"Singapore has managed to find agriculture solutions and I see the possibility of doing something with health. We can start with agriculture, link it with health and that goes with medicine and science," Eng pointed out.

In Singapore's favour were critical factors like accessibility, said Chan Yew Weng, council member and scribe of the Academy of Medicine Singapore and council member (education committee)

of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists.

Meanwhile, Perry Shum, chair, Optical Society of America (Singapore Section) and associate vice president, IEEE Photonics Society, membership council, highlighted Singapore's safety and pro-visitor visa regime to attract participants within a six-hour flight radius.

Supporting the proposal, Anamah Tan, founding member and executive committee member of the Singapore Association of Women Lawyers and advisor of the ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisations, said a hybrid event focusing on women and climate change was workable.

Moving forward, the Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau is providing stronger support for these ambassadors and other local associations when bidding for events to come to Singapore. Its Business Events in Singapore fund, which helps defray costs when organising events here, was enhanced to support local association members in attending relevant global business events to start their lobbying activities earlier and increase their chances of winning hosting rights for Singapore..



Christchurch scores Antarctic symposium

The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) has decided to award hosting rights to its International Biology Symposium in 2021 to Christchurch.

The winning bid was presented by Craig Cary, director for the International Centre for Terrestrial Antarctic Research at the University of Waikato and deputy director of the New Zealand Antarctic Research Institute, on behalf of a group of New Zealand and Australian scientists.

Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) Business Events, through its Conference Assistance Programme worked with Christchurch and Canterbury Convention Bureau (CCCB) were responsible for putting

together the successful bid.

CCCB manager Caroline Blanchfield said the 13th SCAR Biology Symposium will attract 350 of the world's top Antarctic scientists, and bring an estimated economic impact of NZ\$730,000 (US\$526,224) to the city.

Cary noted that Christchurch has had a longstanding and productive Antarctic history since the early era of explorers, and is now the logistics operations hub for four national Antarctic programmes – New Zealand, the US, Italy and South Korea.

"This is an excellent opportunity to showcase Australasian Antarctic science to the world in Christchurch," he opined.

Vista Equity Partners finalises acquisition of Cvent business

The recent merger of Cvent and Lanyon Solutions will see the two providers of cloud-based enterprise event management technology combine operations and become a privately-held company operating under the Cvent brand come 2017.

On November 29, Vista Equity Partners, owner of Lanyon, completed its acquisition of all outstanding Cvent common stock for US\$36.00 per share in a transaction valued at approximately US\$1.65 billion.

Reggie Aggarwal, Cvent's founder and CEO, has been named the CEO of the new company, while David Bonnette, CEO of Lanyon, will "work with the management team through the transition to a single com-

pany", according to a statement.

Combined, Cvent and Lanyon have more than 800 technology experts and over 700 customer-facing support staff.

Brian Sheth, co-founder and president of Vista, said: "There is an incredible opportunity to upgrade and expand the technology in the enormous and largely untapped meetings and events industry.

"With the leadership of Cvent's highly-successful management team (and) our experienced Lanyon team, we are bullish on our ability to seize the green field opportunity ahead and remain the market leader in this segment."

Cvent has powered over two million events to date.

Defence against ad firms entering events space lies in accreditation for incentive, conference agencies: ICESAP

By Karen Yue

Changing client spend on marketing channels – specifically a shift of more money to below-the-line options from above-the-line ones – will drive the need for accreditation among incentive and conference agencies, opined Nigel Gaunt, president of the Incentive Conference & Event Society Asia Pacific (ICESAP).

In an interview with *TTGmice*, Melbourne-based Gaunt explained that more businesses are realising that below-the-line options, which range from digital marketing and public relations to events, are a “more accountable” way of spending their marketing dollars.

“You could either spend a hefty amount of money on an advertisement for your latest product in the newspaper, or you could motivate sales of your latest product through an incentive programme for your dealers. But if your dealers fail to meet targets, the money doesn’t get spent. Advertisements and events both achieve the same objectives, but the latter offer greater

accountability,” Gaunt said.

While the shift in preference towards incentives and events bodes well for incentive and conference agencies, Gaunt warned that global advertising agencies are already starting to fight back, and some incentive and conference agencies are not ready to defend themselves.

Gaunt said: “Many advertising agencies are starting to hire events staff who support clients in below-the-line activities. This proliferation of service encroaches into the business events space. The risk to incentive and conference agencies, particularly the small to mid-sized ones, is that advertising agencies are a lot more savvy in promoting themselves to clients and can swing business their way.”

The solution, Gaunt said, is for incentive and conference agencies to be upskilled and accredited.

ICESAP’s Agency Accreditation Program, launching in January 2017 along with its online training module in partnership

with globally-recognised William Angliss Institute, focuses on three areas: financial probity check; competency check which assesses if the management and staff have the appropriate expertise to deliver the type of business events they claim to specialise in; and code of conduct.

And should incentive and conference agencies fall short on competencies, ICESAP will direct them to a suitable training course.

Gaunt said pricing for the courses is still being determined, and they will be “fairly priced” and “accessible to all”.

ICESAP’s training programme will debut with introductory courses on incentive and conference management. These will be followed by intermediate courses

come early-2018, and degree courses in mid-2019.

Gaunt also revealed intentions to work with a hotel partner in Asia in the near future to run classroom sessions as part of the training programme.



Gaunt: upskill to compete better

MACEOS wants to grow, set new industry standards

The Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (MACEOS) is in discussions with the government to make it compulsory for new organisations to be members of MACEOS before they can be licensed to operate.

MACEOS CEO, Amos Wong, said: “This is to ensure that the companies are of good character and it will be a means to regulate the Business Events industry.”

This could also serve as a means to grow membership. MACEOS currently has over 100 members, a majority of which are from the exhibitions sector.

“Growing our membership is one of our main focus as this will enable us to have a bigger voice in the business events industry in Malaysia. This is a continuous effort. Our subcommittee has expanded its wings in the northern region and Sarawak and

soon we will expand further to the southern region and Sabah,” MACEOS president, Vincent Lim, said.

Meanwhile, MACEOS is also focusing on grooming the labour force, having recently rolled out its first Professional Exhibition Management and Professional Conference Management course in Kuala Lumpur and Kuching. Similar training programmes will soon be organised in Penang and Sabah.

Ong Hong Peng, secretary-general of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, said: “MACEOS’ keen focus on training and education is in line with the government’s Vision 2020 to enhance the capacity and capability of the industry to remain competitive. This way, we will be able to take on our regional competitors and boost the growth of the convention and exhibition industry in Malaysia.”

– S Puvaneswary

Worldhotels eyes China to bolster MICE business

Worldhotels, a global brand of independent properties, is planning to add 20 China members over the next two years and focus on increasing its share of MICE business.

Roland Jegge, executive vice president Asia Pacific, named Hangzhou, Chengdu, Dalian, Shenzhen, Kunming and Chongqing as target cities.

“Location, good MICE facilities and a green approach are the key factors we are eyeing. With China MICE groups looking at getting away from the hustle and bustle of city life, we are also keen on mountain resort locations that provide between 200 and 500 rooms,” he added.

As well, Worldhotels launched the Nin Hao Guest Programme in January to help global members qualify and attract the right business from China. Apart from providing Chinese translation for collateral and websites, the Worldhotels Academy also provides courses

and training on how to sell to the Chinese and conduct business in China.

Jegge also announced that a former longtime member Hotel Kunlun in Beijing has rejoined Worldhotels’ Deluxe Collection.

Of Worldhotels existing network of 30 hotels in Greater China, the majority are located in Hong Kong, followed by Beijing and Shanghai. The company also has presence in Guangzhou with two hotels and one each in Nanjing, Macau, Shenzhen, Shenyang, Suzhou, Changsha and Wuxi.

Meanwhile, Worldhotels launched World Luxury – a collection of independent hotels certified by LRA by Deloitte – in May. It welcomed its first China member, The White Swan Hotel, in July. The hotel in Guangzhou joins an exclusive club of five others in Phuket, Nha Trang, the Maldives, Gothenburg and Los Angeles. – Caroline Boey

Corporate travel policies not addressing use of sharing economy services

An International SOS survey revealed that while sharing economy services are becoming more commonplace in corporate travel, 75 per cent of organisations lack policies that address their travellers' use of such services.

According to the survey, which polled business travellers and travel managers, 40 per cent of respondents used services like Uber and Airbnb when travelling abroad for business and almost half of respondents anticipated their use of shared transport services would grow.

The study further found that 40 per cent of travellers did not know if their organisation considered such services to be safe.

Tim Daniel, executive vice president at International SOS, said: "While there are many benefits to using these types of services, it's important that organisations realise that using sharing economy services for business-related travel creates new risks

and challenges that need to be managed and mitigated."

Meanwhile, more than half of the respondents indicated they didn't know whether their organisation had considered the legality of sharing services in certain countries.

Steve Bell, partner Herbert Smith Freehills, said: "Employers sending workers overseas should understand the laws in their destination country, the relative risk profile of sharing economy services compared with traditional services, and above all be guided by their duty of care to their workers."

Adding that sharing economy services may be more appropriate in some locations than others, Rob Walker of International SOS and Control Risks cautioned against a "one-size-fits-all policy", which he said is "unlikely to meet duty of care obligations to travellers".



KYCC eyes European MICE market

Khao Yai Convention Center (KYCC) wants to attract more Europeans to meet in Khao Yai, and is working together with the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau to make that a reality by organising fam trips to the region.

Porn-Anun Khakhanmalee, front office manager of the Botanica Khao Yai who also manages KYCC, told *TTGmice*: "We're trying to get more European guests, and currently have overseas sales offices in place. Right now, our MICE groups are 90 per cent Asians and 10 per cent Europeans. We're aiming for a 60/40 split instead."

Built in 2014, KYCC offers 3,800m² of flexible meeting space spread across two buildings. The largest facility is its Grand Ballroom which can take up to 1,300 people theatre-style, and be further broken down into three separate spaces.

Other meeting areas include the Exhibition Hall for up to 600 people theatre-

style, seven meeting rooms of varying sizes, and a 1,900m² outdoor plaza.

Asia will remain an important source market for the venue, and according to Porn-Anun, KYCC's largest corporate booking to-date was for a 1,500 pax group from China. The most recent Asian corporate booking was by Samsung in Thailand.

Since January 2016, there have been about 100 (Asian) groups that have used KYCC and stayed in the two hotels within the complex – the 256-room Greenery Resort and 115-key Botanica Khao Yai.

Olga Kovshanova, director of sales and marketing at Bangkok-based Asia World Enterprise, opined that the destination could "be an interesting alternative for MICE events in Thailand".

She said: "It is a little farther than Pattaya (from Bangkok), but it offers something different as many people have been to Pattaya already." – **Rachel AJ Lee**

{ In brief }



Wong recognised by ICCA for contributions

Anthony Wong, group managing director of Malaysia-based Asian Overland Services Tourism & Hospitality Group, was presented with ICCA's Moises Shuster award from ICCA president Nina Freysen-Pretorius during the 55th ICCA Congress in Kuching, Malaysia. Named after one of ICCA's founders, this prestigious award is given to an individual who has contributed to the association's development and achieved great career success in the international meetings industry.

Destination Asia Malaysia launches PCO arm

Destination Asia Malaysia has opened a new PCO division to meet the growing demand for specialist management of conferences and events in Malaysia. Leading the Kuala Lumpur-based team are Grace Chong as director, conference and incentives, and Anitha Krishnan as business development and conference planner.

Seoul MICE Alliance expands

Some 36 new members have joined the Seoul MICE Alliance, bringing the member count to 230. The new additions hail from a range of industries serving the business events market, and include the newly opened Courtyard Marriott Seoul Namdaemun, food tour operator O'ngo Food Communications, National Folk Museum and numerous new duty-free shopping malls. Formed in 2011 and operated by the Seoul Metropolitan Government and Seoul Tourism Organization, the Alliance is a public-private partnership of government agencies and business events service providers. Meeting planners who use Alliance member organisations for their business events are eligible for various benefits.

{ 2017 Calendar }

January 17-20
ASEAN MICE Forum
Singapore

February 21-22
AIME
Melbourne,
Australia

March 8-10
ITB
Berlin, Germany

March 21-23
IT&CM China
Shanghai,



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M E L B O U R N E

21-22 FEBRUARY 2017

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THE FUN ISSUE

In the final cover story of the year, *TTGmice* reminisces about the fun had in the past year – where industry veterans teach us how events can have that element of fun, event planners share the most creative project they’ve done, and corporate clients dream up their wildest event

MY DREAM EVENT

Corporate end-users dream up an event they would do should there be no budget limitations or space restrictions

"I would love to do an event in a castle in Europe. I want a unconventional and personalised event tailored specifically to the needs of my group that can really engage my participants. If agents can cater to leisure travellers this way, so can event planners for corporates.

– **Daisy Widiari**, regional travel buyer Asia Pacific, Dupont Agricultural Products Indonesia

"I would head to the Cayman Islands or (take my group for) a winter holiday to the US. Actually, we are having an incentive trip for about 12 of our top executives to Aruba this year at the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino, so it will be hard to top that. – **Vinitee Mishra**, manager global travel, Utopia Global

"An event in Finland feels like a dream for us. We will be able to carry out product launches and events in exotic and creative settings such as in a life-size snow globe and even get Santa Claus to be our special guest. – **Amor Gilos**, manager of global procurement, Convergys



From above left: Culzean castle, Ayrshire, Scotland; vacationers enjoying the sun on Grand Cayman's Seven Mile Beach; Santa Claus office in The Santa Park, Finland; Australia; touristic trail near the Matterhorn in the Swiss Alps



"I always wonder what we can do better to please these souls who work their guts out for the company and rejoice in everything it achieves.

If I had a magic wand in hand, I would have our hardworking and fun-loving folks be rewarded with

overseas incentive trips instead of domestic ones.

I would love for Australia to be the next destination. (Attractions), airlines and events teams would entertain them and ensure they have the best.

– **Geetha Arekal**, regional travel head, APAC, Unilever Industries

"The Swiss Alps provides such a memorable and scenic background for any event. We can execute luxurious gala dinners and events, and pamper our staff to make them feel like VIPs. – **Shekhar Gupta**, regional manager, indirect procurement, NXP Semiconductors



Daniel Chua
Head MICE architect, Aonia Singapore



Malu Barrios
Director of event services, ICC Sydney



Daniella Tonetto
General manager, sales & marketing,
Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel and The
St. Regis Macao



Alex Dietzsch
EAM, The Westin Resort Nusa Dua, Bali



Marco Ooi
Director of sales and marketing,
W Singapore

THE ART OF HAVING FUN

Our panelists in this editorial roundtable sweep away the misconception that business events are staid and boring, and offer examples of what can be done to bring business and fun together effectively. By **Karen Yue**

TTG Should business events be fun?

DC Having fun is a critical component of all the programmes we deliver. We define fun as a build-up of emotional and intellectual engagements that allow people to let their guard down, allow humour through the chinks of their corporate armour, and ultimately allow genuine relationships and trust to be formed.

In fact, beyond the intellectual input of every successful event, what people remember most are the emotions engendered during that event.

MB Absolutely! By creating a dynamic atmosphere, you can automatically encourage creativity, collaboration and engagement. Bringing a sense of fun to an event is, I think, the perfect way to foster better networking, new ideas and great memories.

AD Yes. Mood, ambience and the 'fun factor' play important roles in setting the right tone, so that the event and its core messages become memorable.

MO It has to! With the world evolving so rapidly, the way business events are (executed) three, five, 10 years ago is obsolete. More events are starting to get innovative in their approach. Clients have come to realise that one of the key ways to drive idea generation is by approaching the same core business in a different manner.

TTG How can serious business content and fun co-exist?

DC Serious messages can be worked into fun activities. For instance, popping balloons with negative messages written on them help remind people that the power to dispel that negativity or overcome that challenge lies literally at their fingertips.

MB The key is to make sure the topic of discussion and/or event objective is firmly at the heart of all activities.

A great example of this is at AIPC's 2014 International Conference of Convention Centres in Berlin, attended by the general managers and CEOs of over 180 convention centres globally.

After learning about the latest trends in convention centre designs, the speakers (a group of architects) encouraged us to put what we had learnt into practice, and took us through an activity which saw a wide mix of attendees grouped together to design their own convention centres.

It was a highly entertaining activity that helped cement key objectives and trends in our minds as we tried to incorporate them into our designs.

DT We've had very effective business events in partnership with SmallWorld, a Macau-based DMC which introduced us to Corporate Drumming from Human Rhythms. Corporate Drumming is fun and energising, and the perfect ice-breaker to open a conference with. Adding fun to a business event, particularly at the start, can get delegates to loosen up...and set the tone for the event.

AD The line drawn between business and play must be clear. To create fun in an event, you usually plan a teambuilding and a closing function or gala dinner with an after-party. These events are separate from the core meetings.

TTG What factors are driving this need for content at business events to be delivered in a more creative and fun manner?

MB The expectations of delegates are high and technology advancements mean clients are continually looking to improve their events and make an impact. Grow-

ing competition between meetings for attendees, changes in client demographics, availability of resources to create fresh and stimulating events, and new methodologies are all creating an environment of change and innovative thinking.

AD There is a greater demand for a more creative and fun event delivery even at traditionally solemn events. Most large conferences conduct surveys that rate a participant's experience. Imagine running a high profile meeting or an influential incentive programme that garners only a mediocre rating. This may impact the company's image negatively. No prominent company can afford this in our highly competitive world.

MO The mix of different generations of participants in a single meeting means mindset, expectations and experience (preferences) are all different. There is a need to adjust and engage every attendee in unique and creative ways.

TTG How do you think this growing demand for fun and creative events will impact event players?

MB It's a great opportunity to increase diversification and collaboration between event agencies, planners and suppliers. By working more closely together with a shared goal, we can ensure we, as a host destination, provide a more efficient service for the client. This in turn will help foster loyalty and ongoing business from planners.

DT The more creative we are, the more business we will drive to our venues. The demand also encourages us to think differently and push our boundaries. It ensures we stay relevant in the marketplace and keep up with the trends.

AD The core services of a hotel will remain, but more services will be outsourced due to specific client requests. This means more coordination is required as more stakeholders are involved. However, working with many providers presents a variety of options for our clients (and that in turn creates) visual references for future, potential clients.

MO Event agencies and hotels must stay ahead of trends and realign their mindset with savvy clients.

TTG And how are you responding to this growing demand?

DC Aonia's success in meeting client needs is derived from not having preconceived notions in solutioning, understand-

ing the profile of our clients in customising the most suitable programmes, and then working with specialists worldwide to fulfil the activities and fantasies that ultimately lead to fun.

MB The unique integrated precinct and our service model at ICC Sydney means we can cater for all kinds of events, utilising world leading technical and production facilities that are all underpinned by a powerful 10Gbps optical fibre backbone.

The exceptional flexibility of the venue and its spaces also allow us to develop bespoke solutions, both big and small. From the set-up and branding to F&B, we can deliver a fully customised and immersive experience.

Alongside this, ICC Sydney has a great pool of original and inventive minds from diverse backgrounds, allowing us to collaboratively draw on different experiences...to enhance our clients' experience. Our customer-focused team then brings these creative ideas to clients, working shoulder to shoulder with them every step of the way to ensure we cater to their specific needs.

DT Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel and The St. Regis Macao are constantly exploring new opportunities to design experiences that stand out. Macao may be small, but it is diverse. The heritage sites on the Macau peninsula set the perfect stage for events and for an entirely different experience.

One of our corporate groups recently split into teams and competed in an outdoor adventure quiz. After that, they enjoyed a Portuguese dinner by the beach.

On-site, we feel that technology plays a big part and we are constantly exploring ways to utilise our digital channels as well as mobile and wireless solutions to provide a differentiated experience for our guests.

AD We are developing a variety of options for teambuilding programmes that can be conducted indoors and out. We are also expanding our database of special service providers (for events).

MO We have incorporated (W Singapore's) passion points – Fashion, Music, Design and Fuel (healthy living) – into events held here. For example, a meeting can start with a morning Strala Yoga class and end with a cocktail session at Woobar. We can arrange for a two-hour yacht cruise out to the Southern Islands, coupled with curated cocktails and canapés, for more intimate groups. It helps that we are the only hotel that offers a marina view and groups can brainstorm under a cosy 'thinking tree' (a tree-like

table structure in Studio 1 and 2).

TTG Does hosting a creative, fun and effective business event always mean a pricey undertaking?

DC The wow factor can sometimes come with a price tag. However, there are certainly affordable means.

MB What's enjoyable is not necessarily expensive. It's about finding a solution given budget parameters. At ICC Sydney we appreciate that each client has different requirements, and we work hard to deliver creative options within all budgets.

DT No. One case in point is the Guinness World Records attempt by Nuskin in 2013 in the Kashgar Ballroom at Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel. The group broke the world record at that time for having 5,000 people sit on a single chair.

AD Budgets are definitely important but we can unleash our creativity to maximise our resources.

MO At times, creative events require set-up and equipment that are not common and these may need additional sourcing and procurement, driving up costs. Having said that, the team at W Singapore is adaptable and can adjust costs according to clients' needs.

TTG What is your one top tip on bringing the right level of creativity and fun into a business event?

MB Establish 'Clarity of Vision' for every event by knowing what needs to be achieved from both the client side and the venue, and work collaboratively to create a different world – or at least, a concept that brings people together in an inspiring destination and helps them step away from their everyday environment. This is key to sparking that creativity and engagement factor that all business event planners are looking for.

DT Know your audience and tailor fun to the right age, gender and business topic. There are many ways to add a bright spark to meetings without losing sight of business objectives. You just have to keep an open mind and think out of the box!

AD Visualise the experience from a guest's perspective from arrival to departure. If it looks and feels great, we are definitely on the right track.

MO Think from outside of the box instead of out of the box.

CREATIVELY CHALLENGED

Event organisers reveal the most creative business event idea they had this year and how they were executed to leave a lasting impression

Francis Chong

Managing director,
Apxara Travel & Events, Malaysia

When EcoWorld Development asked us to pitch for their World Environmental Day event as part of their marketing efforts, we jumped at the opportunity. We developed an event concept that combined visual elements using light, projection and art. To elevate the message of Mother Earth's call for action, we made sure we practiced what we preached by adopting elements of reusing and recycling in everything that we built.

The main attraction was a custom-built children's treehouse that we constructed using reclaimed wood. Children were allowed to play in the treehouse during the day. When night fell, it was transformed into a canvas for projection mapping that relayed a story on Mother Earth.

Other interactive activities during the event included an upcycled playground and an electric playground that used human energy to generate power and light. Students from the Limkokwing University of Creative Technology Cyberjaya and The One Academy Penang also participated by designing art pieces for an art exhibition that celebrated upcycling.

Love-Mother-Earth workshops were a part of the educational efforts as well and participants took home a gift to remind them of their role in conserving the environment.

The event was run across eight locations in three states simultaneously over two weekends. This made it the largest-scale projection mapping operation in Malaysia thus far.



Francis Chong

Spectacular robot performances brought to live in Hilton Tokyo



Jarrold Stenhouse

Managing director,
Destination Asia, Japan

An Australian financial company wanted an event that was different but still uniquely Japanese for around 400 people. We suggested the Robot Restaurant in Tokyo's Shinjuku district. However, it had a capacity of just 172.

Hence, we arranged the Robot Restaurant's first-ever off-site robot event at the Hilton Tokyo in Shinjuku in June, with five-metre tall robots dancing and performing, with lights, music and everything else that made the show so spectacular.

The challenge was to recreate the original in a completely different venue which we did, and the client absolutely loved it. We have been proposing it to larger groups ever since that first event, although cost can be a factor.

Angel Ramos Bognot

President and ultra business
event creator,
Afro-Asian World Events, Philippines

The Tourism Business Exchange Pilipinas 2016 held in Clark in November used decor, food, programmes and activities for that feel-good experience, positive vibes, might, power and strength to attract good business.

The stage was designed like a runway, patterned after the Congress of America so that motivational speakers could better interact with the audience.

An afternoon tea entertainment in-

cluded Pokemon catching people instead of the usual phone user trying to catch Pokemon.

Afterwards, the gala dinner, themed Blue Angels, featured all things blue. Every participant was given a pair of blue wings to wear; the live band sang angel-themed songs; and there was even a Victoria Secret-esque fashion show where male and female models strutted down the runway with wire wings on their backs.

Peter King

Chief executive,
Melbourne
Convention and
Exhibition Centre

In June, the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre hosted the Hair Expo Australia 2016 for 5,000 delegates, with the challenge to create a closing reception and gala dinner that was both decadent and opulent – a luxurious theme



Angel Ramos Bognot



Macau landmarks recreated as food booths at MCI Macau's Macau Fiesta event

for a luxurious industry.

The Great Gatsby theme was chosen and the F&B offering was the centrepiece that came complete with ice sculptures and carvings, champagne towers and an edible dessert forest. The menu alone took three months of development and over 60 hours of preparation.

Lawrence Chan

General manager,
Red Antz Event, Malaysia

As part of an incentive initiative to appreciate and reward team members and trade partners, multinational chemicals manufacturing corporation BASF held a red carpet event in January 2016 at the JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur.

Themed Ring of Glory to signify pride, triumph and victory, the main highlight of the event was a raised boxing ring, positioned at the very tip of the stage runway.

Actual boxing matches took place while 600 guests partook in an eight-course banquet.

Fringe activities included street mentalists performing tricks and illusions, and there were photo opportunities with walkabout boxers.

Marisa Nallana

President,
Philippine Exhibits and
Themeparks Corp

The month-long nationwide gastro-nomic festival Flavors of the Philippines, organised in April by the Department of Tourism, Tourism Promotions Board, challenged our creativity due to its length, breadth, and components such as the Madrid Fusion Manila, food-related cultural activities, gourmet markets and bazaars, roving food trucks, and bar crawls.

These components, in terms of visual appeal, themes and diversity of Philippines' flavours took pains to uncover traditional and modern cooking techniques, common and unusual food ingredients and the variety of regional gustatory experiences in the country.

For the second year of Madrid Fusion Manila, we invited chefs from around the world and its component, International Gastronomy Congress, was creative in tackling the history of Filipino food, including the impact of the Galleon trade and the influence of the West.

James Kent

Sales and marketing manager,
The J Team DMC, Japan

We had an MNC client in the technology sector who asking for something that was very Japanese, very different and a little techy for an event. (To fulfil that) we arranged a competition in which the group was divided into two teams and tasked with putting a robot together.

We upped the challenge by getting the teams to take part in a football match to see who could score the most penalty goals against their rival's robot.

We arranged for the half-day event to take place in Tokyo's Akihabara district – famous for technology and gadget shops – but it was tricky to find the right space to hold the event.

The other issue was that it was expensive as these robot kits are very advanced and expensive. For that reason, we won't be able to do something like this very often, but the client said it was just what they had hoped for.



Robot football match for a tech event

Rob Nelson

General manager,
Brisbane Convention Bureau

Colour was the theme for Brisbane Convention Bureau's business events showcase this year, Brisbane Pop-Up, to inspire planners to "add some colour to their events".

Executed by the bureau and The Styled Group, colour infiltrated each event element including a kaleidoscope that was projected onto the dome of Brisbane City Hall by Staging Connections and the major prize drawn by air cannons. Suppliers stands featured their own interpretation of the theme, with Stamford Plaza Hotel Brisbane winning Best Hotel Stand for its two staff members dressed in colourful inflatable suits.

Olinto Oliveira

Director, business development & events,
MCI Macau

The most creative event we did in 2016 was an event for Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel, Cotai Central, themed Macau Fiesta. It was a casual dinner but the food booths were elaborate recreations of famous Macau icons. We had wine barrel cocktail tables and Portuguese weather rooster table centrepieces which added to the ambience.

Andrew Koh

Managing director,
Events Architects, Singapore

We executed a Dining by Design – Expect the Unexpected themed party for the launch of a new corporate identity & 2.0 roadmap for Lavish, a dining and catering company based in Singapore. Guests were welcomed with a "pop" of the Singapore Sling. Instead of it being served in a tall glass, it was presented as a sphere with mint granite. Guests were also treated to a sensory overload as the sphere expelled vapour like a dragon through their nostrils once they consumed the mythical pearl, taking them beyond the typical catering experience of chaffing trays, canapé and food stations.

Linda Low

Manager of strategic partnership and
product marketing,
Pacific World Singapore

Our most creative project recently was for the Unilever Investor Relations Conference, during which we had to create four concepts for a few product categories – Refreshment, Food, Haircare and Homecare. The concepts had to offer an immersive experience. For the Food category, we created a lively farmer's market stocked high with fresh produce and had park benches with yellow cushions placed all around to add to the sustainable-themed atmosphere.

TOURISM CHIEFS RING IN THE NEW YEAR

For these chiefs, tis' the season to be with loved ones, discover new destinations, retreat into solitary comforts or relish the joy of giving

“ I plan to go fishing in the South China Sea to catch sailfish. I usually do catch-and-release and the fish is just the bonus. The real excitement is in planning the trip and the process that goes into catching a fish.

Zulkefli Sharif

CEO,
Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau

“ The Hong Kong New Year Countdown Celebration is known to be the finale event of the year. To conclude my 2016, I will take part in the celebration together with my family and hundreds of thousands of spectators at Victoria Harbour and look forward to a better year in 2017.

Anthony Lau

Executive director,
Hong Kong Tourism Board

“ Every year, we hold a Christmas party for our team and their family. This year, we have chosen a resort in Sematan for the annual Christmas Party. It serves the best steam crabs in the world. I am really looking forward to this two-day event – it will be so much fun.

Mike Cannon

Managing director,
Sarawak Convention Bureau



“ The year-end is a lively period for Penang, starting with the George Town Literary Festival 2016, followed by the In-Between Arts Festival and ending with the Penang Island Jazz Festival. From November all the way up to the New Year, Penang is always my favourite place to be as I get to spend quality time with my family and friends while indulging in arts, heritage and culture.

Ashwin Gunasekeran

CEO,
Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau

“ On New Year's Day, I always visit my relatives and exchange greetings to mark the arrival of the new year. On that day, we always eat Hakata *zoni* (rice cake soup), which is unique to this region of Kyushu. It is a clear soup that contains a sticky rice cake, yellowtail meat and *katsuona*, a local leaf vegetable. These ingredients are believed to bring good fortune.

We will also visit three local shrines to pray for good health in the year ahead. In the latter half of the vacation, I will go on a trip to an onsen hot spring with my family and grandchildren so I can relax and build up my energy for the busy days that lie ahead.

Seiji Isoyama

President,
Fukuoka Convention & Visitors Bureau

“ I plan to spend the year-end visiting Bodhalkasa and Kunkeshwar, two new destinations in the state of Maharashtra. Bodhalkasa is a village in the Gondia district. Located in a forested area, the destination is very calm and relaxing and I look forward to having a rejuvenating experience there. Kunkeshwar is a magnificent beach located 500km from Mumbai. I would unwind by spending a few hours there. I would also visit the Shiva temple which is about 15km from Devgad. The Shiva temple is situated on a small hillock, giving mesmerising views of the Arabian Sea.

Swati Kale

General manager,
Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation



“My family will be throwing a Christmas party for kids from poor families in Camalaniugan, Cagayan. There will be lunch, gift-giving and games. The number of children is increasing every year, from 75 when we started three years ago to 256 last year. We are expecting an even bigger group this year and have reserved an auditorium for the party.

Maricon B Ebron

Deputy COO – marketing and promotions sector, international promotions, Tourism Promotions Board Philippines



Lyn Lewis-Smith

“I plan to spend the year-end period in Sydney. The week leading up to Christmas is a flurry of excitement as my family and I host a huge Christmas party. This party has become an annual event with family and friends coming from all over Australia and New Zealand. We accommodate everyone! I can't wait to serve up the famous Business Events Sydney signature cocktail, Sydney Shines. I look forward to the house filling up with people and seeing how all the children have grown up.

Lyn Lewis-Smith

CEO,
Business Events Sydney

“As always, I will go to the local shrine close to my home in the Kunitachi district of Tokyo at exactly midnight to mark the arrival of the New Year. For the rest of January 1, I shall spend time with my family, eating traditional *zoni* and drinking sake.

The next day, I will return to the house where I grew up and where my parents still live, in Fuchu. I'm always thankful that all members of my family are able to get together at this time of year.

I also climb Mount Takao in western Tokyo every weekend and I'll do that again this year as well.

Yasuyuki Matsumoto

Director general,
Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau



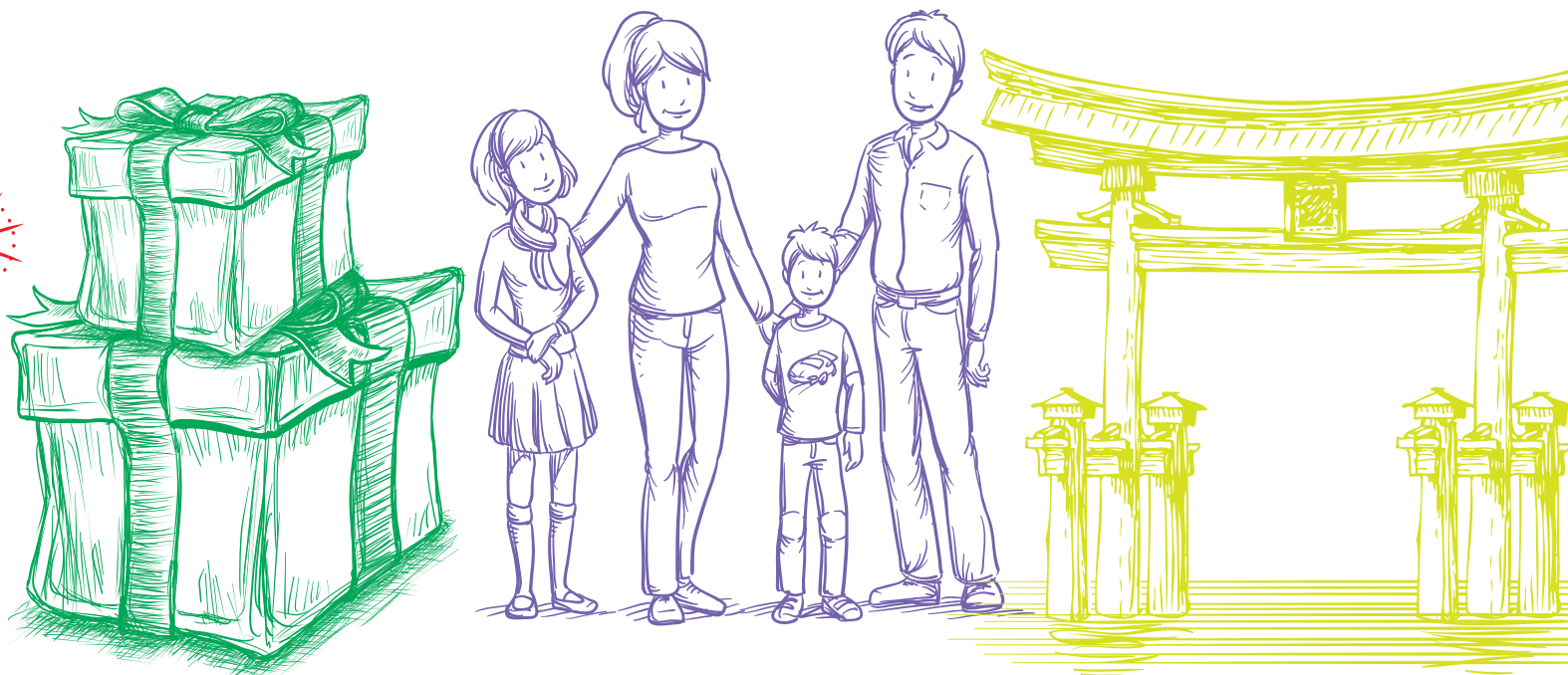
Yasuyuki Matsumoto

“I will spend my new year exploring various Royally-Initiated Development Projects across the country to commemorate the late King's devotion and hard work.

One attraction is the Chang Hua Man Royal Project in Phetchaburi province, approximately an hour's drive from Hua Hin, which King Bhumibol Adulyadej initiated in 2010 to improve the lives of farmers. It offers many educational farm tours and fun activities to learn about the traditional life of Thai farmers, and I think it is good for post-tour activities after corporate meetings and technical visits.

Nopparat Maythaweekulchai

President,
Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau



OUR FAVOURITE TRADE EVENT OF 2016

Team TTG looks back on a fulfilling year and pick out their favourite trade event



My favourite business event this year was the Adelaide Biomed City Showcase 2016 because it was an excellently planned programme that gave me plenty of content for both *TTGmice* and *TTGasociations*, new knowledge as well as opportunities to enjoy some of the best of what the destination offers.

Time is scarce for me and my team, as we work on four regular print titles, two digital platforms and many special projects, so fruitful research trips like the Adelaide Biomed City Showcase – and not media junkets – always win me over. – **Karen Yue**



Mine was the launch of Asia's first luxury cruise line, Dream Cruises, in Singapore. President Thatcher Brown highlighted to the media the leisure and MICE offerings of the first ship, *Genting Dream*, which by the time you read this, is already based in Guangzhou for regional cruising.

For a cruise-feel, the company chose The Lighthouse Restaurant & Rooftop Bar at Fullerton Hotel, which is the exact location where a beacon once guided mariners into the safety of the Singapore port in the 20th century. Champagne breakfast with views of the Singapore skyline and Marina Bay waterfront further added to the cruise touch.

For me, it scored highly in theming and brand messaging. – **Raini Hamdi**



I found a three-day fam trip to Yangon particularly memorable. It felt like a homecoming of sorts, as I first visited the country back in 2009 when it was still closed off to the rest of the world, so my recent visit enabled me to observe the rapid changes that have taken place in the country since. And despite the frantic development the city seems to be undergoing right now, it's lovely to see that the people are smiling and friendly as ever, and opportunities to enjoy a cup of tea by the roadside is never far off. – **Xinyi Liang-Pholensa**



Unlike the typical gala set-up, this dinner hosted by the Korea MICE Bureau during the Korea MICE Expo was in a traditional Hanok restaurant. This setting seemingly welcomed us into a cosy house matched with impeccable hospitality and exquisite cuisine. It was a wonderful experience to be hosted in such an authentic local atmosphere to get a true taste of their tradition and culture. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**



My favourite event this year was the Anak Sarawak event where I won the Anak Sarawak Journalism Award for Business Events Journalism Excellence, Print/Online. It was unexpected as I was not told beforehand that I had won the award. At the same time, it is very meaningful as it meant Sarawak Convention Bureau appreciates the articles we produce. – **S Puvaneswary**



The first-ever media fam organised by Kaohsiung Meeting & Event Promotion Office. I like the small group of six – made up of agents, corporates and media from Hong Kong, Japan, China and Singapore – as this provided more opportunities for interaction. The four-day programme also showcased lesser-known and unique ideas for MICE in Kaohsiung. – **Prudence Lui**



Rendez-vous in France Travel Mart held in Montpellier in April. Held several months after the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels, the French travel trade was indomitable, teaching me that tourism is an effective instrument for peace and that unity is the best response to the challenge.

One message I took away was things were tough but the human spirit isn't easily crushed. The country responded with optimism and were steadfast in their belief in the destination and in their creativity to reinvent products.

I was moved by stories of how countries marched in solidarity with France and the rest of Europe, inspiring them to bring out their values of liberty, equality, fraternity and joy. – **Rosa Ocampo**



It may be the obvious answer, but it is still hard to look beyond the MICE component of the Visit Japan Travel Mart. Held over three days in mid-September, it consistently brings together the key names in the sector as well as newcomers. Everything is achieved – quite naturally – with that unmatched Japanese attention to detail and desire to please, and this year's entertainment at the first night party was exceptional, largely thanks to the hypnotic movement of World Order. – **Julian Ryall**



I spent three fantastic days in June at the This is Gold Coast event. The sunny city is undergoing somewhat of a renaissance in the lead up to hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2018 with many venues and hotels undergoing major refurbishments and new infrastructure coming online. – **Rebecca Elliott**



My favourite trade event was the New Delhi stop of Brand USA's fifth annual sales mission to India. The delegation comprised 37 US companies including destinations, attractions and hotels. It was good to see that Brand USA had kept a day for the media to interact with the delegates instead of clubbing it with B2B meetings. – **Rohit Kaul**

Primed for performance

With a weak ringgit, affordable hotel rates and better hardware, the stars are aligned for Kuala Lumpur's MICE sector to prosper. By **S Puvaneswary**

The main gateway into Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur is benefitting from a weak ringgit, affordable hotel rates and improved infrastructure which altogether are driving business events to the city, revealed inbound agents.

Inbound agent, Nanda Kumar, managing director of Hidden Asia Travel & Tours, had seen a 20 per cent increase in meetings and incentives from Indonesia during the first 10 months of 2016, up from 2015.

Kumar explained that "reasonable" rates at quality city hotels with updated hardware had helped.

"I can get agent rates of RM350 (US\$78) to RM450 for a five-star international branded property in the city. Five-star rates here are similar to four-star options in Indonesia," he said, adding that clients can also enjoy many new upscale properties and refurbished older ones that meet global standards.

Arokia Das, senior manager at Luxury Tours Malaysia, said his company witnessed strong growth in regional markets such as Indonesia and the Philippines, especially for meetings and incentives, catalysed by a weak ringgit and new products that expand pre/post-conference options.

"Kuala Lumpur City Hall and Kuala Lumpur Tourism Bureau has invested a lot in making the city more attractive to tourists, and this has helped us to promote the destination to business event organisers and to come up with creative itineraries," Arokia said.

"For example, restaurants and bars at high elevations, such as Atmosphere 360, Marini's on 57, Nobu Kuala Lumpur, SkyBar and Heli Lounge Bar, make excellent (venue) choices for events. Organisers are willing to pay for unique experiences and great views. These restaurants and bars are also very conveniently located in Kuala Lumpur City Centre and around Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre," he said.

Getting around Kuala Lumpur City Centre has also gotten easier for event delegates looking to explore the city in their free time. Kuala Lumpur City Hall built covered walkways linking shopping malls in the Bukit Bintang area with its surrounds in late 2014. Shoppers can use a 4.5km sheltered elevated walkway that links Berjaya

Times Square, Sungei Wang Plaza and Pavilion Kuala Lumpur.

Abdul Rahman Mohamed, general manager at Mayflower Holidays, told *TTGmice*: "We have seen increased demand for meetings and incentives from regional markets such as Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia, and we think one of the reasons for choosing Kuala Lumpur is their increased buying power thanks to a weakening ringgit."

"Many organisers like to stay in the city centre because of the many shopping options available."

China, a darling source market for many leisure and business events destinations, is also on the radar of Malaysia's tourism industry and the country's government has established an e-visa facility in March for Chinese passport holders to facilitate their arrival. This is a boon for Malaysia's business event

organisers, as visa processing duration has been greatly reduced from five working days to just one.

Through the e-visa, Chinese visitors can stay up to 30 days in Malaysia.

Abdul Rahman said: "This has made it hassle-free for Chinese event delegates to obtain a visa. Kuala Lumpur is always the preferred choice for the Chinese to hold their meetings and incentives because it is the main gateway and has infrastructure for large meetings with a few hundred to thousands of delegates. It also has tourist elements such as shopping, nightlife and nature-based activities like jungle treks and canopy walks."

He added that sightseeing options outside of Kuala Lumpur, such as to Kuala Selangor, Royal Selangor Visitor Centre and Sunway Lagoon, can also be arranged easily.



From top: Marini's on 57; Pavilion, an upscale shopping mall in Kuala Lumpur

Destination: Malaysia



Petronas Twin Tower

{ Talking numbers }

9

The position of Kuala Lumpur in the 2015 ICCA top 10 city ranking for Asia-Pacific, down one spot from 2014

52

The number of full-service carriers using Kuala Lumpur International Airport and its budget terminal klia2

543

The number of exhibitors from 29 countries who participated in the 13th Malaysia International Halal Showcase 2016 at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre from March 30 to April 2. The event was the largest exhibition with international participation held at the Centre in 2016. It attracted 22,027 visitors

11,366

The number of five-star hotel room inventory in Kuala Lumpur, as of July 2016. The city also has 6,000 four-star hotel rooms

{ Developments to watch }

1

Scheduled for completion in 2018, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre's expansion will provide an additional 10,000m² of flexible and multi-purpose space over three floors. The foyer areas on levels one and three will link directly to the existing facility. There will also be three levels of underground car parks with 1,500 spaces, two levels of retail and F&B outlets, a sky garden overlooking a park and a rooftop restaurant. After expansion, the Centre will offer 30,059m² of space, making it ideal for larger international association meetings and concurrent events.

2

Taman Tugu, designed as a lush forest reserve with more than a thousand species of tropical trees, will emerge at the back of Tugu Negara National Monument. Costing RM650 million (US\$155 million) to build, the attraction will have its phase one ready by 2018. There will be camp sites, jungle treks, lakes and a water park, as well as an outdoor venue for events. Walkways have been planned to connect it to Taman Perdana Botanical Gardens and other tourist attractions in the area, including the National Museum and KL Sentral.

3

Famous for being a hive of delicious street food, Jalan Alor is up for an upgrade and its new face will be unveiled in 1Q2017. New landscaping and lighting works can be expected to elevate the dining experience. Jalan Alor is very accessible, with many four- and five-star hotels within close proximity.



Tugu Negara National Monument



Jalan Alor

{ Review central }

Restoran Rebung Dato Chef Ismail

By S Puvaneswary

One of the best ways to introduce a destination and its culture is through the belly, and Restoran Rebung Dato Chef Ismail is just the place to charm international delegates.

Concept Celebrity chef Ismail Ahmad is famed for his delicious Malay cuisine, and he backs this restaurant located just opposite of Perdana Botanical Garden. He carefully plans the menu and monitors the food quality with an eagle eye.

There is a choice of buffet and a la carte for lunch and dinner, but I highly recommend the buffet as you get to sample more than 40 dishes for lunch and more than 50 for dinner. As these dishes are favourites from all over Malaysia, cooked using different styles and influenced by the different culture of each state, one gets to travel all around

the country without ever leaving the restaurant.

MICE application There is an air-conditioned area for 180 diners, and two non-airconditioned areas, one of which is a veranda overlooking a herb and vegetable garden and the other at the back with a stage area where live music is offered at night. Four small private dining rooms of various sizes are available, seating 10 to 100 guests. These rooms have portable projectors and built-in screens.

Venue buy-out is possible and costs RM300,000 (US\$71,327). Interior decorations and seating arrangements can be customised for the event.

Event planners can also ask restaurant staff to introduce diners to the various dishes and their origins.

Restoran Rebung Dato Chef Ismail



offers outdoor catering services.

Service Service is impeccable. Be sure to make reservations as the restaurant is busy for lunch.

Website

www.restoranrebungdatochefismail.com

Operation hours Daily from 07.00 to 10.00

Le Meridien Kuala Lumpur

By S Puvaneswary

Le Meridien Kuala Lumpur had recently completed major refurbishments and renovations carried out in phases over the course of four years and to the tune of RM100 million. The result is a better guest experience for in-house meetings and stays.

Rooms All 420 rooms are now better prepared for the modern traveller. More universal power sockets, two USB socket charges and speedier in-room Wi-Fi (8mbps) are available, along with a 48-inch smart HD LED TV.

My room on the top-most floor, level 35, and on the Club Floor, offered me panoramic views of the city and boasts a convenient layout. For instance, the safe sits under the work table and shelves are built into the tiled wall by the sink

for toiletries. And speaking of toiletries, I love that Cinq Mondes, a luxurious line of botanical spa products from Paris, are provided for guests.

MICE facilities I've attended several press conferences and meetings at Le Meridien Kuala Lumpur, and have always been impressed by the thoughtfulness that went into the design of the property's event facilities.

Meeting spaces are clustered for convenience on level six, on a floor called Metropolis. They sit right above Latest Recipe all-day dining restaurant and is serviced by a set of escalators from the fifth floor.

The collection comprises six meeting rooms and a pillarless ballroom. The latter can accommodate up to 600 del-

egates in a theatre setting, or be divided into two for smaller gatherings.

The refurbishments have given the Metropolis foyer a brighter and more contemporary look. Two interactive kitchens strategically located at the foyer, provide a permanent pantry station where delegates can enjoy limitless variety of snacks, coffee and tea throughout their meetings.

Other facilities In-house facilities include six F&B outlets, a freeform swimming pool, a well-equipped gym and spa facilities.

The Club Lounge on level 33 features an open kitchen with live cooking, a private meeting room for a dozen people and a lounge.

There are also shower rooms for guests who need to freshen up after an early morning arrival, before the usual check-in time, or have a late flight to catch after checking out.

For groups, a dedicated check-in counter can be arranged.

The hotel also provides off-site catering and teambuilding programmes within the Klang Valley.

Room count 420

Star rating Five

Address 2 Jalan Stesen Sentral, Kuala Lumpur Sentral, Kuala Lumpur, 50470, Malaysia

Website

www.lemeridienkualalumpur.com



Muscling up for Asia

More programmes and mid-tier accommodation are surfacing in Qatar as the trade hones in on new and traditional MICE markets. By **Caroline Boey**



Clockwise from top: Al Zubarah; Museum of Islamic Art; Khor Al Aldaid; The Pearl; Barzan Towers; Hamad International Airport



Qatar, host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup and the first country in the Middle East to clinch the event, is banking on MICE and events travel to fulfil the Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy 2030 as the kingdom embarks on the diversification of its economy.

According to the Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA), MICE accounted for 70 per cent of the nearly three million visitors Qatar welcomed in 2015 and the number is expected to grow threefold to nine million in the next 15 years.

The opening of the new Doha Exhibition & Convention Center in 2015 along with the Qatar National Convention Centre are expected to attract a major increase in meetings, exhibitions and other events.

A senior spokesperson with QTA added that the destination's tourism strategy is in place to secure long-term economic viability through an increase in hotel capacity to meet what's required for the upcoming 2022 FIFA World Cup.

He said: "Now, 70 per cent of hotels are in the four- and five-star category. But there will also be a substantial increase in three-star and serviced residences opening in 2019 to meet the needs of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) markets, which may also suit other markets," he noted.

Qatar is investing an estimated

{ Developments to watch }

1 The Qatar Tourism Authority unveiled the Qatar Destination Brand in November last year at World Travel Market in London, marking the first time a brand to represent destination Qatar was created.

2 The Shangri-La, Double Tree by Hilton, Pullman, Adagio, Dusit, and Mondrian were some of the brands which planted their flags in Qatar in 2015, followed by the Waldorf Astoria, Mandarin Oriental and M Gallery in 2016 and Le Méridien and JW Marriott among the properties scheduled for 2017.

3 One of the biggest developments for Qatar, the Doha Metro mass transit system will feature four lines extending across more than 300km of track and incorporate nearly 100 stations. The first phase is scheduled to be up and running by 2019 with completion of the whole network earmarked for 2026.

US\$45 billion on hotel and resort development until 2030 and the four- and five-star room boom kicked into high gear in 2015 with some 4,000 new keys added and more in the pipeline.

Another strategy the QTA is adopting is to market the culture and authenticity in the destination, which could enhance MICE experiences with a “sense of place”, added the spokesperson.

In Asia, QTA has been working on increasing the small base of MICE visitors from Singapore and Malaysia in the last two years and will begin to focus on China in 2017 to extend its reach beyond the traditional GCC countries and European markets like Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France and the UK.

The QTA spokesperson said: “We increased our B2B partnership in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong over the last two years and there was a 14 per cent increase across the markets.”

And to tap China, Qatar has launched a visa-free scheme for Chinese travellers with up to four days in transit and will make available online visa applications in 2017 to leisure and MICE travellers.

DMC Arabian Adventures Qatar, established in 1987, has been tapping the Asian market for almost a decade and CEO Hassan Hajji observed: “Currently, Europe is weak and I believe there is a lot of potential in China and India. For us, international MICE is still very small but with the improved visa facilities, incentives from Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand will be easier to manage.”



“Currently, Europe is weak and I believe there is a lot of potential in China and India... With the improved visa facilities, incentives from (certain Asia-Pacific markets) will be easier to manage.”

Hassan Hajji
CEO, Arabian Adventures Qatar

Other players interviewed expressed that Asia had not previously been a major focus, but is quickly gaining in importance.

Gulf Adventures, set up in 2000, has been handling small Asian incentives (25-30 pax) and larger corporate

{ Talking numbers }

2.93 million

The total number of arrivals into Qatar in 2015, 70 per cent of which were MICE delegates and corporate travellers

90,000

The event space in square metres at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center, which opened in 2015 and includes exhibition halls totaling 29,000m²

23,000

The number of hotel rooms in Qatar as at 2015, with 70 per cent in the four- and five-star categories

meeting groups from China and Singapore (60-65 pax).

Tare Helmy, director of sales, told *TTGmice* that business from Asia, comprising about 200 to 300 travellers a year, is quite a small part of its overall clientele, but the DMC has big plans for some of its promising markets.

“The outlook from Asia shows that China offers the biggest potential and we are planning to appoint a representative in Shanghai,” said Helmy.

He shared: “A unique product we offer is an inland sea safari. Guests drive through the high sands of the desert just outside Doha on the way to a desert camp at the Inland Sea and enjoy a swim in the waters.”

Helmy added that the company has a campsite for 1,200 people to stage a gala dinner with falconry demonstration while live bands and overnight stays can also be arranged. Asian groups also have the option to play a round at the Doha Golf Club.

As well, The Ritz-Carlton Doha reopened in November 2016 after a total makeover and Bahaa Ghaith, cluster assistant director of sales, of the hotel and The Ritz-Carlton Sharq Village and Spa, said: “We don’t have MICE groups from Asia yet, but we have the space to accommodate Asian corporate meetings and events.

“There are many Japanese companies in Qatar and apart from them, we are also eyeing markets like India, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Australia to prepare for the increased competition.”

The call of the Nordics

While Finland is no stranger to MICE groups, it has been dealing mainly with a European clientele. This, however, is set to change with a recent heightening of efforts to court Asian markets. **Rachel AJ Lee** reports

Finland wants more Asian MICE groups to visit, a message that inbound players are broadcasting through their recent efforts.

This is evident in the 90 per cent increase in exhibition space taken by Finland at ITB Asia in October 2016, where various local destination bureaus, hotels and DMCs were in attendance.

Heli Mende, head of global sales promotion, Visit Finland, said: "We also organised our own roadshows in China in May, and in South Korea, Japan and Taiwan in September, bringing Finnish companies along with us.

"(While these roadshows are leisure focused) we're seeing more MICE (buyers) in attendance and showing interest in Finland as a destination. (As such), in 2017 we will invite both leisure and MICE buyers."

When asked if there was a specific campaign to court MICE groups, Mende said there was none at the moment as the bureau was "monitoring the situation and talking to individual incentive companies", seeing that there were already "some MICE

groups from Asia".

While Finland is no stranger to MICE groups, the clientele has mostly been European. It was not until recently that companies began courting and handling Asian MICE groups.

Alexei Petrov, managing director of Levi-based Scandinavian Travel Group, told *TTGmice*: "We have been concentrating on the European markets, and only just started marketing to Asia. I was in Beijing in October 2015, and this is the second time I am meeting a lot of Asian buyers. But we've handled a lot of MICE groups from Europe, and we can offer the same experience, where the only difference is the addition of a Chinese-speaking guide. The Asian MICE market is one with a huge growth potential for us."

Said Aurelie Martin, sales executive of Safartica, a full service safari house and DMC in Rovaniemi: "We've had one group of 100 pax from Citibank in Hong Kong. It was our first experience with Asian MICE."

Seija Vesala, sales team manager, Rukan Salonki, added: "We are very strong in the domestic market but had

only four Asian MICE groups. We are looking forward to more Asian groups in the future."

Leisure travel, on the other hand, has been growing rapidly over the past few years.

Antti Karjalainen, director of sales, Scandi Hotels, added: "We have Asian groups, but these are mainly leisure. There are some incentives, and we see the MICE potential especially from China and Hong Kong. Overall, the Asian market is the fastest-growing market for Finland, with double-digit growth for 2016."

Karjalainen believes that for Finland to succeed in its MICE quest, it must "tell clients what the opportunities and options are for MICE in Finland".

One way is by highlighting unique and fresh itineraries, according to Martin. "We need to give clients proper information on what activities can be done in Finland. For example, we transferred the Hong Kong group to their hotel by reindeer, and they had dinner in a snow igloo. These are unusual and exotic activities for

From left: An event in Helsinki; a Finnish sauna



Jussi Helsten/Visit Helsinki

(Asian clients)."

While Martin reckons the Asian market "will be huge for Finland and Lapland", she cautioned about the downsides of mass tourism.

She added: "While we want to welcome everybody, we need to handle them well and maintain quality, and not kill the reputation of the destination."

Meanwhile, Helsinki attracted 275 international association meetings in 2015, which were attended by more than 35,200 people and generated 66.5 million euros (US\$70.4 million) in tourism income for the capital city.

"Congress organisers are clearly interested in Helsinki, and there is a lot of demand for the coming years. We are already working on projects for congresses to be held in 2023," commented Ines Antti-Poika, convention director, Helsinki Convention & Events Bureau.

Antti-Poika pointed to Helsinki's reputation for security, high standards of education and technology, and unique tour offerings as other key selling points.

Upcoming international events include the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology in June 2017, and the annual congress of International Federation of Surveyors, FIG Working Week, in May/June 2017.

In 2015, Helsinki's registered accommodation inventory was 17,074 rooms, 362 more than the previous



The Northern Lights is a big draw for incentive groups arriving in Finland

year, according to statistics published by Visit Helsinki.

In October 2016, the Clarion Hotel Helsinki and the Clarion Hotel Helsinki Airport opened and added 425 and 258 rooms respectively to the capital region.

While no new conference centres are coming up at the moment, Clarion Hotel Helsinki offers 15 meeting rooms, while an old warehouse building adjacent to the hotel has been transformed into an event venue for 1,000 guests.

"It feels good that there is so much interest and I have a feeling that the Asian MICE market can grow quite rapidly... Finland is ready for MICE, but Asians have to (discover) us."

Heli Mende

Head of global sales promotion
VisitFinland

{ Talking numbers }

4

- The number of congress and exhibition venues in Helsinki.
- The largest is the Messukeskus Expo and Convention Centre (for 10,000 pax), while the smallest is the Scandic Marina Congress Center (700 pax)

80

- The number of direct weekly flights to Finland from 17 Asian destinations

100

- Finland will celebrate its centennial of the country's declaration of independence on December 6, 2017

1,887

- The average expenditure in euros, equivalent to US\$2,094, of a single congress visitor to Helsinki

30,000

- The number of people who attended international association meetings in Helsinki between May and August 2016



Bedrock to a happy partnership

Kyäni and its event outsourcee find communication key to bringing its first Hong Kong show from concept to execution. By **Prudence Lui**

Event brief

Established in 2005, Kyäni is a health and wellness network marketing company. This event – its very first held in Hong Kong – brought together over 1,000 partners from across Greater China.

As Kyäni did not have experience organising conferences of this scope and size, Concept Communications (Conceptcoms) was roped in to help on areas from creative concept development to all logistics and production details.

Challenges

Based on the conference theme *Live Your Dream*, Conceptcoms was challenged to create a key conference visual and produce the entire event including performance, programme run-down, audio visual, lighting and other logistics work – all within a six-week time span.

Also included in this schedule was time needed for Kyäni's headquarter in the US to approve the visual and ensure it matches the conference theme as well as the company's corporate identity.

Communicating across separate time zones was a challenge, and the project team needed to ensure the approval process ran smoothly and on schedule.

And as participants could bring along friends and partners to the conference, Conceptcoms was also tasked to collect information on guests, who were potential business leads for Kyäni.

Solutions

The creative team of Conceptcoms communicated thoroughly with Kyäni's Asia operation manager before proposing three options for key visuals, easing the approval process and allowing sufficient time for production and logistical arrangement.



In order to create a memorable experience, Conceptcoms introduced a performance that combined neon lights and lion dance, some of Hong Kong's icons, at the opening ceremony.

The post-lunch Tron Dance was another highlight of the conference.

In addition, to engage the audience, a fun segment was designed where participants folded paper planes however they wanted before launching them through the air.

And to solve the challenge of collecting data on accompanying friends and partners,

Event

Kyäni Conference

Organiser

Kyäni International

Venue

Asia-World Expo

Date

May 27-28, 2016

Number of participants

More than 1,000 delegates

Conceptcoms implemented an electronic registration system.

Key takeaways

When event and design objectives are well-communicated, organising an event to the client's satisfaction is achievable within a short time span.

Of course, a dedicated event management team and careful attention to the project timeline are also crucial for the event's success.

"We received a lot of positive comments on Kyäni's first-ever conference held in Hong Kong. Conceptcoms demonstrated professionalism, enthusiasm and dedication from start to (finish). We certainly hope to make another record breaking event in Hong Kong with Conceptcoms."

David Nash, Asia operation manager, Kyäni International

Innovation and engagement



A long-running and established forum embraces innovation and new methods to stay fresh and relevant. By **Prudence Lui**

Event brief

Into its 11th year, the Asian MICE Forum (AMF) is an annual event where speakers from the world's major MICE organisations, such as ICCA, UFI and SITE, share their thoughts and experiences.

Themed *The New Era of Experiencing and Sharing*, this year's event saw a discussion of new trends beyond the scope of incentive travel and events, and touched on creative issues and CSR stories in the meetings and conventions sector.

Moreover, as Taiwan's first event to have gained ISO 20121 certification – involving the implementation of a management system standard and green, sustainable MICE practices – the Forum served to encourage the country's MICE industry to adopt the standard and stay abreast of the global green conference trend.

Challenges

The key challenge for an 11-year-old forum is to keep the content and programme new and fresh to satisfy the experienced audience and to engage the younger delegates now involved in

Event

Asian MICE Forum 2016

Organiser

Commissioned by the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA) and implemented by Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA)

Venue

Taipei International Convention Center

Date

September 7 and 8, 2016

Number of participants

600 pax



the MICE industry.

Moreover, where in the past, invited speakers were only from the Asian region, speakers are now invited from all over the world.

A further challenge hence is for organisers to switch to a more global perspective.

Solutions

To make the AMF more dynamic and attractive, boundaries of the MICE industry needed to be extended so the most innovative and inspiring speakers could be involved. The organisers believe that the acronym "MICE" is not

limited to the scope of meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions – it also stands for an industry of creativity and knowledge sharing.

To keep abreast of the latest trends, the organisers arranged for attendance at IMEX, IBTM, SITE, ICCA, and UFI events.

The latest information and most relevant topics were collected, particularly, in relation to new technology tools commonly used by the young generation of today. AMF's event design, theme, and speakers list were reimaged and interactive technologies like online voting and augmented reality were integrated to enhance audience experience.

Key takeaways

The forum stayed fresh and offered a platform for participants to learn new things about the industry. Hot issues and interesting elements in the programme also helped generate more innovative ideas, putting conviction behind the saying that new thinking brings new possibilities.

"Being here is a great learning opportunity for me. I have learnt a lot about how to integrate experience design and new technology into event planning so as to have more interaction engaging all attendees. Thanks to the sharing of experts at AMF, I really had my horizon extended."

Laurie Pan, general manager, e21 MagicMedi

{ Hot moves }



Ian McKie

Andrew Moore

Conrad Seoul has named Moore its director of business development. He joins from Hilton Beijing where he held the same title.

Andrew Tan

Tan now leads Pan Pacific Hotel and Serviced Suites, Ningbo as general manager, having moved from Copthorne Tara Hotel London Kensington where he was also general manager.

Ian McKie

Oakwood Asia Pacific has appointed McKie



Jean-Yong Pittion

as the new general manager of Oakwood Premier Cozmo Jakarta. He was most recently general manager of Nine Dragons HNA Hotels in Zhejiang, China and was responsible for the Nine Dragons Resort Complex. His extensive career spans 20 years.

Jean-Yong Pittion

Pittion is now executive assistant manager of F&B for Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel, Cotai Central and The St. Regis Macao, Cotai Central, having moved from Mandarin Orien-



Matt Brennan

tal, Hong Kong where he was director of F&B.

Matt Brennan

Carlson Wagonlit Travel has named Brennan its vice president of hotel operations. He most recently served as vice president of field partner management of QSI Facilities.

Matt O'Keefe

O'Keefe is now Carlson Wagonlit Travel's chief technology officer of hotel distribution. He brings 20 years of technology and software experience, as well as rich expertise and deep



Matt O'Keefe

knowledge of the travel industry, to his new role. He was most recently chief technology officer for Hyatt Hotels & Resorts.

Maxine Howe

Niccolo Hotels has named Howe as the director of sales and marketing for its new flagship property The Murray, a Niccolo Hotel, Hong Kong. She boasts over 30 years of experience in luxury hospitality and was most recently director of sales and marketing at Langham Place Hotel, Hong Kong.



Romain Chan

Michael Robinson

Caravelle Saigon in Ho Chi Minh City is now helmed by Robinson, who has been promoted from his former position as director of rooms.

Romain Chan

Pan Pacific Hotels Group has appointed Chan as area general manager, China and general manager, Pan Pacific Suzhou. He has over 30 years of industry experience spanning China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Philippines and the US. He is no stranger to the Group, having helmed Pan Pacific Ningbo from 2014 to 2016.

{ Career inspiration }

Reiko Tokuda

Marketing director, DMC Okinawa, Inc

How long have you been in the travel industry and what do you enjoy most about your job?

I have been working as a meeting planner in Okinawa for 10 years and, for me, there is nothing better than seeing our guests experience our programmes and then giving us big smiles in return. It is great when we can all see the targeted effect happening and again when we are able to share the client's excitement with our team.

What is your greatest career achievement to-date?

For six years, I served as a ISO9001-standard chief auditor. That experience has helped me to plan and offer services with our company that take into consideration the importance of process management.

I have never stopped striving to devise ways to make a process more efficient, to determine ways in which we can heighten the degree of achievement in our programmes and how we can deliver additional satisfaction to our clients.

Does anything about your job keep you awake at night?

My mind is constantly occupied with how we can develop better plans to provide greater satisfaction to our clients, and what we can do to brush-up our overall services.

I also often think if all members of our team are sharing and understand the company's purpose of helping clients to achieve their aims.

What are your top three tips for achieving success in a career in this industry?

First, you should build a network that encompasses global issues, the meetings industry, regional culture, regional economics and, of course, clients.

Second, make sure you understand your clients' interests and share that knowledge with your entire team.

Third, raise the motivation levels of your team and make sure they are sharing the organisation's goals.



A race for success

Themed *Race to Innovation: Winning in the age of disruption*, **Associations Summit 4**, hosted by the Philippine Council of Associations and Association Executives, saw a gathering of local and overseas association professionals in November 2016. Outstanding associations and association board members and professionals were also recognised in the Ang SUSI Awards.



TTGmice
Asia Pacific's leading meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions magazine

What's next?

The first TTGmice issue for the year 2017 will take a look at how Asia-Pacific's business events industry is expected to perform, with inputs from industry veterans and thought leaders. And if you are hoping to take your next event to the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong or Japan, be sure to watch this space.

Sven Bossu

The head of Sibos – an annual conference, exhibition and networking event organised by SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) – tells **Caroline Boey** how the event has evolved and how a host city is picked

How has Sibos evolved into the event it is today and what are the key objectives?

The key objectives of Sibos have not changed since it started in 1978. It is still about bringing the SWIFT community together to connect, debate and collaborate; independent of the region Sibos is held in.



What has drastically changed is the nature of the debates and the number of participants. In 1978, the key topic was the implementation of messaging standards, whereas in 2016, cyber security and distributed ledger technology were the topics of the week when the event was held in Geneva from September 26-29. As for the number of delegates, it has swelled from 300 to well over 8,000.

How is the next region and city decided, and what are the key considerations and must-haves to be on the shortlist?

Sibos applies a three-year rotation cycle, moving from EMEA (Europe, Middle East, Africa) to the Americas to Asia-Pacific. This cycle rotation has been in place for a long time and is unlikely to change in the future.

The executive committee of SWIFT decides on the city selection based on 10 criteria such as strategic fit, availability, connectivity, local transportation, security, etc. One criteria that is becoming increasingly important is the green factor – how green are both the city and the venue under consideration. A must-have for any city is the ability to offer an overall experience. Just having a nice conference and exhibition centre is no longer sufficient. It is about creating a “Sibos-buzz” throughout the city during the event.

In the Asia-Pacific, Hong Kong (1991, 2009), Sydney (1997, 2006, 2018), Singapore (2003, 2015), and Osaka (2012) have been chosen. What must other cities in the region do to get onto Sibos’ radar?

We tend to go back to cities where we have held successful Sibos events previously – especially for the Americas and Asia-Pacific – which explains the “repeats”.

However, we are open to having an initial discussion with any city in the regions which can meet all our criteria. We are currently signed up until 2023, so the next open slot for an Asia-Pacific Sibos is 2024.

Share some examples of wow moments cities delivered when they hosted Sibos.

We have been very fortunate to have had wow moments at every Sibos – although sometimes it was completely out of our control. Looking at special dates, we were in Berlin in 1989 (the fall of the Berlin Wall), in Singapore in 2015 (its 50th birthday) and it will be in Toronto in 2017 (Canada’s 150th birthday). On a different note, we were in Vienna in 2008 when the fall of Lehman Brothers was announced on the first day of Sibos!

What kind of government and private sector partnership support is Sibos looking for to tip a city in its favour?

We are looking for partnerships which allow us to enhance the event or make the delegate experience even more unique.

For instance, some cities will provide us access to top speakers, while others will open up venues which otherwise remain sealed to the public, or focus on making sure that delegates can discover the city in an efficient way by offering free public transport. It isn’t a single thing we are looking for; it has to be a mix. At the end of the day it needs to be a win-win situation for both parties.

How will you make the next Sibos another wow event? What’s in store at the 2018 event in Sydney?

Well, it is actually Sydney that has something in store. Sibos 2018 will take place in a brand new conference and exhibition centre, which also triggered a complete revamp of the Darling Harbour area. So for those who attended Sibos in 2006, they can expect to discover a completely different city.



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超过76%的参展商预期在2016年展会结束一年内获取订单



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BUYER 买家

The event was very successful. I met potential suppliers who gave detailed explanations about their products and I gained updated knowledge about their offerings.
PT. Multi Holiday, Indonesia
Rudy Techrisna Satyadi, Managing Director

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深圳新景界国际会议展览有限公司
吴立辉, 会议文化交流中心主管

EXHIBITOR 展商

It was the first time that we participated at IT&CM China and I felt that the 3-day event was organised efficiently. I interacted with many professional Chinese and International buyers and media and look forward to developing my relationship with them in the future.
Daimaru Matsuzakaya Department Store, Japan
Li Meng Ying, Project Manager

眼见为实。作为本次开幕典礼及欢迎晚宴的主办方, 我们借此机会邀请有影响力的业内人士前来参观我们的酒店, 以及我们举办这种活动的的能力。所以我相信这次合作会给我们带来巨大的惠宜。
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