



HATA MATTERS

7th Edition February 2022

HATA MATTERS is a regular newsletter with the objective to enhance communications with its members and serves to inform members of pertinent industry news and developments, membership activities & events such as study tours, annual conventions etc., selective destination updates and various articles of interest for the membership.

Feedbacks and contributions from members are most welcomed. Please send your views and contributions to

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Please also visit Hong Kong Association of Travel Agents site on Facebook where there are more than 600 “followers” or SCAN the QR Code to give us thumbs up!

FESTIVE GREETINGS FROM THE HATA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



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Message from the Chairman

Dear members

May I wish you all a healthy year of the Tiger ahead!

The 5th wave of the pandemic in Hong Kong, the most severe one by far, have once again caused all social activities to come into a hiatus, including all the activities that your association have planned for all members in the 1st quarter of 2022.



During the 4th quarter of 2021, when the pandemic situation of Hong Kong seemed to be well under control, your executive committee was planning for a series of activities to prepare our members to resume business in 2022. The planned activities include a half day convention themed “The Future of Tourism”, our long over-due Spring Dinner, follow by a possible convention to be held outside of Hong Kong in the latter half of 2022.

Unfortunately, all the above planned activities had to be postponed amid the current pandemic situation. This is another big blow to the tourism sector that have been suffering from covid-19 pandemic for over 2 years.

As soon as the 5th wave started, your association, together with the Travel Industry Council (TIC) have immediately written to the HKSAR government, demanding for further support to the travel trade. Since then, the government have provided the travel trade with another round of relief under the 5th round of anti-epidemic fund, with a planned 6th round on its way.

Adding the 2 rounds of relief support together, each member will receive a minimum of \$100,000 support from the HKSAR government.

Without doubt, this is the most difficult time for Hong Kong. Under this crucial time, it is important for the whole community to stay healthy, to strictly follow social distancing policy set out by the government and most importantly, **to be fully vaccinated as soon as possible.**

As a small gesture and for peace of mind, your association have offered each member a pack of 5 covid-19 rapid antigen test kit. Under odd times like now, staying “negative” is consider a very encouraging “positive” message!

All the best,

Ronald Wu

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

*In this section **HATA MATTERS** conducts a series of interviews with various members of the Executive Committee who are elected by the membership and dedicated to serving the membership to the betterment of the Association and in the best interest of the travel industry*

*In this edition, **HATA MATTERS** interviews Ms. Lily Agonoy, a member of our Executive Committee and a former Chairlady of our association, to share her thoughts*

HATA MATTERS: Can you tell us something about your early days and your career in the travel industry?

LA: I was born in Hong Kong but grew up in the Philippines as my mom and I joined my father in the Philippines when I was 4 years old.

I returned with my family to Hong Kong in the 80s and graduated with English Language and Literature at the HK Baptist College, now HKBU. Fortunately, I knew that I wanted a career in the travel industry immediately after graduation because I wanted to see the world and being with average income family, this is impossible. It was hard to find a job in the travel industry during my time since they all require experience and being freshman, I have none. I started as a trainee in an inbound travel agency and kept on searching for outbound travel agency jobs. I am thankful to Mrs. Maria Loh (previously with Farrington Travel) who granted me this opportunity for a travel career. Because of this, I always extend a hand to passionate fresh graduates whom are looking for a career in our travel industry. For me, having a career in the travel industry really did fulfill my dreams of visiting a lot of places in the world. I have the privilege to have a job which I enjoyed.



HATA MATTERS: When did you join the HATA Executive Committee and some of the committees you have been involved with?

LA: I don't really remember exactly when I joined the HATA Executive Committee as it was years ago! I just remembered that after a few years in the travel industry, I wanted to join a travel association and contribute in some ways to the travel industry, sort of giving back. I explored this idea with Mr. Freddy Pong of Sunpac (HATA's Former Chairman) who was one of the HATA's Executive Committee at the time.

With his encouragement and Mrs. Loh's; here I am today, still a HATA Executive Committee member. I have been involved with different committees – Ticketing, Convention, Membership, Training, and Inbound, Outbound etc. I had the honour to be the first Chairlady of HATA in 2006-2007.

HATA MATTERS: Can you tell us about any memorable activities that you have staged during your tenure as HATA's first lady Chairperson from 2006 to 2007?

LA: My most memorable occasion was the occasion when HATA celebrating its 50th Anniversary Golden Jubilee dinner in November 2007 with our Guest of Honour being the Financial Secretary, the Hon John Tsang Chun Wah, JP and a ballroom packed with 40 tables.

HATA MATTERS: What are your thoughts as regard to the association going forward?

LA: HATA as an association should continue to offer value to its members to strive and be successful in their businesses. During my stint as Chairlady, membership benefits were taken to the next level when the first membership card was launched offering various benefits & discounts



HATA MATTERS: Can you share with us your insight of travel trends post-pandemic?

LA: I think the post pandemic travel trends will start with short haul destinations i.e. regional near Hong Kong like Macau, China, Singapore, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and destinations deemed safe.

Travellers will be more on FIT or customized small group (families travelling together).

Duration will be longer since travelers will maximize their trip due to more process and procedures to travel.

HATA MATTERS: Any "Words of Wisdom" for our membership?

LA: More Value More Clients, Retention is far more important than Acquisition.

Travel Agents will come out stronger from this pandemic....just hang on and ride out the prevailing storm weather into calm seas soonest!

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A dialogue with the Honorable Perry YIU Pak-Leung



Representative of the Tourism Sector in the HKSAR Legislative Council

HATA MATTERS: Can you tell us something about your early days and career in the travel & hospitality industries?

PY: Travelling and sports are my life-long hobbies. I was active in organizing study exchange programs between Hong Kong and Mainland when I studied Sports Science at the university. These exchange programs are more similar to the predecessors of the current study tours. Before the World Expo held in Shanghai, I got the valid Tour Escort Pass from TIC and led the World Expo outbound tours during the summer vacation in 2010. In 2011, I joined the CTS Group and worked as an assistant general manager in Metropark Hotel Mongkok. Meanwhile I took up a part-time course and obtained a master degree of hotel management at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.



After fully participated in hotel operations for few years, I was transferred to the travel agency service sector and preceded further to all other aspects, including marketing, outbound tours, individual visitor schemes, ticketing, MICE and study tours.

HATA MATTERS: In your view, how has the pandemic impacted the travel & tourism industry in the past 20 months?

PY: Travel industry has suffered heavy toll from two years of closed borders. The tourism industry contributed 4.5 per cent of the city's gross domestic product in 2018, but that fell to 0.4 per cent last year.

Tourism Board

Only 91,000 people visited Hong Kong last year, a 97.4 percent drop year on year. More than 65,000 visitors came from the mainland, decreased by 97.6 percent compared to 2020 and there were just over 25,000 overseas travelers last year. The majority of the inbound travelers visited for family or out of necessity.

The fifth wave

It was originally expected that the policy of quarantine-free travel between Guangdong and Hong Kong would be resumed by the end of 2021 and the industry was planning to resume business by the Lunar New Year. However, it is estimated that the policy will not be implemented as expectation under the fifth wave outbreak. And even if the policy is commenced, the travel business would not have the rocket resumption.

Local tours

The tourism sector only relied on local tours last year, including "The Green Lifestyle Local Tour Incentive Scheme", "Spend-to-redeem Local Tours" and "Cruise to Nowhere" trips. But all related business is suspended.

HATA MATTERS: What significant changes in the industry do you predict in the post-pandemic period?

PY: Here are my views

Vaccine passports will be required.

Adopting vaccine passports will help countries reopen their borders during the pandemic and encourage citizens to receive their jobs.

The epidemic has reversed the global tourism ecology.

In the future, tourists will pursue personalized, in-depth and connotative travel experiences. Customized tours which are "sustainability" and "focus on personal experience" will emerge. The source market for in-depth travel has slowly developed from a niche market into a mass market.

Great pent-up demand for a wide variety of local leisure experiences.

The trend for booking domestic leisure experiences including Staycation will still be a trend in the short term and perhaps also in the near future because overseas travel remains unviable.

HATA MATTERS: What are your priority agenda at Legco in your first year of office?

PY: These are my priorities:

In dire need of accurate, prompt and continuous support

At the Chief Executive's Question and Answer Session in the Legislative Council, I strongly expressed the difficulties of the tourism industry to Mrs. Carrie Lam, saying that the industry is in dire need of government's accurate, prompt and continuous support, including subsidies for travel agencies, hotels, tourism transportation and their practitioners.



Create more temporary positions and improve talent training

The tourism industry is facing a serious brain drain problem. The "Administrative Support Services at the Community Vaccine Centers" has provided around 1800 jobs for the travel industry, but most of the vaccine centers were stop operating. In order to retain talents in the industry, the government should provide more temporary jobs for the industry, such as the tourism guides or helpers of parks, monuments and exhibition hall for epidemic prevention. It also needs to increase tailor-made and on-the-job training courses.

Set up a Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau

The government should speed up preparations for the establishment of the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau to facilitate the development of Hong Kong as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange as stated in the 14th Five-Year Plan and prepare for the future development of tourism.

Enhance the local travel subsidies

The industry is struggling to survive with the only local travel business, and more and more travel agencies and hotels have applied for "The Green Lifestyle Local Tour Incentive Scheme", "Spend-to-redeem Local Tours" or "Staycation Delights". The government should continue to allocate more resources for local travel, extend the duration of these schemes, and increase the total amount to relieve the worries of local travel agencies and hotels.

Resume quarantine-free travel

The relief fund is just to staunch the bleeding. It is important to resume quarantine-free travel with the Mainland and other countries to recover daily lives and different kinds of interactions between people among places.

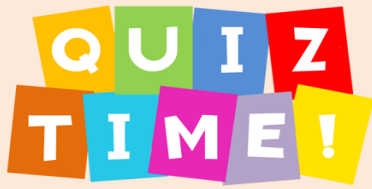


HATA MATTERS: Looking into the crystal ball, when do you think the industry will return to normalcy?

PY: Hong Kong is facing the outbreak where stringent measures are adopted. It is appreciated that government announced on 17 Jan that \$300 million will be injected to extend the "Green Lifestyle Local Tour Incentive Scheme" for encouragement. Besides, government should **get rid of the vicious cycle of "tightening fastly, relaxing slowly"** and formulate a "Quarantine-free Travel Roadmap" not only for the industry, but also for the society.

HATA MATTERS: Any word of wisdom for our members?

PY: Let's use collective intelligence to solve the predicament and find a way out!



Answers to the HATA Travel Quiz posted in the previous edition

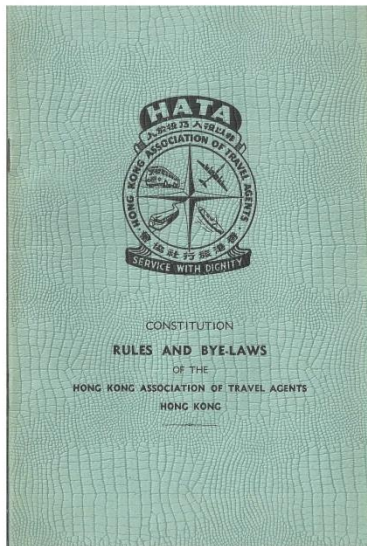
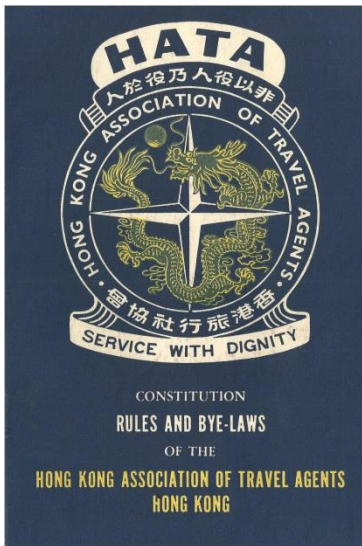
Q1.

When was HATA established? **1957**

Q2. Where was the destination for the latest HATA overseas Convention? **Sydney, Australia**

Q3. In which year was the first HATA overseas convention held? **1972**

Q4. Where was the first HATA Convention held? **Macau**



Q5. Who is the owner of the largest cruise ship at this time? **Royal Caribbean International**

Q6. Who is generally acknowledged as the father of the tourism industry? **Thomas Cook**

Q7. When was Hong Kong Tourism Board (previously the HKTA) established? **01April2001**

Q8. Name one destination in Asia where HATA has held its overseas convention Macau, **Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, Singapore, Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Manila, Sanya, Phuket, Pattaya, Hanoi, Taipei, Tainan Kota Kinabalu, Kagoshima, Seoul, Jakarta**

Q9. In which year did HATA celebrated its Diamond Jubilee? **2017**

Q10. In what month and year did the present airport (CLK) became operational? **July 1998**

Congratulations to the 20 winners of this quiz and the Secretariat will be in contact the winners in due course for the collection of prizes

More travel quizzes will be featured in future editions....so watch out for them!

In conversation with
Mrs. Gianna Hsu
Chairlady
Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong

HATA MATTERS: Can you tell us something about your early days and career in the travel business?

GH: I started my career in the travel industry 40 years ago. In my early years in the travel industry, I worked in a leading position at two of the largest outbound retail travel agencies respectively at the time. In 1990, I joined my current company, which mainly focuses on inbound and outbound-MICE travel business. I enjoy my time very much in different sectors of the travel business.

On serving the travel industry, I acted as Chairman of the Federation of Hong Kong Chinese Travel Agencies, and was acting as President of the Hongkong Japanese Tour Operators Association. My relationship with the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) began in 1992 while working as one of the members of the Board of Directors. Since 1997, I had taken up the position of TIC Deputy Chairman. My motivation to work and to serve in the travel industry comes from my passion in traveling and in meeting different people around the world. Thanks to the support from the trade, I am grateful to lead as Chairman of TIC since December 2021.



HATA MATTERS: With the inevitable transition of the operation and regulatory framework of Hong Kong's travel industry from TIC to the TIA in the coming year, what will be the role of TIC after the transition?

GH: In mid-2022, the licensing and trade regulatory functions from the Travel Agents Registry and the TIC will be taken over respectively by the Travel Industry Authority (TIA) for the full implementation of the new regulatory regime. Established under the Travel Industry Ordinance (Cap. 634) in January 2020, the TIA is a new regulatory body of the travel industry which is primarily responsible for the licensing and regulation of travel agents, tourist guides and tour escorts.

The TIC has been proactively preparing for the transition to the new regulatory regime and the transformation into a federation of travel trade associations. Its work will then be more focused on promoting development of the trade and training of industry personnel.

Serving for more than 40 years, the TIC will continually act as a bridge between travel agents and their business partners and the Government, speak up and fight for their rights and interests, and maintain close contact with mainland and overseas tourism departments and associations, related local organizations and enterprises in order to seek for business promotion, career development and professional enhancement opportunities for members, tour escorts and tourist guides.

HATA MATTERS: What significant changes do you envisage for travel agents and tour operators in the post-pandemic period?

GH: In my opinion, there will be a gradual recovery in the post-pandemic period, the speed of which will depend on the (medical) development of the pandemic. In the immediate post-pandemic period, I envisage that our fellow members will have to work on recruiting experienced employees and probably developing new businesses that they did not work on because their past business might not have recovered to pre-pandemic level. Also, there will be more health regulations, like vaccine pass, etc.

HATA MATTERS: What are the plans to help TIC members to recover from the aftermath of the pandemic?

GH: The TIC has continued to work very hard to support the trade and has all along worked closely with the HKSAR Government to help administer the support measures. During the past period of time, through the active and frequent reflection of the views of the trade by the TIC, the HKSAR Government has provided financial support to the tourism-related industry and cross-boundary passenger transport trade through various rounds of the Anti-epidemic Fund.

When the travel industry resumes from the aftermath of the pandemic, the TIC will strongly urge the government to provide funding to the travel industry players for the revitalization of their business. We will also aim to provide more training to enhance the competitiveness of our fellow members, their employees, tour guides and tour escorts. We will also provide a digital platform to facilitate B2B and B2C business of our fellow members. We will also cooperate with trade partners and other entities to promote the interests of the travel industry.



HATA MATTERS: Looking into the crystal ball, when do you think the industry will return to normalcy?

GH: The Omicron variant is spreading rapidly and Hong Kong is facing a fifth wave of the Covid-19 outbreak. During January, the Government has tightened social distancing measures which will be maintained until the Lunar New Year holiday, in response to the rapidly changing epidemic situation. To prevent the importation of COVID-19 cases, the Government also announced that the place-specific flight suspension mechanism will be extended to early February. Some experts predicted that fifth wave cases may take two to three months to contain.

The trade, including myself, would certainly like to see the early resumption of quarantine-free travel between the Mainland, Macau and Hong Kong, which may enable short haul market to resume. However, hopes that the tourism industry would rebound from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 seem to be dented by the spread of the Omicron variant. It is foreseeable that it will take a long time for the tourism industry to return to normal.

HATA MATTERS: Any word of wisdom for our members?

GH: Because we are a service industry, our people are our greatest asset. We should contemplate how we can maintain and utilize this greatest asset. This would inevitably include some sort of new business development. If we can retain our greatest asset, we can have a head start when the travel industry rebounds. **Together, we can create opportunities in the face of changes.**

Looking forward, the TIC will continue to maintain a close contact with the Government and continue speaking up for the trade, as well as proactively prepare for the gradual resumption of quarantine-free travel. Meanwhile, the TIC will continue to fully support the Associations and members in promoting a brighter future for the tourism industry. We are looking forward to a new chapter in post COVID-19 period.

Membership Activity

An educational afternoon excursion to Hong Kong's latest tourism attractions

A total of 37 members joined an educational afternoon excursion to Hong Kong's latest tourism attractions on Wednesday 22 December

Prior to setting out for the excursion, members were treated with a semi-buffet lunch at the "Waterfront" restaurant operated by the Harbour Grand Kowloon Hotel.



The first stop of the excursion was the Central Market formerly a fresh food market in Central and Hong Kong's and the first wet market. It is one of only two existing Bauhaus market buildings in Hong Kong, the other one being Wan Chai Market

After years of disuse, it was reopened to the public on Aug 23, 2021 as a new centre for retailers, eateries and public areas. This was after a major renovation led by the Urban Renewal Authority, which retained some original architectural structures such as some market stalls and its iconic stairwell.

Next a quick stop at the Tamar Park for a photo opportunity before heading to West Kowloon to visit the new M+ Museum - new kind of museum that reflects our unique time and place, a museum that builds on Hong Kong's historic balance

of the local and the international to define a distinctive and innovative voice for Asia's twenty-first century.

The opening displays feature M+'s pre-eminent collections of visual art, design and architecture, and moving image from Hong Kong, Greater China, Asia, and beyond. The presentations showcase approximately 1,500 works across thirty-three galleries and other spaces in the museum.



All in all a most informative and enjoyable afternoon