



HATA MATTERS

5th Edition October 2021

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

manager@hata.org.hk For advertising opportunities please contact the Secretariat



Please also visit Hong Kong Association of Travel Agents site on Facebook where there are more than 500 “followers” or SCAN the QR Code to give us thumbs up!

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



Greetings fellow HATA members

HATA has recently commissioned a survey entitled “The Way Forward” to be conducted by a team of Master Degree students from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, School of Hotel and Tourism Management.

The main objective of this research is to develop a sustainable and strategic tactic and plan for HATA to formulate the membership strategy which meet the needs of HATA members and pave the way for the future development of HATA through creating membership value and enhancing the functionality of you association.

Soon, each of our member will be receiving an email with an online link to complete a short (less than 10 minutes) survey. Your input is critical in making this study meaningful and ultimately, enhance the membership value of HATA to benefit our members. Thus, we request your support for this very important project for the betterment of our association and its valued members. As a token of appreciation and to encourage responses, a \$50 coupon will be given to each member that participated in the survey once the participating members reach 100. Stay tuned for details.

Many thanks and hope you will enjoy some of the very interesting articles in this edition of the newsletter

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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. Eliza Ma, HATA's Honorary Secretary & Treasurer as well as the Chairperson of the Membership & PR Committee to share her thoughts and visions*

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

EM: I started my travel industry career in the eighties and worked managerial positions in various travel companies namely Karison Travel, Thomas Cook, Travelex and TLX. Currently I am the General Manager of Corporate Travel Management Ltd (CTM) which is essentially engaged in business travel plus some a bit of leisure and incentive arrangements

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

EM: I joined the HATA Executive Committee around 15 years and took up the role of Honorary Secretary & Treasurer after the retirement of my predecessor Mr. Ken Chang in 2019. Here, I must give a vote of thanks to all the former Honorary Secretaries & Treasurers and commended them for their financial prudence of HATA's operation all these years.

Historically, there has always been a lot of subsidies for membership and other activities (such as study and fam tours) from HATA's financial reserves, therefore the HATA operation is very dependent on members' subscription hence It was indeed a challenge to waive the membership fee for 2020/21 and a reduction in 2021/2022.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank each and every one of our members for their unrelenting support and loyalty to HATA throughout the years especially during these challenging times

Additionally I also chair the Membership & PR Sub-Committee and am also a member of the Staff & finance Sub-Committee



HATA MATTERS: *Can you tell us more about the membership activities that you have staged in the past and the most memorable one in your opinion?*



First and foremost it is the Membership & PR Committee's mission to enhance membership connectivity and networking as well as supporting the works of other sub-committees such as assisting the promotion of our Annual Convention and of course the recruitment of new members

We are fortunate to have a great, creative and active team on the Membership& PR Sub-Committee who over the years has come up with meaningful and fun-filled membership activities such as the Annual Chinese New Year and/or Christmas gatherings, a variety of "Summer Fun" activities such as, a dinner cruises on Victoria Harbour , a musical

evening on the Jumbo Kingdom Floating Restaurant, Happy Hour membership networking, visit to the Show Suite of 11 SKIES and more recently the local excursion as mentioned in this edition.

Perhaps my most memorable activity that I and my sub-committee stages was a poolside barbeque, with an extensive menu and free flowing drinks with live music and dancing under the stars.....ending up with a good number of luck draw winners !!!

HATA MATTERS: *What are your thoughts as regard to activities for the membership going forward?*

Needless to say my sub-committee and I shall spare no efforts in coming up with new ideas but more importantly I would like to appeal to our members to suggest their choices /preference membership activities to further strengthen and enhance membership connectivity and networking opportunities.

In this context please feel free to send your ideas/requests/suggestion to our Secretarial for follow up



Updates from Regent Seven Seas Cruises

REGENT SEVEN SEAS CRUISES 2023-2024 VOYAGE COLLECTION

The World's Most Luxurious Fleet™ has raised the bar yet again with the launch of the 2023-2024 Voyage Collection. Regent's luxury ships will sail an incredible 139 new voyages, with 15 maiden ports of call and four mesmerising Grand Voyages to explore. The new itineraries have been meticulously crafted with discerning guests in mind, bridging their passion for discovering the world with Regent's all-inclusive luxury cruise experience.

[ANTICIPATE THE JOURNEY](#)

ABOARD THE NEW SEVEN SEAS GRANDEUR – SUITES & FIRST SAILINGS REVEALED

For nearly thirty years, Regent Seven Seas has held its status as the leading luxury cruise line. Inspired by the past and looking to the future, the newest ship *Seven Seas Grandeur* continues the line's heritage of perfection by offering the very best in space, service, cuisine and experiences. Anticipated to commence her inaugural season in November 2023, with 17 voyages in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean plus two transatlantic crossings, *Seven Seas Grandeur* is expected to continue to set records for advance reservations, so encourage your guests to book early! [LEARN MORE](#)



SPECTACULAR DINING ON BOARD SEVEN SEAS GRANDEUR

Dining on board *Seven Seas Grandeur* brings Regent Seven Seas Cruises' elevated specialty dining to even greater heights. Signature restaurant **Compass Rose** is the ship's largest and most spectacular restaurant, reminiscent of an enchanted forest with a vision of majestic blooms in the very centre. For sweeping ocean views and a magnificent French fine dining experience, **Chartreuse** offers an expansive wine range in an art deco inspired setting, while **Prime 7** is a refined classic American steakhouse set in the early 1900s era, offering perfectly cooked aged-meats, fresh seafood and more.

[DISCOVER A TASTE OF EXQUISITE DINING EXPERIENCES](#)

THE SUITE LIFE ON SEVEN SEAS GRANDEUR

Seven Seas Grandeur is set to offer the highest level of imaginable luxury. With a maximum of 750 guests per voyage, she has the highest space and staff-to-guest ratios in the industry. On board, the new ship offers 15 exquisite suite categories, starting from the Deluxe Veranda and Veranda Suites, which have been revitalised with soft pink hues and muted tones in a classic modernistic aesthetic, each with a 108 sq ft balcony. The one-of-a-kind Regent Suite – a skylit, glass-enclosed parlour - comes with a private in-suite spa and unlimited complimentary treatments, two spacious bedrooms fitted with hand selected furnishings and textiles, marble and stone bathrooms, a personal bar and dining room and of course dedicated butler service. It's possibly the most luxurious address at sea.

[EXPLORE YOUR HOME AWAY AT SEA](#)

THE LONG ANTICIPATED SEVEN SEAS GRANDEUR INAUGURAL SAILINGS

Seven Seas Grandeur will embark on her first sailing on 25 November 2023, making her way across the Atlantic with a 14-night cruise from Barcelona to Miami, visiting Seville, Funchal, and Bermuda on the way. She then coasts through the Caribbean Sea to South America from Miami, to celebrate Christmas and ring in the new year on the 16-night *Comfort Across the Canal* cruise, exploring Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Mexico. Guests can enjoy complimentary shore excursions with expert guides, as with all Regent Seven Seas Cruises sailings.

[SEE ALL INAUGURAL SAILINGS](#)

Updates from Oceania Cruises



OCEANIA CRUISES' NEWEST SHIP *VISTA* SETS SAIL IN 2023

Oceania Cruises, the world's leading culinary and destination-focused cruise line is adding the final touches to its newest ship *Vista*, set to sail in 2023. The design and décor of the staterooms and suites are a work of art aboard the new vessel, perfectly embodying the stylish living, thoughtful amenities and personal touches that Oceania Cruises is synonymous with. Interior style house Ralph Lauren Home lends its impeccable taste to *Vista*'s three supremely spacious Owner's Suites, each measuring 2,400 sq ft and spanning the full beam of the ship, to create seagoing estate homes which are the ultimate expression of timeless elegance.

[TAKE A VIRTUAL TOUR](#)

INTRODUCING THE CULINARY HIGHLIGHTS OF YOUR *VISTA* CRUISE ADVENTURE

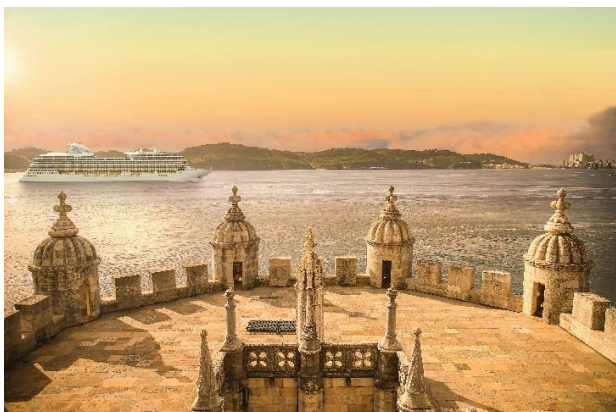
The finest wining and dining has always distinguished Oceania Cruises, and with the debut of *Vista* comes two new concepts to join the already superb existing restaurant line up. A signature addition, **Ember** is the ideal place to find culinary comfort with a menu of inventive American creations blended with time-honoured classics. An extension of the cruise's health and wellness programme, **Aquamar Kitchen**, presents a fresh perspective on health-conscious dining, offering an abundance of indulgence with none of the guilt.

[EXPLORE VISTA DINING](#)



THE UNVEILING OF INAUGURAL SEASON VOYAGES FOR *VISTA*

To celebrate the newest ship to join the fleet, *Vista*'s Inaugural Season is set to make waves in the world of cruise travel. The first 18 voyages commencing in April 2023 will span 24 countries across four continents, from Asia in the East to



Hollywood in the west. The itineraries have been carefully designed to present immersive destination experiences and unique perspectives travellers have never seen before.

[PREVIEW VISTA'S INAUGURAL SEASON VOYAGES](#)

GET IN TOUCH!

**Oceania Cruises &
Regent Seven Seas Cruises – Hong Kong**
Ms. Holly Kong (Director of Sales – North Asia)
T: 2165 6102 / 5236 8873
E: hkong@oceaniaregent.com

JOIN OUR LIVE WEBINAR!

You can learn more about the latest promotions and extended offerings, as well as preview the newest ships *Oceania Vista* and *Regent Seven Seas Grandeur* in a live webinar session (in Cantonese) with **Holly Kong, Director of Sales (North Asia)**.

Tuesday, 2 November, 2021
15:00 – 16:30 (HKT)
CLICK [HERE](#) TO REGISTER NOW!

In-depth Conversation with Mr. Dane Cheng

Mr. Dane Cheng, Executive Director, Hong Kong Tourism Board

Mr. Dane Cheng has been Executive Director of the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) since 2019, leading the organization as it maintains Hong Kong as a world-class travel destination.

Mr. Cheng also works closely with the Tourism Commission of the Hong Kong SAR Government and members of tourism-related sectors and organizations to oversee the industry's development and promotion of the Hong Kong tourism brand to visitors from around the world.

He serves on a number of key tourism-related bodies, including the Advisory Committee on Cruise Industry, the Advisory Committee on Travel Agents, the Lantau Development Advisory Committee, and the Tourism Strategy Group, among others.



HATA MATTERS: Since you took up the reins as Executive Director of HKTB in November 2019, can you share with us your thoughts about the challenges you encountered and achievements you made in almost two years?

DC: The past two years is definitely most challenging time for the tourism industry in Hong Kong. However, I have always believed that times of challenges are exactly the moments that spark innovation and experimental spirits – they are chances that we can seize to evolve for the better.

The tourism industry was hit by the social unrest in 2019. That was when we first launched the “Hong Kong is ON” promotions, which drove visitor arrivals from mainly short-haul markets, combining tactical offers and exciting experiences from our city’s core strengths in tourism.



Building on the agility that we have demonstrated, when facing the unprecedented challenge brought by COVID-19 pandemic on global tourism, the HKTB has also swiftly adjusted our strategies to drive local ambience and cheerleading for local businesses through the “Holiday at Home” campaign. The popularity of our first-ever venture into local tourism has been greatly beneficial to our work in showcasing Hong Kong as a lively, vibrant and safe world-class travel destination to global audiences in various source markets, and we are ready to welcome back visitors as soon as borders reopen.

The HKTB launched the “Holiday at Home” campaign in 2020 to boost local ambience and drive local consumption, successfully creating a multiplying effect and sends a positive message about Hong Kong to the global audience.

HATA MATTERS: How do you rate the success of promoting free local tours and staycation programmes to local residence at a time when borders are essentially closed to visitors?

DC: The HKTb's initiative in launching the Spend-to-Redeem "Free Tours" and "Staycation Delights" resulted in great success. Let the figures speak for themselves. The "Staycation Delights" programme successfully stimulated local spending, as the average of participants' actual spending reached \$1,200 to \$1,500, exceeded the minimum required spending of \$800 by 50% to 75%. It achieved a special multiplying effect along the cross-sector consumption chain.

Our strategy in providing incentives to local consumers to explore Hong Kong not only provided material financial support and cross-sector synergy to our local businesses, but also enabled our travel trade to identify new tourism assets and putting together exciting, upgraded products. These offerings that have come into being during travel restrictions will undoubtedly become part of our new tourism appeals to our mainland and overseas visitors in the future.

HATA MATTERS: Can you brief us about HKTb's "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods" campaign such as thematic walks focusing on heritage, craftsmanship, cultural and culinary arts?

DC: Since a few years ago, the HKTb has already identified in-depth, authentic local experiences as a growing trend for tourism. After the success of the "Old Town Central" (2017) and "Sham Shui Po" (2018) programmes of the "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods" campaigns, the "West Kowloon Neighbourhoods" promotion hopes to connect the district's rich heritage and vibrant street life in Yau Ma Tei and Jordan with new, world-class arts infrastructures, in particular the soon-to-open M+ Museum and Hong Kong Palace Museum in the West Kowloon Cultural District.



The "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods – West Kowloon" promotion takes locals and visitors on an authentic journey of heritage, cultural and art, featuring lesser-known points of interests such as the mosaic mural at the Yau Ma Tei Fruit Market (left) and



The promotion builds a bridge between the local life of the bustling communities of Yau Ma Tei and Jordan, which are home to much historical architecture, time-tested stores and traditional craftsmanship, and the artistic lure of the WKCD. We hope to take locals and visitors on an authentic adventure through 5 thematic walking tours focused on Heritage & Craftsmanship, Cultural Arts and Culinary Arts, which cover many little-known corners of the neighborhood.

HATA MATTERS: It looks like experiential tourism will play a key role in future promotions by the HKTb. In this context, would you agree that that training and orientation is crucial to upgrading the product knowledge of travel practitioners such as our licensed guides, product planners, and operation staff? Would this be an opportunity for the HKTb and HATA to work together in organizing these training programmes/seminars for our members?

DC: Experiential tourism is a rising and inspiring trend. Unlike tourism in earlier ages when tourism hardware dominated the trip, experiential tourism heavily relies on our local hosts, guides or points of interests to deliver in-depth knowledge and stories to the guests. Therefore, training and orientation for tourism industry practitioners is crucial to the

development of experiential tourism. That's why the HKTb has organized visits and provided information kits for members in the travel industry to familiarize them with the tourism assets in HKTb's various promotions, so as to well prepare them for developing new products and deliver services with these experiential elements. Definitely, we look forward to working with the whole travel industry on providing more trainings in the future.

HATA MATTERS: Before COVID-19 hit, the biggest challenge in the world of travel was "over-tourism" and now more than ever, sustainable tourism needs are deemed an important priority and consideration for travellers to choose destinations for their vacations. Where are we in terms of sustainable tourism in Hong Kong to meet the expectations from visitors?

DC: Sustainability is certainly a major focus in tourism development. To this end, we have maintained engagement with a wide spectrum of stakeholders when we develop major promotions or organize mega events. We hope local residents in the neighborhoods can enjoy the initiatives as much as visitors do so that they can become better hosts when we launch a promotion or event. The HKTb has unceasingly engaged different stakeholders in the community. By doing so, our local community will be able to appreciate the value of tourism and become a good host when they come across visitors in the community, giving them a warm welcome. We hope visitors can hence appreciate the authentic, "natural" facets of Hong Kong's diversity, and we trust this is what our visitors expect from us too.

HATA MATTERS: Do you think the popular usage of virtual meeting apps such as Zoom etc. would somehow impact the meetings and conference market segments when borders re-opens?

DC: Virtual meetings and hybrid form of meetings combining online and physical happenings has become the new normal for sure. However, virtual events and physical events are not at all mutually exclusive. With the right support in facilities and services, online conference technologies enable event organizers to reach audiences that they didn't involve previously and open up new markets.

Indeed, our trade partners in the MICE sector reflected that, organizers agree that the hybrid formats enhanced their efficiency, reach and participation. And the hybrid format has once again proofed that in-person participation is still an integral part of for the MICE segment, because MICE travel relies more heavily on reputation and credibility, which is harder to discern online, than other travel segments. That's why the HKTb has launched a new Convention Ambassador programme with over 100 elite leaders in business and various science and technology segments to spread the goodwill of Hong Kong's strength in hosting world-class MICE events. Our Convention Ambassadors are helping to leverage world-class MICE events to Hong Kong, and speed up the recovery of this high-yield segment



Hong Kong continues to see physical MICE events hybridized with virtual formats during the pandemic.

HATA MATTERS: Can you share with us HKTb's promotional strategies and plans in the short and medium term (hopefully when tourism here will return to normalcy) and are there any new mega events that are in the pipeline?

DC: The HKTb has drawn up a Recovery Framework, covering the short, medium and long term strategies. Before travel resumes, the HKTb will continue to focus on driving local ambience, spreading positive messages and maintaining Hong Kong's positive visibility on a global level to keep our city top-of-mind among consumers in visitor source markets.

We also endeavor in demonstrating to the world that HK is clean and ready by launching a standardized hygiene protocol. Different mega events such as Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival and large-scale promotional campaign West Kowloon Neighbourhoods continued to be organized to maintain Hong Kong's international exposure.

Being the hub of Greater Bay Area (GBA), once border reopens, we will strengthen promotions targeting GBA, to attract visitors, especially high-yield segment to Hong Kong and stay overnight to maximize tourism contribution. When international travel resumes, we will continue to work with other cities to establish a GBA tourism brand and collaborate with the travel trade to develop multi-destination GBA travel products with Hong Kong as the GBA's travel hub to attract international travellers to entire region.

In face of the evolving global tourism landscape, the HKTb will remain flexible and agile in our strategy to drive recovery of tourism industry in Hong Kong and sustainable development in the longer run.

Consultation and Sharing Session for the Draft Specification of Competency Standards for Travel Industry



On 24th September 2021, the Travel Industry Training Advisory Committee (ITAC) held a Consultation and Sharing Session for the Draft Specification of Competency Standards (SCS) for Travel Industry to collect views on the draft SCS from industry stakeholders. In the welcoming remark given by Mr. Andrew LEUNG Chi-kwan, JP, the Chairman of the Travel ITAC, he highlighted the completion of SCS would mark an important milestone to the human development for travel industry. He wished the values of Qualifications Framework (QF) would be widely supported by the industry and the capability of travel industry practitioners could be enhanced

through the quality-assured QF platform. .

To raise the understanding on the practical applications of SCS in human resources development, two guest speakers from Catering and Jewellery industries were invited to share their experiences in establishing structural internal training system based on the QF platform and developing SCS-based programmes to build up skillsets of their staff in the sharing session. The guest speakers were Mr. Wallace LI, Head of Food & Beverage Operations (Racecourses & Special Projects) of the Hong Kong Jockey Club and Mr. Terrence LAI, Training Manager of the Lukfook Group. The exchange gave meaningful insights to the participants on the diversified applications of QF and SCS in human resources management.

Human capital is a long-term rewarding investment. SCS of the Travel industry will serve as useful benchmarks and references for employers, practitioners as well as education and training providers. To learn more about QF, please visit www.hkqf.gov.hk

Dialogue with Mr. Peter Wong
Chairman of the Hong Kong Hotels Association

How many hotel members are there in your Association and the number of rooms they represent in the HKSAR?

As of July 2021, Hong Kong has 315 hotels with a total of 87,302 rooms.

Since its establishment in 1961, the HKHA has grown from its humble beginnings, with 11 founding member hotels to the current 139 strong members, operating 59,383 hotel rooms, representing 68% of the total number of hotels rooms in the city.

In 2021, the Association entered into a new milestone – HKHA 60th Anniversary. To commemorate the past 6-decades of remarkable achievements of the Association, while simultaneously promoting the history, development, and contributions to the economy since 1961, the Association has introduced an array of events and activities to ramp up preparations for tourism recovery as well as providing a positive impetus to hotel colleagues.

Our 60-year journey has not all been smooth sailing. As in all journeys, there were challenges, adversities, and complications along the way. We are thankful for all the support and contributions from our hotel members through the years.

Are there new hotels being developed in the near future?

There are many current and future hotel projects to meet the increase in overnight visitors to Hong Kong in recent years, particularly from Mainland China. 2015 and 2016 proved very difficult for Hong Kong hotel trade, with a decline in visitor arrivals and occupancy rates, but recovery had seen throughout 2017 and 2018 (the record year with 91% occupancy rate).

However, the effect of social unrest from mid-2019 resulting in a substantial reduction in overnight arrivals has had a devastating impact on the hotel trade, with occupancy rates continuing to deteriorate into early 2020 and little prospect of early recovery.

At the beginning of 2021, there were about 17 new hotel projects with original tentative completion dates before the end of the year and a further eight hotels provisionally due for completion before the end of 2022. However, the impact of global lockdown and travel restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a plunge of visitor arrivals to almost zero since early 2020. Some new hotel openings planned for 2020 and 2021 has been delayed until the situation improves.



How has the pandemic impacted the hotel industry in the past 18 months?

In the first six months of 2021, total visitor arrivals plunged 99.0 percent to 33,749, with average hotel occupancy at 56 percent compared to only 39 percent in the same period last year. With no improvement in the global lockdown situation, travel restrictions are a big challenge in recovery planning with no schedule to work with.

Under this unprecedented critical situation, quarantine hotel packages and staycation packages become the significant intake of business and income sources. However, the F&B business was drastically affected by social distancing measures, which restricted the operation hours, the number of guests, and the capacity of all catering premises. Due to the strict standards, most of the banquets and business meetings were cancelled, which are significant revenue sources for many hotels.

We have spared no effort in representing our members and ensuring our voice is heard. After continuous pleading to the Government for ease of social distancing measures, it was announced in August concerning further relaxation of social distancing measures, which enabled hotels to stage banquets or MICE events up to 180 pax. It is indeed significant to salvage the livelihood of many hotel employees and families.

Given the Covid-19 situation has continued to stabilize in recent months, growing vaccination intake in the city is a positive sign on the path of recovery.

What precautionary or preventive measures are your members taking or improve on in these challenging times?



Our world has been turned upside down by COVID-19, and this new 'normal' means that hotels must adapt. Apart from the accelerated pace of innovation and smart technology in hospitality, hotels have also put our guest's safety and well-being first by upholding the highest standards of cleanliness.

New operational guidance and resources, i.e., hand sanitizer stations throughout public spaces, social distancing guidance in hotel public areas, and protective masks for staff, have been deployed to ensure colleague and guest safety and peace of mind. Hopefully, these rigorous commitments will help bolster the confidence of our guests when they

resume travel again. The hotel industry has been - and will continue to be - second to none when it comes to vigilance in the fight against the coronavirus.

The Association also urges its members to encourage their staff to join the inoculation campaign. The objective is to better protect themselves, especially in light of advice from the World Health Organization that the vaccine protects against the disease by developing immunity and if you become exposed helps you fight the virus. We support community immunity will help speed up border opening in the Greater Bay Area, which is the priority for tourism recovery.

Our industry has always been disciplined, supportive, and responsible in terms of safe distancing and hygiene.

What changes do you predict post-pandemic?

Before Covid-19 turned the world upside down, the hospitality and tourism industry were responsible for more than 10 percent of global GDP and one in every ten jobs worldwide, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). It was one of the fastest-growing fields, accounting for one in four new jobs created over the previous five years.

The pandemic changed all that, at least temporarily. Inevitably hospitality and tourism sectors were among the hard-hit industry. The WTTC reported that the sectors lost \$4.5 trillion in 2020, with its contribution to GDP plummeting 49.1 percent, compared with just a 3.7 percent decline in the overall global economy.

The hospitality industry has a way to go before it could fully emerge from the woods, but its position is far more promising than it was this time in 2020 – and even in the early part of 2021. Its ongoing recovery will hinge on the ability to counter the known and unknown challenges along the way.

Covid-19 has placed greater scrutiny on design, particularly in public and transient spaces like hotels. Social distancing, reduced congestion points, better use of technology, Covid cleaning protocols of rooms and public spaces are all top of mind for travellers. The overarching objective for hotels of any star rating is to offer guests a low touch experience, with high guest service, to connect with guests on the journeys of their stay. Hotel owners and operators alike are addressing these matters.



Online check-in has been available for a few years, but now it is becoming the preferred means of checking into a hotel. For guests, it avoids unnecessary interface and a potential delay in access to the guest room. Moreover, the hotel reception staffs have more time to focus on greeting and assisting guests. The necessity of life has radically reduced consumer resistance to technology usage during the pandemic.

Another technology readily available is keyless room entry. A code sent to a mobile device is all that is required to open the room door. Although this technology was readily available before the pandemic, its adoption was slow as the legacy system worked.

Simple programming of the hotel lifts to allow access to a specific floor by presenting a scanner with a bar code on a smartphone is easily within technological capabilities. The other concepts like automatically opening doors become much more commonly in place. In some hotels, operators are even using robots and artificial intelligence to enhance touch-free operations. It could be just a few simple changes that could help in reducing the number of times we touch shared items in public spaces.

Practically, the way hotels react to Covid-19 is much more complex than merely addressing guests' interaction with their physical environment. Addressing cancellation policies for guests forced to change plans, disruption insurance, and the health and welfare of staff are being considered due to the pandemic across the industry. But ensuring guests understand that their chosen hotel makes their well-being and security a priority concern is critical to establishing trust with the clientele.

It is not so much a revolution in the way hotels operate that is taking place, but rather an accelerated adoption of existing technology.

Covid-19 is the nudge for the industry to review technology and a new guest experience. Travelling can be stressful, and during the pandemic has created additional stresses, domestically and certainly, internationally. Hotels that are more prepared to address some simple but important concerns in guests' minds will always preferred than those that think life will return to normal one day. The changes required for a better guest experience, because of Covid -19, are enhancements that will be advantageous irrespective of the pandemic's course.

With virtual meeting technology such as Zoom, what is the implication on meetings and conventions?

A lot has happened since last year that wreaked havoc on the MICE industry. The COVID-19 pandemic has been driving organizations to substitute face-to-face meetings with virtual editions leading to the hybrid version combining both. It has exterminated the event space, with online and hybrid events enjoying mixed success across industries. Technology

has been the only viable solution to overcoming the constraints caused by the pandemic. Covid-19 also created a mad scramble by event planners to turn to virtual formats.

The MICE industry needs to leverage technology in creative ways to serve its customers in developing new policies and service standards with a focus on health and hygiene.

If 'virtual' was the keyword for 2020, 'hybrid' is the zeitgeist for 2021. While many events will remain complete virtual for the rest of this year, plans are also underway to host events that include a blend of in-person and virtual participants.

As the pandemic rolls on, albeit with recovery insight in some regions, safety remains the top concern for event organizers. Much hinges on the successful roll-out of vaccines, which has been patchy in a global sense. Ongoing travel restrictions are another huge barrier and are subject to change at short notice, making it a challenge to do planning a live or hybrid event. The number of attendees will be substantially smaller than in the past, and possibly for years to come.

Looking into the crystal ball, when do you think that occupancy will return to normalcy?



Owing to volatility caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, international tourist arrivals (overnight) were down 83% in the first quarter of 2021 as widespread travel restrictions remained in place.

According to the UNWTO barometer, between January and March 2021, destinations around the world welcome 180 million fewer international arrivals compared to the first quarter of last year. Asia and the Pacific continued to suffer the lowest activity levels with a 94% drop in international arrivals over the three months. Europe recorded the second-largest decline with -83%, followed by Africa (-81%), the Middle East (-78%), and the Americas (-71%). It follows the 73% fall in worldwide international tourist arrivals recorded in 2020, making it the worst year in tourism history.

However, the UNWTO Confidence Index shows signs of a slow uptick in confidence. The latest survey of the UNWTO Panel of Tourism Experts shows prospects for the May-August period improving slightly. UNWTO's extended scenarios for 2021-2024 indicate that it could take between two-and-a-half and four years for international tourism to return to 2019 levels.

For sure, the pace of the vaccination rollout in major source markets and the policies to restart tourism safely are expected to help restore consumer confidence, contribute to an easing of travel restrictions, and slowly normalize travel during the year ahead.

In the absence of a crystal ball, we need to remain cohesive and collaborative both internally with members and externally with industry stakeholders. With normal business effectively mothballed because of the coronavirus crisis, members have made sterling efforts to carve out new and different business opportunities

Vaccines also offer reassurance and rebuild confidence to the travelling public along with the Government's comprehensive and rigorous anti-pandemic measures. We wish in the not-too-distant future, Hong Kong may become a COVID-free haven for tourists to visit. That is why the Association urges all our members to give their unconditional support to the vaccination programmes.

The mainland China market has been our inbound tourism bread and butter since 2003 after SARS, with the inception of IVS supported by the Central Government. There is no doubt that the very future of our industry depends on the reopening of borders to China, especially when international travel remains restrictive and fluid. The Greater Bay Area (GBA) is our target market, given its proximity to Hong Kong and its emergence as a regional powerhouse.

From this starting point, we can work together to tap the regional and international visitor market.



Office Space for Rent

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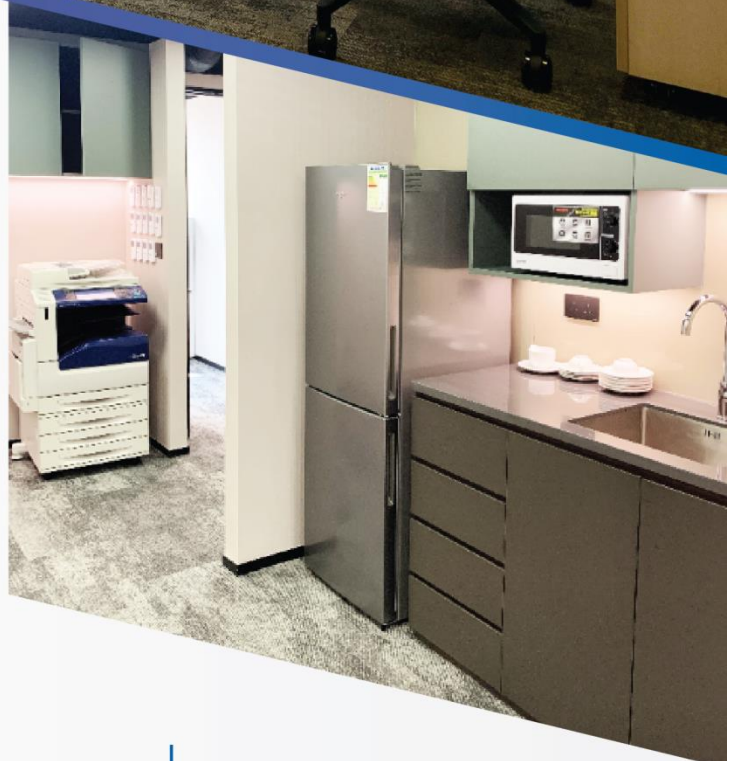
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Membership Activity: "Summer Fun" Excursions

As in previous years, the HATA Membership & PR committee organized two fun filled "Summer Fun" excursions on the 14th August (Cantonese speaking narration) and 21st August (English speaking narration).



A total of 80 members joined the two tours starting off in the afternoon and visiting the Nan Lian Garden: a Chinese Classical Garden in Diamond Hill. With an area of 3.5 hectares. It is designed in the Tang Dynasty-style with hills, water features, trees, rocks and wooden structures

Next, a visit to the Family Mask Factory where members were briefed on the production of the 3-ply Disposable Ear-Loop Face Mask. All members were given a box of 50 facemasks compliments of HATA

Afterwards, the excursion continue to SKY 100: the 360-degree indoor observation deck on the 100th floor of the International



Commerce Centre, in West Kowloon, offering scenic views of Hong Kong Island, Victoria Harbour, the Kowloon Peninsula and Tai Mo Shan in the background.



In the late afternoon, members were treated to a sumptuous dim sum meal at the renowned Tim Ho Wan restaurant known for being "the world's cheapest Michelin-star restaurant".

Later that evening, members boarded the newly formed Water Taxi to experience the enchanting night view of Victoria Harbour Kong and enjoy the unique A Symphony of Lights: the world's largest permanent light and sound show according to Guinness World Records

