



Message from the Chairman



As the Chairman of the Asian Council on Tourism, I take this opportunity to thank all our members for your continued support and patronage to CACCI. The much anticipated Millennium, is now at the end of its second decade. With time passing so rapidly, we must act with greater speed, or risk being left behind.

Having said that, the Tourism industry is ever-changing and the global platform is changing faster than ever before. All together the Industry continues to grow and travel has become more common place. According to The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates, the worldwide international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) has increased by 6% to 1.4 billion in 2018, clearly above the 3.7% growth registered in the global economy.

Each year, we take a look at what we think will affect independent properties and the hospitality industry as a whole. “We live in an increasingly connected and interdependent world with digital advances transforming how we inform ourselves, changing our behaviour, and encouraging innovation. We need not only new tools but also new capacities and ways of thinking.” stated the UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili.

Travelers today tend to seek new experiences rather than just going to new places. They seek to explore new cultures and possibilities than in the past. Digitalization has transformed the decision-making processes of travel just as the opportunities for tourism marketing.

With the new advances in technology and the transformation of the world and the challenges that ascend alongside it, are the new opportunities that arise with it. The Industry, therefore, must embrace these changes and the accompanying trends and the digital development for its betterment and services.

“The growth of tourism in recent years confirms that the sector is today one of the most powerful drivers of economic growth and development. It is our responsibility to manage it in a sustainable manner and translate this expansion into real benefits for all countries, and particularly, to all local communities, creating opportunities for jobs and entrepreneurship and leaving no one behind. This is why UNWTO is focusing 2019 on education, skills and job creation,” said UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili.

Tourism as an industry benefits its host communities and impacts many sectors, from infrastructure and transport to energy. It plays a pivotal role in job creation. The industry advances cultural understanding and brings people together. Therefore, Tourism needs innovation in technology to achieve its potential contributions.

On-going through the Travel and Tourism Council statistics, the total contribution of Travel and Tourism Industry to GDP was USD8,272.3bn (10.4% of GDP) in 2017 and was forecast to rise by 4% in 2018, and to rise 3.8% to USD12,450.1bn (11.7% of GDP) in 2028. Out of every 10 jobs in the market, one is directly related to tourism. In 2017, the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the visitor exports generated USD1,494.2bn (6.5% of total exports) in 2017. This is forecast to grow by 3.9% in 2018, and grow by 4.1% pa, from 2018-2028, to USD2,311.4bn in 2028 (6.9% of total).

The Millennials are changing the way the industry used to function, with them being the first generation to handle everything digitally, from the inception of a journey till the conclusion of it. They have set the trend of digitalization. The Travel and Tourism Industry has already undergone a massive digital transformation with offers like Booking.com and Airbnb being the new normal and the expectations of Millennials are fueling further changes.

According to Statista, the statistics Portal, travelers are also relying more on travel review sites when booking. The share of U.S. travelers who said travel review sites influence their travel choices increased by 10 percent between 2014 and 2015. Millennials are setting new digital standards, their requirements have spread to other generations and today, it is difficult to tell who is driving change in consumer behavior. What is sure is that Millennials are bringing in a huge momentum to the travel industry.

Overall, 2019 is yet to be an eventful year for Travel and Tourism. Emerging trends such as Sustainable travel or Eco travel, Wellness Travel, and Seamless Solutions are expected to be consolidated among consumers and predicted to bring in changes such as responsible travel.

Anura Samarawickrema Lokuhetty
Chairman, Asian Council on Tourism

APAC Records New Highs in Outbound Travel

By BRINK Asia Editorial Staff



Chinese tourists pose for a photograph as a gigantic Great White Shark replica floats into Sydney Harbor. China leads outbound travel growth in Asia-Pacific. Photo: Greg Wood/AFP/Getty Images

Increasing economic affluence in Asia-Pacific has been accompanied by higher cross-border tourism that has outpaced GDP growth in the region. According to a recent report by Visa, “Asia-Pacific households now account for one in three global traveling households, up from one out of four in 2006.” It is likely that even further growth will be witnessed, and by 2025, an estimated 90 million households from the region will become part of the global traveling class.

China Leads Outbound Travel Growth in the Region

In the last decade, outbound travel demand in 12 major Asia-Pacific economies increased twice as fast in terms of constant dollars and prices. Currently, China is the regional leader: Between 2006 and 2016, its outbound travel demand witnessed a staggering increase of 22 percent per year. In comparison, its GDP grew by 9 percent annually. By 2025, China is expected to add an estimated 80 million more households to the global traveling class. Trends in outbound travel from Southeast Asia are also encouraging: Growth in outbound travel has significantly exceeded real economic growth. The Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand also witnessed significant growth in outbound travel. Only Japan recorded a decline, largely on account of its aging population, which is more keen to travel within the country. Japan’s slowing outbound travel could also be attributed to its relatively slower pace of economic and income growth.

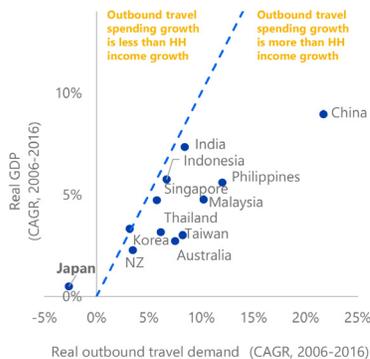


Exhibit 1: Travel and Tourism Expenditures Are Growing Faster than GDP in All Major Asian Economies Except Japan
Sources: International Monetary Fund, Institute of International Finance, Haver Analytics, Visa Business and Economic Insights

Singapore Residents Most Likely To Undertake Long-Haul Trips

The report highlights that most Asia-Pacific travelers are likely to travel within the region. However, the more affluent subset is likely to undertake longer trips to the U.S. and countries in Europe. Residents of Singapore, who boast an average household disposable income of nearly \$137,000, displayed the highest tendency for long-distance travel. Singapore was followed by Hong Kong and Australia, where residents have disposable incomes of \$102,000 and \$85,900, respectively. In countries such as India, Japan and Indonesia, the incidences of outbound travel were found to be significantly lower.

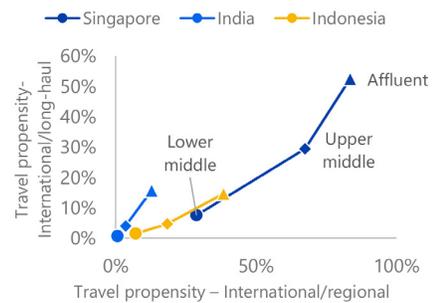


Exhibit 2: Cross-Border Travel Increases with Income but Skews to Regional Travel at Early Stages of Traveling Class, Source: VisaNet, 2017

Increasing Number of Cities that Can Support Mass Tourism

It is likely that outbound travel growth will continue its upward trend, as more cities reach a level where they can support mass tourism. The report states that “the propensity of households to travel cross-border ramps up once traveling-class households reach a critical mass of around 800,000 (roughly 70 percent of total resident households).” With rising economic affluence in Asia, more cities will become centers of outbound cross-border tourism. In China alone, the number of such cities is likely to double by 2025.

Travel Patterns Vary within the Region

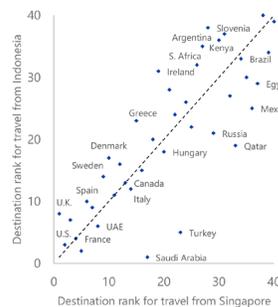


Exhibit 3: Neighbor Countries Can Have very Different Travel Preferences; Middle East Destinations Rank Much Higher for Indonesian Travelers than Singaporeans
Sources: VISIT, Haver Analytics, 2017

Although the traveling subset in the Asia-Pacific region is expanding, their preferences and travel patterns do not necessarily align with those of established markets. The report highlights that, “Travel arrivals indicate a preference for European destinations among Singaporean travelers, while Indonesians—who are newer to international travel—appear to favor Middle Eastern countries.” Indonesian travelers displayed a strong tendency

to travel to Saudi Arabia. In contrast, Saudi Arabia ranked 17th among Singaporeans.

To further illustrate the skewed preference patterns within Asia-Pacific countries, the report cites how “Indonesian and Singaporean traveler preferences coincided in only three out of 40 top long-haul destination countries ranked.” Likewise, when making a travel decision for an international destination, Indonesians seemed to consider “rich culture and heritage” as one of the most important factors, while for Singaporean travelers this was a distant factor.

The varying patterns in travel preferences signal both opportunities and challenges for the tourism industry. Although Asia-Pacific travelers are largely traveling within the region currently, they are likely to explore distant shores as their disposable incomes increase. This traveling segment is also expected to make travel decisions that are unique in comparison to traditional preferences and interests. Market dynamics must be keenly observed for signs of the emerging traveling class in Asia-Pacific, as each economy is at a different stage of development.

BRINK Asia

Environment Under Threat as Tourism Surge Lashes Southeast Asian Nations, Beaches

AFP-JJI

Hordes of tourists clamber across the white sand with selfie sticks as Thai park rangers wade into turquoise waters to direct boats charging into the cliff-ringed cove.

Made famous by the 2000 movie “The Beach,” starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Maya Bay on the western Thai island of Koh Phi Phi Ley is now a case study in the ruinous costs of runaway tourism, swamped by up to 4,000 visitors daily.

“There are too many people here, it’s bad,” lamented Saad Lazrak, a 61-year-old from Morocco, as crowds around him swallowed the stretch of sand encircled by an amphitheater of limestone cliffs.

Across the region, Southeast Asia’s once-pristine beaches are reeling from decades of unchecked tourism as governments scramble to confront trash-filled waters and environmental degradation without puncturing a key economic driver.

Maya Bay will be off limits for four months from June to September, officials announced last month, in a bid to save its ravaged coral reefs.

In the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte this month ordered the Boracay beach resort closed to tourists for up to six months from April 26, describing the destination as a “cesspool” tainted by sewage dumped directly into the sea.

Indonesian officials declared a “garbage emergency” last year over debris covering a 6-km (3.7-mile) stretch of coast on Bali.

The island’s grim coastal pollution was highlighted in March by British diver Rich Horner’s viral video of swimming through a dystopia of trash swirling offshore. “Plastic bags, more plastic bags, plastic, plastic, so much plastic!” Horner said in a Facebook post that has been viewed more than a million times.

Conservationists and governments are worried about the health of coral reefs, which are in a dire state globally due to climate change and rising sea temperatures.

When exposed to warmer waters, they shed the algae that



Tourists take selfies in Maya Bay on the Thai island of Koh Phi Phi Ley on April 9, 2018. | AFP-JJI

dazzle the eye and are vital to marine ecosystems, leaving the corals diseased or bone-white in a process called bleaching.

Environmental stresses from mass tourism — including pollution, human contact and exposure to plastics — are additional major threats to the reefs, which are part of the draw for snorkelers and scuba divers.

“Tourism has a series of detrimental effects on coral health,” said Eike Schoenig, a Thailand-based marine biologist at the Center for Oceanic Research and Education.

Countries in Southeast Asia are looking to stem the threats without cutting off the cash flow of a regional tourism boom led by China, the top source of travelers in the region. Thailand received 35 million tourists last year, of whom nearly 10 million hailed from China, according to official data.

But what is good for business can be bad for beaches.

Songtam Suksawang, Thailand’s National Park Office director, said he personally inspected the beach at Maya Bay and said it “must definitely be (temporarily) closed” in order to rehabilitate it.

He said authorities are discussing new rules once the shutdown is lifted, such as restrictions on the number of daily visitors, better regulation of boats and a higher entrance fee.

Thailand is also conducting studies on six other marine parks. The Philippines is weighing action on other top destinations buckling under mass tourism.

But governments are wary of curtailing an industry that creates jobs and buoy economies.

Spending on travel and tourism contributed nearly \$136 billion to the region’s GDP in 2017, a figure forecast to rise to \$144 billion this year, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council.

The cost of the closures is already being felt in the Philippines, where hundreds of Boracay hotels and tour companies are facing steep losses from cancelled rooms, flights and other

bookings.

But some countries are not taking such dramatic steps.

In Indonesia, the Tourism Ministry said there are no plans to close Bali or any other holiday destination in the archipelago, although it acknowledged that pockets of the tropical paradise are under strain from heavy tourism.

“Shut down Bali? I don’t think we will need to do that yet,” said ministry spokesman Guntur Sakti. “Bali is the center of Indonesian tourism.”

Indonesia has identified 10 other destinations where it is trying to boost visitors and replicate Bali’s success, including the neighboring island of Lombok and Lake Toba in Sumatra.

Experts are skeptical that short shutdowns will have lasting effects.

“Bottom line is that temporarily closing the beach is probably not the optimal solution to these problems. It only takes

a day for a bunch of incompetent snorkelers to trash a small reef,” said Andrew Baird from the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies in Australia.

In Thailand, the government hopes to draw people to lesser known beaches.

“We are working very hard to spread people out, not to go to one condensed area,” said Thon Thamrongnawasawat, a marine expert working with the parks and tourism authorities.

Travelers to Maya Bay might like the idea.

“It’s very touristy. There wasn’t a patch of sand that didn’t have people laying down on it, taking photos,” Oliver Black, a 22-year-old tourist, said of his afternoon at the destination.

As for his thoughts on the looming closure?

“It would not really upset me if I wasn’t able to go to (back to) Maya beach,” he said.

Japan Times

Wooing Millennials With Exotic Experiences That Aren’t Too Costly

By Janet Morrissey



The Moxy Times Square is part of a Marriott product line aimed at millennials.

Credit: Michael Kleinberg

When Nicola Todd, 29, and Eva Mehesfalvi, 31, decided to visit Manhattan from England recently, they wanted a hotel that would be light on the pocketbook but big on the New York City experience.

So instead of springing for a place with oversize rooms and round-the-clock room service, they chose the Moxy Times Square, which offered small but stylish rooms, quirky décor, lightning-fast Wi-Fi and eclectic lounge and bar areas, all at an affordable price.

“I wanted something that felt very urban, very New York, something with a little bit of character,” Ms. Todd said. “I feel a lot of the Hiltons and Marriotts are very cookie-cutter. No matter where you are in the world, they all kind of feel the same.”

The Moxy Times Square,

however, is part of the Marriott empire. Marriott is just one of a growing number of companies that are rolling out product lines to attract the cash-conscious millennial. It now has 20 Moxy hotels around the world and plans to open 90 more by the end of 2021.

Millennials, broadly defined as those born in the last two decades of last century, have, as a group, tended to put more emphasis on experiences. And this has become a challenge for businesses.

“The Kardashians paint a false picture of millennials,” said Joan Kuhl, founder and president of Why Millennials Matter, a New York research agency. “I don’t see this group with a lavish affluent lifestyle.”

Millennials, many of whom saw their parents struggle with jobs and mortgages during the recession, generally have less interest in buying the big house, flashy sports car and designer clothing that previous generations sought as status symbols of success. Nevertheless, they will pay for the right experiences and technology.

“It’s where you go on vacation, what you do and what technology you have,” said Allen Adamson, one of the founders and managing partners of Metaforce, a brand marketing and consulting firm, and one of the authors of “Shift Ahead: How The Best Companies

Stay Relevant in a Fast Changing World.” Those experiences need to be “Instagram-worthy,” too. The quirkier, flashier and more offbeat the experience, the better, he said.

And businesses are catching on.

IMAX, for instance, rolled out six virtual reality theaters in New York, Los Angeles, Shanghai, Manchester and Toronto over the last year as a pilot project to attract millennials. And it has plans to open four more.

IMAX charges roughly \$10 for a 10-minute VR experience, which is far cheaper than the \$1,500 or more needed to buy an in-home VR technology system with a high-end PC and headset. A visitor steps into a pod, snaps on a VR headset and is virtually transported on a 360-degree journey that can include flying over volcanoes, diving into the world of criminals and hit men from the John Wick films, or stepping into the shoes of virtual game superheroes like Batman and Wonder Woman.

Afterward, the players receive a video of their VR experience, which they can share with friends on social media. “Millennials want really special experiences and ones that are hard to replicate,” said Rich Gelfond, the chief executive of IMAX.

When it comes to automobiles, many millennials don’t care about high-end

cars the way that previous generations did, but they do want the in-cabin technology and luxury features that often go with them, said Sam Russell, Buick's marketing director.

So Buick started marketing the brand as "attainable luxury" to attract younger buyers, and it added features normally seen in cars like Mercedes-Benz, Lexus and BMW to many of its models in recent years, like 4G LTE Wi-Fi, Apple CarPlay and Ionizer air purifiers.

As for the Moxy, its very existence is aimed at millennials.

"We're delivering a killer experience at a price point that's affordable," said Toni Stoeckl, global brand leader of Marriott's Distinctive Select Brands.

To keep rates down, Moxy's rooms are tiny, averaging only 183 square feet. But its lounges, bars and public spaces are large and encourage a social atmosphere, where guests can mingle and even play board games with friends and strangers. Guests check in electronically through their phones or through the hotel bar instead of at a front desk. There are special events, like midnight pajama parties, where guests are invited to the bar for a nightcap, as well as yoga classes, tarot card readings and "ConBody" events, where ex-convicts lead prison-style boot-camp fitness classes.

At the Moxy Times Square, a neon-pink light marks the entryway and art graces the ceiling and walls. And its five rooftop dining and nightclub spaces, operated by the Tao Group, contain a rotating carousel bar and outdoor mini-golf course with a clear view of the Empire State Building.

"It's funky and quite quirky," said Karl Fegredo, 27, from London, who recently stayed at the hotel.

Even Moxy's hotel openings are edgy and memorable.



The Moxy Times Square offers small but stylish rooms, quirky décor, and lightning-fast Wi-Fi. Credit: Michael Kleinberg

At the Moxy New Orleans party, snake charmers, tarot card readers and sword swallows took part in its "Freak Show" theme. The Berlin Moxy "coming out" party featured drag queens, dominatrixes and tattoo artists as part of an S.&M. theme.

"Moxy is about transforming yourself in a playful environment," Mr. Stoeckl said.

Many brands hope that by capturing millennials now, they can turn them into lifelong customers.

"I think everybody understands they really need to home in on millennials," Mr. Gelfond said, "if they want to create a successful long-term business."

A version of this article appears in print on February 26, 2018, on Page B6 of the New York edition with the headline: Wooing Millennials With Exotic Experiences That Aren't Too Expensive.

New York Times

Foreign tourists to Japan reach record high 28.7 mil. in 2017

By Janet Morrissey



Japan. Endless Discovery.

The number of foreign tourists to Japan reached a record high 28,690,000 in 2017, up 19.3 percent from the previous year and rising for the sixth straight year, the transport minister said on January 12.

Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Minister Keiichi Ishii attributed the growth to an increase in low-cost carrier flights from South Korea and other Asian countries and cruise ship services between China and Japan as well as relaxed visa requirements for Chinese and Russian travelers.

"In 2017, there was a sharp increase in tourists from Asia, and we need to make more efforts to attract tourists from a wide range of countries and regions," Ishii told a press conference.

The government will release a regional breakdown and other details next week.

The government targets 40 million foreign visitors by 2020, when Japan hosts the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics.



It plans to use revenue from the 1,000 yen departure tax it will impose on every traveler leaving Japan from January 2019, to promote tourism.

Mainichi Japan

Visitor Arrivals from Southeast Asia rose 33% last year: MOI

Staff writer, with Central News Agency (CNA)



The number of people traveling to and from Taiwan in the first 11 months of 2017 was up slightly from 2016, helped by a sizable increase in visitors from Southeast Asia, Ministry of the Interior (MOI) data released on December 30, 2017 showed.

According to ministry statistics, 48.17 million travelers left and arrived in Taiwan from Jan. 1 to Nov. 30 last year, up 4.1 percent from the same period in 2016.

More than three-quarters of those travelers (75.35 percent) entered or exited Taiwan through Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, the data showed.

A total of 24.08 million people arrived in Taiwan, including 9.62 million foreign nationals, of which 25.81 percent were from China, 17.78 percent from Japan, and 15.74 percent from Hong Kong and Macao.

Southeast Asian nations accounted for 19.4 percent of all foreign visitor arrivals, at nearly 1.87 million, up 32.57 percent from 2016.

Visitor arrivals from Vietnam, the Philippines and Thailand showed particularly strong growth, growing 100.5 percent, 71.96 percent and 56 percent respectively.

Of the 24.09 million travelers who departed from Taiwan for an overseas destination in the first 11 months of last year, 60 percent were Taiwanese, 16 percent were from China, Hong Kong or Macau and the remaining 24 percent were from other nations.

The figures showed that the preferred overseas destination for Taiwanese travelers was Japan, at 29.63 percent of all outbound trips, followed by China at 25.04 percent and Hong Kong at 11.25 percent.

Taipei Times

Foreign tourist spending in Japan hits record in 2017



Spending by foreign tourists to Japan increased 17.8 percent in 2017 from a year earlier to a record 4.42 trillion yen (\$39.9 billion), as the number of travelers rose to an all-time high, the Japan Tourism Agency said on January 16, 2018.

The surge in spending was boosted by robust increases in the number of visitors from Asia and their purchases, the agency said.

In 2017, the number of foreign tourists surged 19.3 percent from the previous year to a record 28,690,000.

Average spending per visitor fell 1.3 percent to 153,921 yen in 2017 following an 11.5 percent decrease the previous year, dragged down by a decline in “bakugai,” or “explosive shopping,” by Chinese tourists in the first half of the year, the agency said.

Chinese travelers spent 1.69 trillion yen in 2017, up 14.9 percent from a year earlier, followed by the 574.4 billion yen spent by Taiwanese, up 9.5 percent, and 512.6 billion yen by South Koreans, up 43.3 percent.

Spending per Chinese visitor dropped 0.5 percent to 230,382 yen last year but was still higher than around 200,000 yen spent on average by visitors from the United States and European nations. Spending per South Korean visitor totaled only 71,795 yen, although their total spending ranked third among all countries and regions.

Kyodo News



Muslim Visitors Find Warm Welcome

Staff writer, with AFP



A chef prepares a halal meal at the Gaia Hotel, which caters to tourists from Muslim-majority nations, in Taipei's Beitou District on January 19. Photo: AFP, February 23, 2018



Muslims during Friday prayers at a mosque in Taipei on January 19. Photo: AFP, February 23, 2018

TOUGH COMPETITION: The head of the nation's largest halal certification body said tourists from southbound nations are not able to spend as much as Chinese visitors

From halal fried chicken to hot spring hotels with prayer facilities, the nation is adapting its traditional tourist draws to woo Muslim visitors as Chinese arrivals dwindle.

Chinese tourist numbers have slid dramatically as relations with the nation deteriorate, sparking speculation that Chinese authorities are turning off the taps to pressure the Democratic Progressive Party government.

President Tsai Ing-wen's administration is looking to boost relations with 16 South and Southeast Asian nations through its New Southbound Policy, and is seeking more visitors from the region.

That has meant a growing number of tourists from Muslim-majority nations, such as Malaysia and Indonesia. Taiwan last year welcomed 30 percent more visitors from Southeast Asia. Taoism is the prevalent religion in Taiwan, with Muslims making up less than 2 percent of the population, but tourists who spoke to Agence France-Presse said they were surprised at how welcome they felt.

"I really like the natural scenery in Taiwan and the people are very nice," said Ashma Bunlapho, 40, a Muslim tourist from Thailand on a five-day trip with her husband.

She found halal restaurants using Google Maps, including a shop selling beef noodles, and felt free to pray where she chose, taking her mat with her to famous nature spots including Sun Moon Lake.

Malaysian tourist Dean Idris said that halal eats were easily accessible when he visited Taipei with his two young children.

"I learned that Taiwan, Taipei especially, is actually Muslim-friendly," he said outside a mosque in the capital, where he had gone to pray.

Thailand, South Korea and Japan are among Asian countries that are tapping into the Muslim travel market, which is fueled by growth in cheap flights and a booming middle class in nations such as Indonesia.

Fried Chicken Master, a small shop not far from Taipei's Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall has adapted to the trend, selling a halal version of the snack.

"We hope to be able to serve tourists, exchange students

or Muslims living in Taiwan. As Taiwanese we are proud of our food," said Louis Tsai, a spokesman for Super Qin Group, which owns the shop.

A trip to one of the nation's hot springs resorts tops most tourists' to-do lists and Gaia Hotel in Taipei's Beitou District, best-known for its natural pools, provides guest rooms with prayer-direction signs and prayer schedules.

Minibars there are alcohol-free and cakes do not include pork-based gelatin. To obtain its halal certification, the hotel kitchen created a separate cooking and dining area.

"Since the number of Chinese tourists has decreased, and Southeast Asia is quite a sizable market with many Muslims, this is an area we have to actively pursue," Gaia operations manager Jack Chang said.

On his visit to Istanbul in February 2018, Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je met with Turkish lawmakers who want to fund the building of a third mosque in Taipei, according to the city government.

The government is also trialing visa waivers for Thailand, Brunei and the Philippines, and in June 2017 eased visa rules for six southbound nations, including Indonesia, India and Cambodia.

However, some doubt whether the growth in Muslim tourism is enough to offset the lost income from China. Chinese visitor numbers, which have been falling since Tsai took office in May 2016, dropped by one-fifth last year.

Salahuding Ma, secretary general of the Chinese Muslim Association, Taiwan's largest halal certification body, said it is hard for the new wave of tourists to compete with their Chinese counterparts.

"The Chinese have wealth and spend lavishly," he said. "If you are talking about Southeast Asia, which countries can even compare?"

The nation would have greater success if it overcame the language barrier by encouraging students from target nations to work in the tourism sector, Ma said.

For Thai visitor Bunlapho, her lack of Mandarin skills and limited English proved an obstacle when trying to find transportation to Taroko National Park.

"I could not figure out how to get there," she said. "Next time. I will come back."

Taipei Times

Abenomics at Its Best: Inbound Tourism Boom

By Jesper Koll



Since Shinzo Abe became prime minister in December 2012, inbound tourism has grown nearly fourfold. | GETTY IMAGES

The boom in Japan's inbound tourism is arguably the most tangible success story of Abenomics. Propelled by a steady stream of visa-rule deregulation that started right in the first week of Team Abe moving into the Prime Minister's Office in December 2012, inbound tourist arrivals have risen almost fourfold, from a 2012 monthly average of 697,000 to 2.6 million recently. That's real change, with deep-rooted positive structural dynamics and economic follow-through.

Money makes the world go round and money is exactly what the inbound tourism boom has brought to Japan. Consider this: Since 2012 inbound tourists spending has accounted for the equivalent of almost 20 percent of the growth in Japan's consumer spending (excluding spending on rent). Although in absolute terms the amount of tourist spending is still small at less than 2 percent of all consumption, going from basically zero to 2 percent of all consumption in six years is an exceptional growth rate. Positive impact is not just on Tokyo, Osaka or Fukuoka, but the beneficial multipliers are extraordinarily high in Japan's regional economies.

Japan's tourism strategy is arguably the most successful top-down regional growth policy implemented in an advanced economy in recent years. At first, Abe's progressive deregulation of visa rules for Chinese and ASEAN tourists released structural pent-up demand — a new travel destination for Asia's rising middle class.

At the same time, the government pushed through supply-side deregulation — more airport landing slots, easier hotel building codes and so on. The result: After decades of "hollowing out," Japan's regional economies are now re-building and re-inventing themselves as tourist destinations. This is not so because of one-off big government spending programs, but because of genuine private sector profit opportunities created by deregulation. It takes both positive demand and positive supply side dynamics to create a virtuous economic cycle.

Team Abe deserves credit not only for kick-starting the cycle, but also for seeking to anchor demand-growth expectations for private hospitality entrepreneurs by setting aggressive long-

term goals: Japan wants 40 million visitors by 2020 and then 60 million by 2030, a massive jump from last year's 28.7 million. These seem to make sense because of Asia's population — and economic growth dynamics. The boom turns into a structural growth upcycle.

However, there is no room for complacency: Despite all the positive structural tailwinds, already the exchange rate plays an important role in determining the spending habits of inbound tourists. A strong yen immediately cuts their purchasing power, while a weak yen raises it. How much? My analysis suggests that yen appreciation cuts both visitor arrivals and average amount spent in Japan: An appreciation of the yen of 10 against the dollar appears to reduce monthly arrivals by approximately 1.2 percent, and cut money spent per tourist by approximately 10 percent.

While the impact on tourist volume appears negligible, the negative impact of money spent is significant. This has important negative implications for hospitality entrepreneurs for their price point and profit strategies. The stronger the yen, the stronger the pressure to offer discounts, which in turn means lower profits for regional hospitality entrepreneurs.

From here, an important consequence of the success of Abe's tourism strategy will make it even more imperative for Japan to have a weaker, rather than stronger, yen. In fact, weak-yen advocacy is poised to spread from the manufacturing export lobby to the regional development lobby. In the past, many regional and local politicians viewed yen depreciation as negative for their constituents because a weak yen meant higher import prices and the cost push depressed further local business and regional economies. In contrast, yen depreciation is becoming viewed as a positive policy tool for driving domestic growth in general, regional growth in particular. Just like Toyota and Hitachi, local businesses have now become exporters of the services and goods to the world. The inbound tourism boom has aligned the interests of both global and local Japan Inc.

In coming years, the impact of the structural change that kick-started the tourism boom will fade and the importance of the yen as a driver for inbound purchasing power is poised to grow. To keep tourism strong, Japan will need a weaker yen. Before long, local political leaders, i.e., the backbone of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, are bound to become vocal advocates for yen depreciation, in my view.

Of course, from a purist analysts' perspective, it is still too early for statistically sound conclusions on the exact factor contributions driving inbound tourist spending. The structural break forced by visa deregulation is still too recent — in fact in early 2017 visa rules for Chinese nationals were eased further; and currency cycles have been relatively limited between 2012 and 2017.

However, the fact that forex sensitivity already registers as a force of significant impact — despite powerful structural tailwinds still at work — suggests that, from here, the importance of the yen exchange rate as a key to the success of Japan's inbound strategy will only grow.

Make no mistake. To keep the tourism boom growing,

Japan does need a weaker yen. Japan's policy advocacy for yen depreciation is poised to get stronger. Importantly, the key exchange rate to watch here will be the yen-yuan (i.e., Japan-China) exchange rate: a yuan devaluation could quickly translate into very bad economic news for Japan's regional economies.

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Japan Times

Hong Kong a Valuable Test Market for Japan's Campaign to Attract Foreign Tourists

By Junko Horiuchi, Kyodo



Shoppers browse Japanese food products at a Yata Ltd. department store in Hong Kong on March 5. | KYODO

With trips to Japan being so popular among people from Hong Kong, Tokyo sees the territory as a testing ground for trying out various initiatives and analyzing behavioral patterns as it seeks to attract more foreign tourists.

A record 2.2 million Hong Kong residents visited Japan in 2017, up 21.3 percent from the previous year, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization. This means that more than 1 in 3 people from the Chinese territory have visited Japan, and almost 21 percent of them have done so more than 10 times.

"There is nowhere else that resonates as much as Hong Kong. The locals really like Japan and have deep knowledge that even we Japanese don't have," said Yasumasa Shimizu, JNTO's senior director of the Hong Kong office, citing as an example the popularity among Hong Kong people of the relatively obscure Iya spa resort in Tokushima Prefecture.

Japan is the top tourist destination for the people of Hong Kong, surpassing Taiwan and Thailand in second and third,

respectively, thanks to the spread of Japanese food and culture, an economic recovery and the yen's depreciation, which makes Japan a bargain destination, according to the JNTO.

"We try to be creative and help people understand Japanese culture" so they will want to travel to Japan and taste the authentic food, said Susanna Wong, CEO of Yata Ltd., which operates 11 department stores and supermarkets in Hong Kong specializing in Japanese foods and lifestyles.

Wong said her company also seeks to "show the latest gourmet trends across Japan and re-create the Japanese lifestyle." "Fruits and green tea are always popular," she said. "Hong Kong people also like new things, like in snacks."

By country and region, Hong Kong was the largest importer per capita of Japanese agriculture, forestry and fisheries products — at a value of ¥187.7 billion (\$1.78 billion) — in 2017 for the 13th straight year. There are more than 1,500 Japanese restaurants in the city, according to the Japanese government.

In Yata's Tseung Kwan O store, the popular Kumamon black bear that serves as the mascot of Kumamoto Prefecture welcomes customers, while wagyu beef, sake, fruits and snacks imported directly from Japan line the shelves.

Sushi and sake bars have been set up with eat-in spaces, as has a booth devoted to products from Tokushima, open for a limited period.

"Among our products, jams and drinks using yuzu citrus fruit are especially popular," said Shiro Oka, chief representative for the Shanghai office of the Tokushima Industrial Promotion Organization, adding that the organization held a low-carbohydrate tasting event of konnyaku (devil's tongue) noodles for health-conscious consumers. "Competition is tough, but I hope more people will visit Tokushima."

There are 15 Japanese cities that have regular flights to and from Hong Kong.

JNTO officials said they try to attract tourists to Japan from Hong Kong in different seasons, pitching food items that can only be found at certain times of the year, such as crab in the winter, or experiences like fireworks festivals in the summer or fruit picking in spring.

The organization has also set its sights on offering a new type of tourism: Japan as a destination for holding weddings, after data showed that some 10 percent of Hong Kong couples choose to wed outside the territory, and spending an average of \$13,000 to do so.

Around 97 percent take part in "photo weddings," in which no actual wedding ceremony is held but only photos are taken, with 70 percent being held overseas.

In 2016, more than 1,000 couples came to Japan to have weddings, while 6,111 couples picked Japan for photo weddings.

"Hong Kong provides us with insights on what works in tourism," said JNTO's Shimizu. "We want to use the experience and implement this in attracting tourists from other countries."

Japan has seen a surge in foreign visitors in recent years, with the number hitting a record of over 28 million in 2017. The government is seeking to increase the figure to 40 million in 2020 when the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics will be held.

Japan Times

Japan's Railway Operators Use Local Attractions to Draw Foreign Tourists



Japanese railway operators are making the most of local sightseeing spots along their routes to attract more foreign tourists, with social media proving an excellent promotional tool.

At Gotokuji Temple located on Tokyu Corp.'s Setagaya Line in Tokyo, foreign tourists snapped shots of a cluster of "Maneki-neko" beckoning-cat dolls. The temple is known for its extensive collection of the beckoning cats, a good-luck charm believed to bring prosperity to shop owners in Japan.

After visiting the Setagaya-Hachimangu shrine near the temple, the tourists appeared to have enjoyed their time in the residential area of the capital, some saying they felt like they got a taste of "ordinary Japan."

Tokyu has promoted local sightseeing spots in cooperation with Huber Inc., a tech venture offering a service that matches tourists with Japanese guides.

"I thought there are few sightseeing spots, but there was some buried treasure," said a Tokyu official about the area around the 5-kilometer Setagaya line tram that is mainly used by local commuters and students.

Seeing social media posts by foreigners, Japanese tourists to the area also increased, raising the overall number of Setagaya Line passengers, the operator said.

"Visits to quiet areas reminiscent of old Japan have been catching on as tourists appreciate the contrast between those locations and the popular scramble crossing in the bustling Shibuya district, reachable within 30 minutes," the official said.

Railway companies in western Japan are also making a pitch to foreign travelers.

Hankyu Hanshin Holdings Inc., a train operator in the Kansai region, has been selling one-day and two-day passes for



foreign tourists since 2012, offering unlimited travel on all lines operating in the Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe areas. Sales soared from about 20,000 passes in fiscal 2012 to some 440,000 in fiscal 2016.

Leisure facilities in Mt. Rokko in Kobe, easily accessible from downtown, are anticipated to draw more inbound travelers. "A ski slope with artificial snow near Kyoto and Osaka is a popular choice for enjoying a bit of snow, in addition to a cable car service which is rare in other Asian countries," said a Hankyu Hanshin official.

Nankai Electric Railway Co., which runs trains between Osaka and its neighboring prefecture of Wakayama, will open a new hotel and shopping mall adjacent to its Wakayama City Station in 2020.

"We want to increase demand from inbound visitors," said a Nankai official, as Kansai International Airport, the leading gateway to western Japan, is closer to Wakayama city than the Umeda district in Osaka's city center.

An open-air bath will be built on the top floor of the planned hotel, offering visitors a view of a local river while they relax. English- and Chinese-speaking staff will also be on hand at the hotel.

Kyodo News

Int'l Seminar talks Mekong Delta's Tourism Vision

An international seminar discussing the vision of the modern and sustainable Mekong Delta's tourism adaptive to climate change took place in Cần Thơ City on May 20, 2018.

Speaking at the event, Vice Chairman of the municipal People's Committee Lê Văn Tâm said the Mekong Delta is not only a granary but also one of the seven major tourism regions of the country.

The number of tourists to the region rose 18.7 per cent to 34 million in 2017, bringing total revenue of more than VNĐ17 trillion (US\$748.9 million), up 26.5 per cent annually.

Associate Prof. Nguyễn Khắc Cường, from the Government Office, said the government has issued a number of documents directing the sustainable development of the Mekong



Christopher Malone, Managing Director of the Boston Consulting Group, emphasised the need to issue a framework for environmental sustainability for the region tourism development strategy. — VNA/VNS Photo Xuân Mai

Delta adaptive to climate change, adding that it is the first time the State, consultant units and banks have worked together in the effort.

Nguyễn Hữu Thiện, an independent ecological expert, suggested incorporating tourism into socio-economic development

plans of localities, with attention given to regional connectivity, tourism development in combination with clean agricultural production, among others.

Christopher Malone, Managing Director of the Boston Consulting Group, presented three strategic initiatives, including resorts on rivers, Mekong Delta safari, and ecological-agriculture discovery, and talked ways to increase the number of tourists and their expenses in the region.

He emphasised the need to issue a framework for environmental sustainability, citing the Philippine government's decision to shut down Boracay island within six months due to pollution and worsening water quality as an example.

Experts introduced successful models in the world such as canal tourism in the Netherlands, the US's Mississippi river tourism system, Nile River in Egypt and floating markets in Thailand.

They called on parties concerned to launch flights to Cần Thơ International Airport, and accelerate the construction of the remaining sections of the HCM City – Cần Thơ highway.

The region needs to develop an integrated lodging system and special tourism products to affirm its stature in the world's tourism map, they said.

Vietnam News

New Airlines Drive Passenger Growth

By May Kunmakara

Cambodia's three main international airports welcomed about three million passengers in the first quarter of 2018, a rise of 26.1 per cent thanks to the increased number of new airlines from China and the opening of new routes.

According to the quarterly report from VINCI Airports, Cambodia Airports' mother company, the three airports reported sharp traffic growth.

"Growth was particularly strong in Phnom Penh, as the capital's airport welcomed 1.4 million passengers (up 34.5 percent), reflecting the arrival of new carriers like Malindo, Vietjet and Shenzhen Airlines, the growth of Chinese carriers such as Spring, China Southern Airlines and Xiamen Airlines, and the opening of major new routes by local airlines such as Singapore and Bangkok by JC Airlines and Lan Mei," it said.

"Activity was also brisk in Siem Reap (up 17.4 percent) with travelers from China and domestic market being the main drivers of growth."

Ho Vandy, secretary-general of the Cambodian National Tourism Alliance, said on April 19, 2018 that the rise in passengers through the airports reflected the country's political stability, economic growth and the increase in people's income.

"Of course, I have noticed that our tourism industry is still doing well in the recent months of 2018 because more and

more airlines opened, especially airlines in China, while Chinese tourists are flocking into the country a lot now," he said.

"I also see more and more local people traveling by air now because their incomes are rising so they want to pay visits or have health checks abroad," he said.

He said that although Cambodia was to hold a general election in July 2018, the country's economic activity and especially the tourism sector were still doing well.

"We do hope that our politicians will put the national interest as their priority to maintain the country's growth to benefit our

people."

In mid-April 2018, the Asian Development Bank projected positive economic growth for Cambodia in 2018, thanks to robust expansion in exports, strong foreign direct investment inflows, solid tourist arrivals, construction, garment and footwear and buoyant domestic demand.

In 2017, international travellers visiting the kingdom totaled 5.6 million, 11.8 percent more than in 2016, according to the Ministry of Tourism.

In 2017, 59 percent of all foreign tourists (3.3 million) arrived via air, with the local tourism sector earning \$3.6 billion in revenue, an increase of 13 percent year-on-year.



Passengers traffic takes flight, Airports welcome three million in first quarter. KT/Mai Vireak



Government officials at Phnom Penh International Airport. KT/Mai Vireak



American tourist Emi Estrada listens to guide Shogo Nomura during a nighttime tour in April 2018 of the Shibuya district in Tokyo. | KYODO

Cambodia is expected to welcome 6.1 million international visitors in 2018 and the government expects seven million tourists a year by 2020.

Earlier in April 2018, the three international airports passed a carbon reduction program from the Airports Council International, according to Cambodia Airports.

Within the framework of the Airport Carbon Accreditation, introduced in 2009 on the initiative of the Airports Council International, Cambodia's three international airports renewed in March 2018 the level 1 certification of a program aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Cambodia Airports said the achievement demonstrated its strong commitment to coping with the challenges of global climate change.

Khmer Times

The Latest Take on Tokyo: Shibuya After Dark

KYODO

Already known for its boutiques, bars, restaurants and that famous scramble crossing, Shibuya's appeal as a destination for foreign visitors has gotten a further boost from its local tourist association: tours introducing the area's nightlife, from backstreet izakaya pubs to the "love hotel" quarter.

The tours, which give tourists a taste of the famed Tokyo neighborhood after dark, are also aimed at boosting Shibuya's nighttime economy.

Starting from the popular Hachiko Square meeting place, they take in a number of landmarks, including a local shrine, the Shibuya Hikarie shopping complex and the much filmed and photographed intersection in front of JR Shibuya Station.

"I have never seen anything like this," Emi Estrada, a 70-year-old solo traveler from the United States, says as she is guided by Shogo Nomura, 24, to Nonbei Yokocho (Drunkard's Alley).

Nomura explained the history of the narrow, untidy strip of tiny bars and restaurants, decorated with akachōchin red lanterns, which date back to the early postwar period.

"I was able to see a side of Shibuya that I could not

have seen on my own," Estrada says after the tour is complete. "I enjoyed the gleaming buildings and trains and buses passing by."

While other guided tours of the area are available, what makes this one unique is that it is hosted by Shibuya City Tourism Association Inc., which started the English-language nightlife tour in April. According to the Japan Tourism Agency, it is rare for a local tourism association to conduct night tours.

One of the night tours includes the chance to savor Japanese food and drink, including sushi, takoyaki — balls of diced octopus cooked in batter — and sake.

Participants also walk through a district of love hotels, Japan's version of the "no-tell motel," watch live entertainment featuring Japanese "idols" and stop by ¥100 discount stores.

Nomura says he sometimes goes out with his customers once his work is done. "After the tour, there are times when I'll be invited out for drinks by the foreign tourists."

Describing what motivated the association to launch these tours, spokeswoman Kyoko Hori said, "People used to say Shibuya is only for taking photos." The area's clubs, bars and other nighttime attractions are still relatively unknown to foreign visitors, she added.

The association's plan to start evening tours were realized when the government relaxed regulations earlier this year and allowed noncertified tour guides to offer paid services.

Japan has noted the economic boost that a thriving night scene brings other countries. When London started operating subway services around the clock on weekends, for example, the positive economic impact on the city's nightlife was estimated at ¥4 trillion (\$36.39 billion), according to the Japan Tourism Agency.

Hori says the Shibuya Tourism Association is considering other measures to boost the local nighttime economy by collaborating with restaurants and other businesses.

"We hope more foreign people will become a part of Shibuya's nightlife," she says.

Anyone wanting to go on one of the tours can apply at the tourist information center near Hachiko Square. Prices start at ¥1,000 for a one-hour tour, while a two-hour tour costs ¥3,000.

Japan Times

Online Educator iTutorGroup Sees Stronger Demand for English Education Amid Japan's Tourism Boom

By Cory Baird



iTutorGroup CEO Eric Yang explains vipabc, his company's English language learning platform in Japan. | ITUTOR

Although iTutorGroup has turned into one of the largest online marketplaces of learning in the world, earning itself a \$1 billion valuation along the way, the company can trace its roots back to the pre-internet age, when English tutoring was restricted to face-to-face interaction.

When CEO Dr. Eric Yang first got into the education sector in the early 1990s, he would create a list of characteristics for each English learner in order to personalize the material.

Taking his customization to the next level, Dr. Yang would go on to successfully launch an online English service in China in 2004, bringing his uniquely crafted lessons into the digital age.

Now iTutorGroup has more than 20,000 registered teachers and delivers online and interactive lessons using video and real-time conversation exercises. In addition to English, students from around the world can take courses in math, Mandarin and computer programming.

“The interesting thing about Japan is that our second-biggest market in the country after Tokyo is Hokkaido. I think a lot of people want to learn there because one of the main parts of the local economy is tourism,” Dr. Yang said during a recent interview at the company's Tokyo office.

The firm launched vipabc, its English language learning platform, for the Japanese market in August 2016. The company's Japanese investors, including Cyberagent Inc. and SBI Holdings Inc., played a role in its expansion to Japan — its first market outside China.

Japan was also an attractive market because of Dr. Yang's personal connection to the country, having spent one year teaching at the University of Tokyo in the early 1990s after he earned his Ph.D. in chemistry in the United States.

The English language instructors at iTutorGroup all possess teaching certifications and, according to Dr. Yang, its pricing remains more affordable than its brick and mortar competitors.

Dr. Yang said he sees a strong demand for online English

education as more tourists flock here in the lead-up to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

And it's no secret that many tourists struggle with the language barrier. According to a January 2017 survey conducted by Recruit Lifestyle Co., tourists most often cite the inability to communicate with locals as a negative aspect of their travels in Japan.

While many Japanese students spend over six years studying the language at school, the country still lags behind its Asian neighbors in English education.

The average score for Japanese nationals on the 2016 Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) was lower than China, South Korea and Taiwan, according to the Educational Testing Service, the company that creates the test.

“Most Japanese people learn English in a linear fashion starting from chapter one and moving onward,” Dr. Yang said. Online learning, on the other hand, can be more easily customized to individual users.

Dr. Yang also noted that iTutorGroup was eyeing an expansion of its services to South Korea, and eventually other regions, including Latin America. He hopes to take the company public sometime around 2020.

Japan Times

Travelers Without Insurance cause Headaches for Japan's Hospitals

By Mizuho Aoki

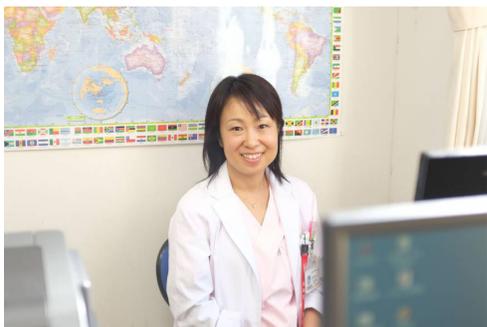
Are you insured?

As Japan sees a record-breaking number of foreign visitors, a major hospital near Narita airport is struggling to deal with an increasing number of uninsured patients who can't pay for the medical treatment they've received.

“Most of the foreign visitors we treat are emergency patients, coming directly from the airport...In many cases, they are not covered with by insurance,” said Tomomi Asaka, a surgeon who is also chief of the International Medical Center at Japanese Red Cross Narita Hospital.

Emergency treatment can cost several million yen. When patients can't pay, the hospital tries several ways to collect, such as by contacting their relatives to ask them to shoulder the cost, proposing installment plans or calling embassies for help. But when all these attempts fail, the hospital has no choice but to absorb the cost.

Although the Narita hospital declined to disclose how many unpaid medical bills it has, Asaka said it is “a lot.”



Tomomi Asaka, head of the International Medical Center at Japanese Red Cross Narita Hospital in Chiba Prefecture, is interviewed on June 8, 2018. | MIZUHO AOKI

“When we have such troubled foreign patients, it’s really, really tough for us to deal with,” Asaka said.

Sometimes patients decline to receive necessary treatment after learning how much it will cost, she said.

“I believe many of these problems would have been solved if they had purchased travel insurance,” she said.

Asaka said the patients should have purchased travel insurance. But she also said they are not the only ones to blame.

“Many, in my understanding, do not have the knowledge or custom of buying a policy when traveling. And that is partly the responsibility of their countries as well as Japan, which is campaigning hard to draw foreign visitors,” Asaka said.

According to records, the hospital treated 409 foreign visitors who could not speak Japanese in 2017. Although it does not have any previous data for comparison, the number definitely has increased in recent years, Asaka said.

To better cater to complex cases presented by foreign patients, the hospital set up the International Medical Center in April 2017 with three fully bilingual staffers — Asaka and two medical clerks.

The center gets a phone call when a foreign patient who doesn’t have insurance or Japanese ability seeks help at the hospital. Many of the cases are complicated by linguistic, visa and cultural differences that can take days to sort.

The center recently dealt with a man in his 70s who was suffering from arrhythmia and was brought to the hospital from the airport.

The patient, whose name and nationality were not disclosed for privacy reasons, had a temporary pacemaker inserted. That cost ¥600,000. He also needed to undergo another operation to replace the pacemaker with a permanent one, a procedure that would set him back another ¥7 million.

The man, transiting through Narita on his way home, had no travel insurance.

“He was old and was living on a pension. He did not have any savings and he was single, and his siblings also couldn’t pay the cost,” she said.

He insisted on flying back to his country where he said he could get free treatment at a veterans’ hospital. But the man’s condition was too unstable to let him return by himself. After mulling several options, Asaka and a nurse decided to fly back with him to his country.

If a private company was asked to dispatch doctors to accompany a patient on an international flight, it would cost

several million yen, Asaka said. But by doing it themselves, they were able to spare the patient the cost, she said.

“In 2017 alone, there were three such cases where we had no option but to accompany patients ourselves and take them back to their home countries,” Asaka said.

Japan’s legal obligation to provide medical treatment to anyone on request also places a heavy psychological burden on doctors.

“We are trained to focus on treating patients without thinking of the bills. . . . So it’s very stressful for doctors to discharge or provide minimum treatment to patients with financial troubles. It’s ethically hard to swallow,” Asaka said.

“The government is trying to further increase the number of foreign visitors. But when they fall ill and can’t pay medical bills we are the ones left to shoulder the cost because we have the legal obligation to provide treatment. That’s unreasonable,” Asaka said. “I hope the government creates a legal system that matches today’s environment.”

Japan Times

Your Next Trip Might Change Your Life

By Elaine Glusac



At the Cal-a-Vie Health Spa near San Diego, guests can make use of a headband that monitors brain activity during meditation. Credit Cal-a-Vie Health Spa

Once confined to spas, wellness travel has expanded to encompass the many ways getting away can benefit mind, body and spirit.

The spa has left the building. Industry growth indicates those places that once dispensed pampering are now expanding their reach into adventure trips, hotel design and even cultural programming under the banner of wellness travel.

“Wellness travel has traditionally been associated with the spa experience,” said Anne Dimon, the president of the recently formed Wellness Tourism Association, which unites industry partners in advancing the category. “Today it’s more about food and opportunities for fitness and to be out in nature.”

Once confined to the spa silo, wellness has seeped into other areas. The Peninsula Hot Springs near Melbourne, Australia, is adding seven new mineral pools that face an amphitheater,

allowing patrons to soak while taking in a concert. Spa directors work with the room divisions of Mandarin Oriental hotels to consult on ways to encourage sleep. It's even behind the scenes: The spa staff at the Barceló Gran Faro Los Cabos must attend morning yoga.

Creative and cultural programming are joining the wellness fold, too. At the new Amanyangyun near Shanghai, guests can learn the meditative crafts of calligraphy and painting. In fall, the spa brand Six Senses will open five small lodges in Bhutan that guests can hike between, exposing them to different aspects of the culture.

"Before it was experiential travel and now everyone's talking about transformative travel," said Beth McGroarty, the research director of the Global Wellness Institute, a nonprofit devoted to health and wellness education. "Transformative travel is typically defined as something that wraps you up in story, is extremely emotional, challenges you and shakes up your life."

The following new developments in wellness travel aim to make you buffer, smarter, healthier and better fed.

STAY AT THE GYM

The fitness chain Equinox is building its first hotel in New York, but already other hotels have made expansive gyms their key amenity.

In Chicago, the new Hotel at Midtown offers guests entree to Midtown Athletic Club, with access to indoor and outdoor lap pools, 16 tennis courts, a cycling studio, boxing gym and hundreds of group classes weekly. The restaurant offers healthy grain bowls as well as more indulgent duck-fat tater tots (rooms from \$189).

Also a membership club, the 150-room Carillon Miami Wellness Resort features a two-story fitness center with a rooftop pool, rock-climbing wall and more than 300 fitness classes weekly, including beach boot camp. The 70,000-square-foot spa features a hydrotherapy circuit and wellness experts include a "grocery guru" to teach healthy shopping practices (rooms from \$495).

NEW WELLNESS DESTINATIONS

Women-only tour operators have long worked wellness into their itineraries, combining hiking or safari trips with yoga and meditation. Advancing the genre, the eight-acre SuperShe Island in Finland, opening this month with cabins, saunas and wellness activities, will welcome 10 women at a time (weeklong stays, 4,000 euro, or about \$4,700).

The Catskills property that once hosted the borscht belt classic Kutsher's resort will soon reopen with YO 1 Wellness Center. Fronting Bailey Lake, the 131-room resort will offer Ayurvedic therapy based on traditional Indian healing, eight yoga rooms, 36 therapy rooms and a 213-seat theater (rooms from \$900, all-inclusive).

The 160-room, wellness-focused Waldhotel, among four hotels at the new Bürgenstock Resort Lake Lucerne in Switzerland, is home to Health & Medical Excellence, a 37,000-square-foot medical center staffed by doctors with specialties ranging from dermatology to orthopedics offering checkups, weight loss plans and other services (three-day programs from 4,040 Swiss francs, or about \$4,045).

Among more affordable newcomers, the 189-room Civana resort in Carefree, Ariz., has five to seven complimentary fitness and enrichment classes daily, such as spinning, juicing and art and meditation (rooms from \$169, plus a \$25 activity fee).

Next fall, Miraval Austin will open in Texas with its own farm and chicken coop, and a kitchen featuring classes in conscious cooking that consider

environmental impacts as well as nutrition.

STILLNESS SESSIONS

To escape the 24/7 demands of technology, many are seeking solace in nature or silence.

"The values of the monastery — meditation, mindfulness, silence, contemplation and community — are being secularized and redone as resorts," said Ms. McGroarty.

When it's not holding silence retreats, Eremito in Umbria, Italy, modeled on a historic monastery, offers workshops in Gregorian chant. Mandarin Oriental holds Silent Nights at its spas where conversation is discouraged. In Quebec City, the 17th-century monastery Le Monastère des Augustines provides rooms in the original cloister, breakfast served in silence, workshops in painting and opportunities to hear the nuns singing vespers.

The Japanese concept of shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing, blends a gentle hike with mindfulness, encouraging participants to listen to the birds, notice the patterns on the leaves and observe the insects. Find it at the Ojai Valley Inn & Spa in Southern California, as well as Blackberry Farm in eastern Tennessee.

SHIPSHAPE CRUISES

Most cruise ships offer fitness areas and spa services. Some even have designated wellness cruises like Seabourn, which has teamed with the integrative medicine guru Dr. Andrew Weil to offer itineraries in Alaska and the Mediterranean.

But in May 2019, the industry will get its first wellness cruise line in Blue World Voyages. According to Gene Meehan, its founder and chairman, the plan is to turn an existing 900-passenger ship into a 350-passenger one, making the top level a spa and relaxation deck. Fitness facilities, including yoga and spinning studios, golf and soccer simulators, and batting cages will fill another level; a bike shop will outfit passengers for rides during port calls. Seven-night itineraries in the Mediterranean will start around \$3,400 a person.



Yoga at Le Monastère des Augustines in Quebec City. Credit Le Monastère des Augustines

TECH-DIAGNOSTIC TRIPS

Medical wellness vacations have taken a tech turn with programs to analyze DNA, and prescribing fitness and nutrition routines based on the results at destination spas like Canyon Ranch in Tucson and Lenox, Mass.

Near San Diego, Cal-a-Vie Health Spa's WellnessFX program uses blood tests to measure cardiovascular, metabolic, hormonal and nutritional health. Guests then meet with the staff dietitian to discuss eating and lifestyle recommendations. The spa also offers body scanning to monitor body shape, and headbands that monitor brain activity during meditation.

EXTREME FITNESS

For athletic travelers, a new category of extreme fitness trips introduces new challenges.

Nicknamed the Iceman, Wim Hof has set records for

withstanding extreme environments, including swimming below ice. Now fans can learn his method, which is grounded in breathing exercises, mental focus and exposure to cold temperatures on seven-day trips to the Spanish Pyrenees in June and July (1,799 euros).

In June, Le Grand Bellevue in Gstaad, Switzerland, will introduce Wild Wellness, a four-night retreat with "wild swimming" in Alpine lakes, mountain biking, trail running, mountaintop heli-yoga and food foraging.

At the wellness-focused BodyHoliday resort on St. Lucia, guests can sign up for the island quadrathlon, a four-sport tour of the Caribbean island that includes a six-mile mountain bike ride, a two-and-a-half-mile run and hill climb, rappelling and kayaking a mile and a half back to the resort.

New York Times

North Korea eyes Taiwan tourists, Launches New Tour



RECLUSIVE AND EXCLUSIVE: Only preapproved sites are to be visited on the tours, which are to go for NT\$40,000, but they would include 'exclusive' locations, the organizers said

A North Korean travel company is working with a Taiwanese travel agency to attract more local tourists to visit the country.

The travel agency, titled Korean Heritage International Travel Company, was in 2015 cofounded by the North Korean National Bureau for Cultural Property Conservation and China's Jiangyin Huaxi International Travel Service.

It was the first time that the North Korean government worked with foreign investors to establish a tour company.

The company announced on July 19, 2018 said that it would work with Taiwan's Chung Hsing Travel Service to attract more Taiwanese travelers to North Korea.

For political reasons, tourists in North Korea can only visit tourist attractions approved by Pyongyang. Korean Heritage representative Gu Keyan said, adding that unsupervised tours are not allowed.

The tour features travel destinations that are exclusively offered to the company's customers, she said, adding that those destinations have been opened to tourists for the first time.

North Korea is developing its economy following the

summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in June 2018, Gu said.

Since May, the number of Chinese tourists visiting North Korea has grown from about 100 to 1,000 per day, she added.

China remains the main source of tourists to North Korea, followed by Russia, Europe and North America, Gu said, adding that fewer than 1,000 Taiwanese visit North Korea each year.

The tour price was set by the North Korean State General Bureau of Tourist Guidance, Chung Hsing chairman Ringo Lee said, adding that a six-day tour would cost between NT\$40,000 and NT\$50,000.

Taiwan does not have direct flights to Pyongyang and tourists must transfer in China, but the agency hopes to charter direct flights to Pyongyang in the future or to allow business travelers to enter North Korea on private jets, he said.

The North Korean agency would come to the Taipei International Travel Fair in November to promote the tours as well, Lee added.

Travelers would visit the Migok Cooperative Farm, where they can converse with farmers who are assigned by the government to speak with foreigners, he said.

They would also visit Sariwon City, where they can visit Sariwon Folklore Street and recreated ancient buildings, and the Pothonggang Department Store in Pyongyang, he said.

Hsin Show Travel Service Co representative Chien Shih-chiang said he has been organizing tours to North Korea for more than a decade.

Tourists must heed several restrictions to avoid getting in trouble with North Korean authorities, including avoiding any criticism of North Korean leaders and the regime.

Tourists are barred from taking photos that would hurt the image of North Korea, ezfly.com international tour department manager Ren Shih-ting said.

Taipei Times

Dining Out in Tokyo in the Age of Gastro-Tourism

By Robbie Swinnerton, Contributing Writer



It's the world's greatest dining city. Twenty years ago this assertion — one I delighted in dropping into conversations whenever possible — would have been met with bemusement if not ridicule, especially among the gourmets of Paris or New York. These days, few seriously dispute it. In terms of both quantity and quality — the sheer number of restaurants and the depth of Japanese food culture — nowhere else comes close.

So what happened to change perceptions on a global scale? First, thanks to the sushi boom of the '80s, Japanese cuisine is no longer considered exotic. Even seaweed has gone mainstream.

Second, there were the stars. The word was already out among chefs and adventurous gourmets in the know, but it was the first Michelin guide to Tokyo, published in 2007, that eventually triggered the wave of gastro-tourism to Japan.

The effect was immediate. Traditional restaurants that had been discreetly plying their trade for years were suddenly thrust into the global spotlight. Fame came fast to some chefs — sushi master Jiro Ono, now in his 90s, has now become a household name — and for the foodie fraternity it became a badge of honor to secure a prized seat at sushi or kaiseki restaurants formerly known only to insiders.

But the biggest impact on dining in Japan, as on all aspects of tourism, has come from the internet. Blogs led the way, but they've been eclipsed by Instagram and other social media networks. Now, smartphone cameras shine a spotlight on even the most obscure neighborhood eateries. Nowhere is immune or sacrosanct.

As a longtime resident — I've lived in Japan close to 40 years — it's easy to grumble. The influx of visitors from abroad has certainly made it harder to make reservations at some of my favorite restaurants. When a disproportionate number of diners in a small restaurant are from abroad, that inevitably affects the dynamic of the overall experience. And it is always jarring to hear English, Chinese or other languages rising sharply above the usual "tree-line" of Japanese conversation levels.

Many chefs have told me that the biggest negative has been the growing number of no-shows — customers not honoring their reservations. Sometimes this may just be unfortunate. Jet lag

can kick in at any time, and an afternoon nap can easily turn into deep slumber. But as often as not, the motives are purely selfish: The customer doesn't even feel the need to call and cancel.

Then there are the visiting gourmets who book themselves in for two dinners in the same evening — say, an early slot at a sushi counter and then a heavier wagyu dinner later — as a way to tick off more restaurants from their bucket lists during their visit. Even with the best of intentions, this is clearly unhealthy. When you start hearing stories of purging and bulimia, that is Instagram eating taken to excessive lengths.

But the impact is not only in the minus column. On the most practical level, there are few owner-chefs who will bemoan the increased clientele and having reservations assured for months ahead. And it's not just the high-end restaurants that are enjoying this surge: kaiten (conveyor-belt) sushi and ramen are equally in demand, while convenience store egg sandwiches now enjoy cult status in certain quarters.

I would also argue that the growing overseas interest in Japan has boosted the number and the quality of restaurants, especially in Tokyo. It encourages chefs to step up their game, to source better ingredients, to work with farmers and other food producers to improve their products.

Many of the current generation of chefs in Japan have lived and worked abroad, or increasingly travel outside the country for demonstrations and collaborations. The cross-fertilization is a two-way process and we are all the beneficiaries.

Best of all, there is generally a much greater receptiveness toward visitors from abroad. A generation ago, few restaurants wanted the hassle, the uncertainty, the fear of "misunderstanding" that might arise when dealing with non-Japanese speakers.

Today, many more chefs are just happy they can share their culture and cuisine with all-comers. This is a golden age for dining out in Japan, whether you are a first-time visitor or a seasoned veteran.

Japan Times

Night Markets Draw Most Tourists Last Year in Taipei

By Tsai Ya-hua and Sherry Hsiao/Staff reporter, with staff writer

SOUTHBOUND REWARDS: Taipei has recorded a nearly 30 percent increase in tourists from Southeast Asia, with the Philippines showing the largest rise

Night markets, Taipei 101 and Ximending area attracted the most visitors to Taipei last year, according to the results of a survey released on July 26, 2018 by the Taipei Department of Information and Tourism.

Of the survey's 3,600 respondents, 74.53 percent visited

night markets in the city in 2017. Next most popular were Taipei 101 (67.33 percent), Ximending (48.75 percent), the National Palace Museum (27.56 percent), Yangmingshan (21.17 percent) and the Dadaocheng area (19.21 percent).

Among the 2,640 respondents who reported purchasing local specialty foods, pineapple cakes were by far the most popular (85.76 percent, or 2,264 people).

Tourists from Japan, Singapore and China also ate traditional Taiwanese breakfasts, the department said, adding that instant noodles and beef noodle soup were popular among tourists.

The survey, which was conducted throughout 2017, targeted foreign tourists who visited Taipei during their stay and departed from Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, Taipei International Airport (Songshan airport) or Kaohsiung International Airport.

Among the 10,739,601 people who visited Taiwan in 2017, 90.9 percent visited Taipei, it said.

On average, visitors spent 4.22 days and US\$259.83 per person per day in the city, it said.

Tourists from China, Japan,



Taipei 101 and the Taipei skyline are pictured on December 20, 2017.

Photo: Chien Jung-fong, Taipei Times, July 27, 2018

Hong Kong and Macau accounted for the largest share of foreign visitors to Taipei in 2017, said Chueh Yu-ling, head of the department's Tourism Development Division.

The number of tourists from South Korea, which has grown rapidly in recent years, ranked fourth, Chueh said.

As a result of the New Southbound Policy, the city experienced a nearly 30 percent increase from 2016 in tourists from Southeast Asia, with the Philippines showing the largest growth in visitors, she said.

The number of visitors from Muslim-majority nations, which the Taipei

City Government has been seeking to boost in recent years, has also shown a slight increase, she said.

Chinese tourists have the strongest spending power, department Commissioner Chen Su-yu said.

In 2017, Chinese tourists spent an average of US\$390.44 per person per day in Taipei, followed by those from Singapore (US\$265.41), Japan (US\$245.76) and South Korea (US\$243.29), she said.

Travel to Taipei from Japan and South Korea has been growing steadily, Chen said.

The department is to continue pushing marketing strategies to attract Japanese and South Korean tourists, she said.

For example, it is this year to target older travelers from South Korea and has partnered with online travel platforms, airlines and travel agencies to August 2018 release discounted hot spring itineraries, she said.

In September, the department is to participate in the Tourism Expo Japan in Tokyo, Chen said, adding that the city government has worked with a Japanese artist to create special-edition EasyCards to bring to the event.

Taipei Times

Trunk (Hotel) Banks on Lodging Experience that Goes Beyond the Room

By Cory Baird

In the morning, two millennial-age men sit at a table together sipping coffee while typing away on their computers. As lunch time approaches, office workers file in for a bite to eat. At dusk, fashionable crowds sip on swanky cocktails and listen to local DJs spin their latest tunes.

This is the scene over the course of a normal day at Trunk (Hotel), a business whose fittingly ambiguous name brings to light a basic question about the company — is it a hotel, or a business with a hotel?

Speaking with Trunk officials and spending a day at the facilities, it's clear that the company is aiming to be the latter.

“Our business is more than our rooms,” said Haruka Osaka, a spokesman for Trunk, the first venture into the hotel industry by parent company Take and Give Needs Co., which provides wedding planning and event services. (It's formal name is Take and Give. Needs Co.)

Sitting in the bustling main entrance of the facility in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward, Osaka lists the many amenities available: a lounge with a bar, a convenience store, two restaurants, four

banquet rooms and a chapel for weddings.

These various shops, in addition to tours conducted by the hotel, are part of what she says is the company's plan to “create a community hub, unlike an exclusive hotel.”

While the community hub model — also referred to as the boutique or experience model — is not a new concept, it has only recently started to take off in Japan.

“Many wealthy people used to want to stay in high-class hotels in good locations, which can be thought of as the ‘classical model,’” said Kimio Morishige, a professor at Osaka Gakuin University who specializes in the hotel industry.

“But recently, a new model of hotel, called the ‘experience model,’ is becoming more popular. These types of hotels try to provide authentic experiences in the community, are concerned with sustainability and often conduct tours,” said Morishige.

“Their popularity has slowly been growing in Japan,” he added.

While diversifying revenue seems like an no-brainer from a business perspective, many of Tokyo's hotels have instead



In addition to restaurants, bars and a convenience store, the experience-oriented Trunk (Hotel) also boasts tour offerings. | SATOKO KAWASAKI

chosen to carve out market share by simply catering to a specific segment, such as business travelers.

According to a December 2017 estimate by the Japan Tourism Agency, business hotels, which usually offer cheap stays and a no-frills service, account for about 40 percent of all lodging in Tokyo.

But the new business model appears to be paying off so far. Since Trunk (Hotel) opened its doors in May 2017, occupancy rates have averaged around 91 percent, according to data from the company. By comparison, the average occupancy rate in Tokyo was 80 percent throughout 2017, according to the tourism ministry.

Trunk (Hotel) President Yoshitaka Nojiri, who is also president of Take and Give, appears ready to double down on his belief that the experience model is here to stay.

At an investor meeting in July, Nojiri announced plans to develop nine similar hotels in other major cities across Japan by 2027. But the company made it clear that the new properties will not simply mimic the offerings at the Shibuya branch.

“Regarding our future developments, we will continue to create a different concept for each hotel,” Nojiri said in an email to *The Japan Times*, explaining that each new development will have a different design and carry a different name.

How these plans play out depends on whether the company can continue to tap into the growing tourism boom.

With Trunk estimating that around 85 percent of its guests are from abroad, there is a risk a slump could threaten the revenue stream. Replacing its overseas customers would also be a hefty challenge as room rates average about ¥55,000 (\$500) a night, which may be too steep for domestic customers.

Another potential threat to upstarts like Trunk may come from large hotel chains, which are starting to take note that tourists are seeking more than a hotel room, Osaka Gakuin’s Morishige said.

“Some large hotels already offer tourists a chance to connect with local specialists,” said Morishige. “This includes courses on how to make Japanese cuisine and other experiences that can only be tried in Japan.”

Given the variety of its business offerings, the company might be insulated to some degree if competition heats up. While the company does not release details of its sales, spokesman Osaka estimated that around 90 percent of the patrons frequenting the lounge, two restaurants, and convenience store are not guests at the hotel.

It also hosts a variety of concerts, workshops, and other

product launches that help cushion its bottom line. In July alone Trunk (Hotel) sponsored 11 separate events.

In addition to the nine facilities being planned, Osaka said it is also holding discussions on adding another Trunk branded facility somewhere in Tokyo.

While the theme of each may differ, the diverse business model is likely to remain.

“On weekends we have weddings, during the week we have corporate events and different exhibitions,” said Osaka. “It all helps support our business.”

Japan Times

Thai Hotels, Resorts Band Together Against Plastics

By Michael Taylor / Thomson Reuters Foundation, Kuala Lumpur

For the millions of sun-seekers who head to Thailand’s resort island of Phuket each year in search of stunning beaches and clear waters, cutting down on waste might not be a top priority.

However, the island’s hotel association is hoping to change that with a series of initiatives aimed at reducing the use of plastic, tackling the garbage that washes up on its shores and educating staff, local communities and tourists alike.

“Hotels unchecked are huge consumers and users of single-use plastics,” said Anthony Lark, president of the Phuket Hotels Association and managing director of the Trisara resort.

“Every resort in Southeast Asia has a plastic problem. Until we all make a change, it’s going to get worse and worse,” he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Established in 2016 and with about 70 members — including all Phuket’s five-star hotels — the association has put tackling environmental issues high on its to-do list.

Last year, the group surveyed members’ plastics use and then began looking at ways to shrink their plastics footprint.

As part of this, three months ago the association’s hotels committed to phase out, or put plans in place to stop using plastic water bottles and plastic drinking straws by next year.

About five years ago, Lark’s own resort of about 40 villas used to dump into landfills about 250,000 plastic water bottles annually. It has now switched to reusable glass bottles.

The association also teamed up with the makers of the documentary *A Plastic Ocean* and now show an edited version with Thai subtitles for staff training.

Meanwhile, hotel employees and local schoolchildren take part in regular beach clean-ups.

“The association is involved in good and inclusive community-based action, rather than just hotel general managers getting together for a drink,” Lark said.

Phuket, like Bali in Indonesia and Boracay in the Philippines, has become a top holiday destination in Southeast Asia — and faces similar challenges.

Of a similar size to Singapore and at the geographical heart of Southeast Asia, Phuket is easily accessible to tourists from China, India, Malaysia and Australia.



With its white sandy beaches and infamous nightlife, Phuket attracts about 10 million visitors each year, according to media reports, helping make the Thai tourism industry one of the few bright spots in an otherwise lackluster economy.

Popular with vacationers and retirees, Phuket — like many other Southeast Asian resorts — must contend with traffic congestion, poor water management and patchy waste collection services.

Despite these persistent problems, hotels in the region need to follow Phuket's lead and step up action to cut their dependence on plastics, US-based nonprofit Ocean Conservancy managing director Susan Ruffo said.

Worldwide, between 8 million and 15 million tonnes of plastic are dumped in the ocean every year, killing marine life and entering the human food chain, the UN Environment Programme has said.

Five Asian countries — China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand — account for up to 60 percent of plastic waste leaking into the seas, an Ocean Conservancy study found.

“As both creators and ‘victims’ of waste, the hotel industry has a lot to gain by making efforts to control their own waste and helping their guests do the same,” Ruffo said.

“We are seeing more and more resorts and chains start to take action, but there is a lot more to be done, particularly in the area of ensuring that hotel waste is properly collected and recycled,” she added.

Data on how much plastic is used by hotels and the hospitality industry is hard to find.

However, packaging accounts for up to 40 percent of an establishment's waste stream, according to a 2011 study by the Travel Foundation, a UK-based charity.

Water bottles, shampoo bottles, toothbrushes and even food delivered by room service all tend to use throw-away plastics. In the past, the hospitality industry had looked at how to use less water and energy, said Von Hernandez, global coordinator at the Break Free From Plastic movement in Manila.

Now hotels are turning their attention to single-use plastics amid growing public awareness about damage to oceans.

“A lot of hotels are doing good work around plastics,” adopting measures to eliminate or shrink their footprint, Hernandez said.

However, hotels in Southeast Asia often have to contend with poor waste management and crumbling infrastructure.

“I've seen resorts in Bali that pay staff to rake the beach every morning to get rid of plastic, but then they either dig a hole and bury it or burn it on the beach,” Ruffo said. “Those are not effective solutions, and can lead to other issues.”

Hotels should look at providing reusable water containers and refill stations, giving guests metal or bamboo drinking straws and bamboo toothbrushes and replacing single-use soap and shampoo containers with refillable dispensers, experts said.

“Over time, this could actually lower their operational costs — it could give them savings,” Hernandez said. “It could help change mindsets of people, so that when they go back to their usual lives, they have a little bit of education.”

Back in Phuket, the hotel association is exploring ways to cut plastic waste further and is to host its first regional forum on environmental awareness in September 2018.

The hope is that what the group has learned over the past two years can be implemented at other Southeast Asian resorts and across the wider community.

“If the 20,000 staff in our hotels go home and educate mum and dad about recycling or reusing, it's going to make a big difference,” Lark said.

Taipei Times

About CACCI Asian Council on Tourism

Asian Council of Tourism (ACT) is one of the Product Service Councils under the CACCI umbrella. The PSCs have been formed with the primary aim of promoting greater business interaction among CACCI members who are in the same product or service line. There are currently twelve PSCs that are operating within the CACCI umbrella.

The PSCs meet at least once a year, usually in

conjunction with the Annual CACCI Conference held in various member countries.

The current Chairman of ACT is Mr. Anura Samarawickrema Lokuhetty from Sri Lanka. He is concurrently Chairman of Red Apple Travel & Holidays Lanka (Pvt) Ltd., and Immediate Past President of The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka, the apex body representing all hotels in Sri Lanka.

Published by the Secretariat, Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry

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