

GEARING UP THE TRADE



The HKTB has closely monitored the pandemic development throughout 2020/21 to adjust its strategies flexibly. Although Hong Kong saw few inbound visitors, the behind-the-scenes work with various stakeholders in the tourism sectors did not stop; on the other hand, the HKTB seized the chance to gear up and enhance the tourism sector to stand up to increasing regional competition when travel resumes.

UNCEASING COMMUNICATIONS

As border closure limited exchange between Hong Kong and its visitor sources, the HKTB maintained close communications with trade members to keep audiences in visitor source markets updated with accurate information about Hong Kong.

QUICK RESPONSE TO TRAVEL RESTRICTION – ONLINE TOURISM UPDATE



Shortly after the HKSAR Government adopted stringent boundary/border control measures in March 2020 to prevent the spread of the pandemic, the HKTb hosted its first-ever online annual Tourism Update in April 2020 to present a recovery plan for Hong Kong's tourism industry.

In addition to our regular presentation of HKTb's annual business plan by HKTb Chairman and Executive Director, representatives from various worldwide offices also shared their insights in the event to keep local trade members abreast about pandemic development, attracting about 1,500 trade members from various sectors.

GLOBAL ONLINE FORUM CONNECTING WORLDWIDE TRADE PARTNERS



In June 2020, the HKTb hosted an online forum titled “Beyond COVID-19: Global Tourism’s New Normal” – the first event of its kind focusing on the post-pandemic tourism prospects for Hong Kong, Mainland, Asia, and the world.

The global online forum secured the support of 7 respected global industry leaders, including McKinsey & Company Partner, Google Sector Lead in Travel & Vertical Search APAC, Trip.com CEO, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) President and CEO, International Air Transport Association (IATA) Director General and CEO, Hong Kong and Shanghai Hotels Ltd COO, and The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI) Managing Director and CEO, to discuss the latest consumer sentiments and behaviour and share insights into the challenges confronting the industry.

FOSTERING COHESIVE FORCE IN THE INDUSTRY



At the beginning of the pandemic, the HKTb identified two key elements – accurate intelligence and prompt, collective actions from the travel industry – are the key to sustaining the tourism industry under the pandemic and creating space for survival for industry members.

As such, the HKTb has formed an industry task force focusing on pandemic responses with major tourism-related sectors to convene regularly for the latest updates on pandemic development in Hong Kong and source markets, HKTb's upcoming business strategies and recovery directions, as well as government policies. The industry taskforce helped develop measures to provide timely support to trade partners.

Besides, the HKTb has hosted more than 100 webinars since March 2020, among them is a major webinar in April to analyse the pandemic's impact on tourism, drawing 1,500 trade representatives from Hong Kong. The webinars were well received by trade partners around the world and generated many news reports in major media platforms.

POOL OF ELITE FOR BIDDING WORLD-RENOWNED EVENTS



The HKTB invited leaders with significant influence in respective sectors and wider community such as the medical science, commerce, innovation and technology, and various academic sectors to become Hong Kong Convention Ambassadors to promote Hong Kong as a leading destination for meetings, incentive travels, conventions, exhibitions (MICE).

With extensive connections, influence and personal standing in their respective fields, Convention Ambassadors have a significant advantage when they lobby potential conference organisers to consider Hong Kong as the preferred host city for future MICE events. The Ambassadors have been leading a number of conventional events, including Hong Kong International Dental Expo and Symposium (bottom), International Airline Transport Association (IATA) World Cargo Symposium, Asia Pacific League of Associations for Rheumatology (APLAR).

REGIONAL PARTICIPATION TO SEIZE UPCOMING CHANCES



At the same time, the HKTb maintained Hong Kong's exposure among international trade associations by actively participating in different large-scale regional and global industry events, such as the 87th UFI Global Congress, M&C Asia Connection, the China Congress of Association and Chamber of Commerce, and Seatrade Cruise Virtual to solicit their support towards the tourism industry in preparation for welcoming back MICE and business travellers as well as high-yield visitors when travel restrictions are lifted.

Mainland will continue to be Hong Kong's largest visitors source when boundaries reopen. In light of this, the HKTb collaborated with trade partners to conduct a MICE Virtual Trade Show and business matching sessions among the Mainland MICE buyers, agents and potential corporate clients, to create business opportunities for Hong Kong and Mainland trade partners.

To keep Hong Kong on the radar of Mainland trade partners, in March 2021, the HKTb organised a physical MICE trade seminar in Guangzhou with trade partners from Southern China to capitalise on the Greater Bay Area opportunity as detailed in the National Fourteenth Five-Year Plan. In addition, the HKTb also facilitated trade partners to network and discuss business with Mainland consumers through setting up the Hong Kong Pavilion at the physical China (Guangdong) International Tourism Industry Expo (CITIE) in September 2020 which helped trade partners generate business leads prior to boundary reopening.

TRADE ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES AND MICE EVENTS IN NUMBERS

- Tourism Update 2020: Around 1,500 representatives from Hong Kong travel trade attended
- “Beyond COVID-19: Global Tourism’s New Normal” Global Online Forum: 4,000 registered viewers including trade representatives, academics and media from 75 markets; 55% of which are non-local viewers
- HKTb Trade Webinars: More than 100 webinars with 15,000 trade representatives from the Mainland and overseas; generated around 40 media clippings with publicity value of HK\$1.1 million
- Hong Kong Convention Ambassadors: More than 100 distinguished leaders of business and professional bodies in Hong Kong
- MICE Virtual Trade Show & Business Matching Sessions for Mainland market: Collaborated with 85 Hong Kong partners with 77 virtual exhibition booths; successfully generated more than 1,300 appointments between buyers and providers
- Physical MICE trade seminar in Guangzhou: Attracted over 40 industry executives from the Mainland
- Online+Offline Business Matching Sessions for local, Mainland and overseas markets: Lined up around 7,000 appointments in 12 sessions
- CITIE Hong Kong Pavilion: Exposed to 20,000 visitors and 500 buyers, winning the “Best Organisation Award”

RESTORING CONFIDENCE AND ENHANCING SERVICES

While preparing for tourism recovery, the HKTb focused on restoring consumer confidence in Hong Kong's safety against COVID-19 as well as our relatively stable pandemic situation, highlighting the efforts in combating the virus by trade partners and the true testimonies of business leaders. At the same time, the HKTb made use of the pandemic as a chance to accelerate our digitalisation to provide effective, seamless and customisable visitor services.

REASSURING COVID SAFETY WITH STANDARDISED HYGIENE PROTOCOL



Campaign partner

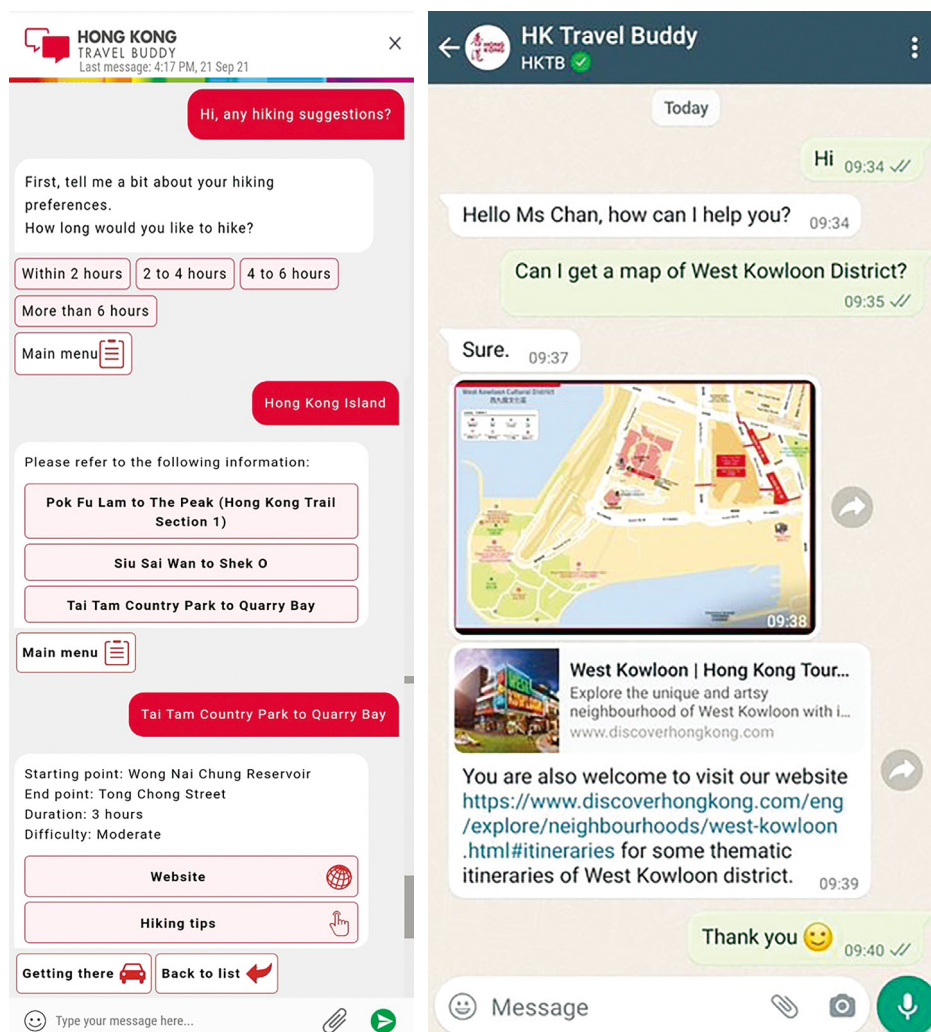


To restore consumers' confidence and deepen their understanding in Hong Kong businesses' hygiene measures against COVID-19, in October 2020, the HKTb joined hands with the Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency to lay down a standardised set of hygiene and anti-epidemic protocol for tourism-related industries, including hotels, shopping malls, attractions, travel agencies, the dining and retail sectors. The "Anti-Epidemic Hygiene Measures Certification Scheme" will help visitors easily identify up-to-par outlets and become a source of confidence for having an enjoyable stay in Hong Kong.

The protocol was endorsed by trade partners and Dr Yuen Kwok-yung, Chair of Infectious Diseases, in the Department of Microbiology at The University of Hong Kong who also advised the government on pandemic-response measures.

To further support the industry through these difficult times, the HKTb fully sponsored the application fee for eligible businesses.

ACCELERATING DIGITALISATION



In terms of visitor information and services, the HKTb has made use of the time in pandemic to enhance its automated and online services. The HKTb launched an AI visitor service chatbot in October 2020 and WhatsApp live chat services in December 2020 to provide local consumers and travellers with more efficient services. The services allow travellers to receive accurate information from a reliable source and increase their confidence to come to Hong Kong under the pandemic. The existing email inquiry and hotline systems were also upgraded to incorporate the online services so that inquirers can switch to other communication means once they get in touch with HKTb's staff, making the inquiry process more convenient and highly customised.

STANDARDISED HYGIENE PROTOCOL AND AI VISITOR SERVICE CHATBOT IN NUMBERS

- “Anti-Epidemic Hygiene Measures Certification Scheme”: around 3,000 certified outlets
- AI Visitor Service chatbot: handled more than 11,000 inquiries, equivalent to 40% of inquiries received from webchats on DiscoverHongKong.com