

Tourism Industry Conference 2022
6 April 2022, Suntec City Convention & Exhibition Centre
Presentation by Mr. Keith Tan, Chief Executive, Singapore Tourism Board

1. Good morning MOS Alvin, and friends and colleagues from the tourism industry.
2. We have survived!
 - a. Light at the end of the tunnel is real and getting bigger!
 - b. Very proud of how far we have come as a country, and as an industry.
 - c. You have supported our national efforts in so many ways.
 - i. More than 100 hotels supported COVID-19 efforts by operating as SHN and quarantine facilities
 - ii. Some 250 tourist guides signed up to serve as SDAs to keep tourism businesses and precincts safe
 - iii. You worked hard with us to retain important capabilities and skills. Some even built up new capabilities and refreshed your products and infrastructure.
 - iv. Piloted over 200 MICE events safely, with over 50,000 attendees – culminating in the Singapore Airshow in February 2022.
 - v. Pivoted decisively to support SingapoRediscovered domestic tourism campaign
 - d. Thank you for the sacrifices you have made, and for bearing with us through the ups and downs of the past two years.
 - e. Because of these efforts, **we are now poised for a strong recovery** over the next few years.

DIFFERENTIATE SINGAPORE AS WE REOPEN

3. Key preoccupation: How do we differentiate ourselves from other destinations?
 - a. Many competitors have reopened.
 - b. Everyone is intensifying their inbound tourism campaigns.
 - c. We must do likewise, in ways that differentiate us.

- i. The services you provide
 - ii. The experiences you deliver
 - iii. The way you engage your guests
- 4. Today, I will share some of what STB is planning to do in the next 6 – 12 months
 - a. To inspire and challenge you
 - b. Please think of how you can partner us in these efforts

SINGAPOREIMAGINE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN

- 5. STB is rapidly accelerating the SingapoReimagine international recovery campaign around the world. As a quick sampling:
 - a. In Australia, we are working with the Australian media house Urban List and launched Urban List Singapore just last month.
 - i. Singapore is the first destination outside Australia and New Zealand to have its own dedicated page on Urban List, covering our lifestyle offerings.
 - ii. It has already reached more than 1 million people since its launch!
 - b. In India, we are also ramping up efforts in time for the summer travel peak season:
 - i. Just launched a new collaboration with the St+art India Foundation, bringing together a Singapore-based artist Tina Fung and an Indian artist Osheen Siva, to create a large-scale outdoor art installation in Chennai; footfall of about over half a million to-date
 - ii. Only a few days ago, featured a Singapore Experience Zone at India's biggest gin festival, with more than 5,000 physical attendees and a digital reach of about 3 million
 - c. In Indonesia, we are relying on a combination of creative activations and attractive incentives to drive Singapore's desirability
 - i. Ongoing collaboration with Artotel Group and Far East Hospitality, where they designed unique Singapore-themed rooms while offering exclusive discounts at Far East properties in Singapore
 - ii. Promoted Singapore's tourism offerings with redeemable rewards at the Astindo Travel fair in Jakarta just last month, Indonesia's

largest travel fair, which saw 10,000 physical and 30,000 virtual attendees

- iii. Now finalising partnerships with Indonesian banks and malls, to promote Singapore offerings and to spur conversions.
6. To support these in-market efforts, we will intensify our regional and global partnerships to feature Singapore
 - a. Aviation partners such as Singapore Airlines, Qantas and Changi Airport, as well as regional airlines like AirAsia, Scoot and Jetstar
 - b. Major OTAs like Expedia, Agoda, Klook and Traveloka
 - c. Media and entertainment partners like WarnerMedia
 7. To support these efforts at driving consideration and conversion, STB will launch a new incentive programme that will offer visitors a complimentary experience when they visit Singapore.
 - a. We want to delight our visitors with “hidden gem” surprises so that they experience more of Singapore, in an unexpected way.
 - b. To succeed, we need you to develop more unique and unusual experiences for our visitors, especially repeat visitors who think they know Singapore
 - c. Think of experiences that can differentiate Singapore from our competitors!
 - d. We will name it soon and launch it later this year.
 8. Let me take a brief pause now to feature the SingapoReimagine clip
 - a. Since its launch, it has already gotten more than two and a half million views on our social media platforms.
 - b. Spotlights both our iconic experiences and unexpected facets of Singapore, the sorts of experiences that we hope to see more of, from all of you.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

9. All that I have said so far is focused on the near-term, over the next 6 – 12 months.
 - a. We know this is important for you.

- b. That's why we have set aside a sizeable budget to support your efforts in this timeframe, as MOS Alvin has already mentioned.
- c. But we must also make sure that what we do in the next 6 – 12 months, supports our medium to longer term plans and strategies for 2030 and beyond, which we have called "Tourism 203X".
- d. I will spend the rest of my time here on **four key pillars** of our longer-term T203X strategy, which I hope will shape your thinking and directions too.

GLOBAL-ASIA NODE FOR BUSINESS TOURISM

10. First, we must defend and grow our position as the **Global-Asia node for business tourism**.

- a. The rumours about the decline of business travel are greatly exaggerated.
 - i. In the US and Europe, our MICE stakeholders tell us that appetite for face-to-face business events is strong and many of them have resumed.
 - ii. Same in Singapore – most tradeshows anchored in Singapore and association conventions want to resume fully physical events in the upcoming months
- b. Our strategies to Create, Attract and Grow high-quality MICE events out of Singapore therefore remain relevant for the future.
- c. We want Singapore to be a home to best-in-class MICE events, especially those that can bring Asian, European and American businesses together.
- d. Grow the business events that are relevant to the needs of the future – such as sustainability, urban solutions, food security, energy security, fintech, and advanced manufacturing.
- e. In this way, our MICE sector can support the growth of Singapore-based companies in these areas, giving them a competitive advantage.
- f. And strengthen Singapore's relevance at a time when globalisation is under severe pressure.

11. In the next few weeks, we will have three major events that some of you have worked hard on: Singapore International Water Week, CleanEnviro Summit Singapore, and Asia Tech x Singapore.

- a. We expect about 25,000 people from around the world to attend these events – perhaps more now that we have relaxed our border policies.

- b. It is important to focus not just on the numbers, but on the quality of the events – the thought leadership, the breadth and range of the companies represented, and the outcomes from these events.
- c. Many other similar high-quality events later this year, including the 60th International Young Lawyers’ Congress, the Global Health Security Conference, two mega events under Food&HotelAsia, ITB Asia for our travel industry, as well as the Singapore FinTech Festival.
- d. Let’s work hard to give all attendees a great experience when they visit.

SUSTAINABLE URBAN DESTINATION

12. I spoke about this theme last year.

- a. Our ambition is to become one of the world’s most sustainable urban destinations, a city in nature, where large experiences come with small footprints.
- b. We have made good progress over the past year at raising our sustainability quotient.
- c. For example, we recently launched the Hotel Sustainability Roadmap
 - i. First of its kind in the world as a collective effort amongst a city’s hotels
 - ii. Characterised by high ambition and high commitment from our hotels
 - iii. Our hotels now have an opportunity to lead the way for other hotels around the world

13. We won’t stop here. Three further areas of work:

- a. We will work with other segments of the tourism sector to set ambitious targets and strategies e.g., SACEOS will be pursuing efforts to align their MICE Sustainability Certification with internationally-recognised standards
- b. In 2022, we will participate in the **Global Destination Sustainability Index** for the first time, to benchmark our sustainability performance against other MICE destinations.
- c. We will also start our journey for Singapore to be certified as a sustainable destination under the Global Sustainable Tourism Council’s (GSTC’s) Destination Criteria.

14. As STB pursues these efforts, I want to challenge you in two ways.

- a. First, think expansively about sustainability.
 - i. Not just narrowly about reducing carbon emissions.
 - ii. Also how you optimise the use of resources – don't forget that our power bills are all going to be rising in the coming months.
 - iii. Waste and water management.
 - iv. How you design your buildings, facilities and operational processes
- b. Second, weave sustainability into all your touchpoints with your guests.
 - i. Nudge them to make better choices.
 - ii. Educate them about what you are doing – especially the less visible aspects of your efforts that may make a bigger difference e.g. the use of more sustainable building materials or more efficient cooling systems
 - iii. Ensure that your experiences and offerings feature sustainability in a visible way. For example, Sentosa Development Corporation is working with Palawan Innovation Studios to introduce a new electric go-kart and interactive gaming activity called HyperDrive, in 2023.
 - iv. Weave Singapore's sustainability story into your narratives and guides.
 - v. As MOS Alvin mentioned, STB just launched the Tourism Sustainability Programme which will provide resources and information that you can use to guide the sustainable development of your businesses – refer to our website for more details.

URBAN WELLNESS HAVEN

15. Last year I also spoke about wellness as a growth area that we must tap into.
- a. Post-pandemic, we want Singapore to be seen as a destination with a wide range of accessible experiences that support the holistic wellbeing of our leisure and business visitors.
 - b. There are many offerings and experiences that cater to the full range of wellness, that are quite easily accessible even for the busy business traveller – but they are not very well known.

16. Therefore, STB has worked with several other government agencies and industry partners to launch the first edition of the Wellness Festival Singapore, in June this year.

- a. To enhance discoverability of Singapore's wellness offerings, or our wellness quotient.
- b. To catalyse more wellness-related products and partnerships between various players in Singapore
- c. To grow domestic customer base and advocacy
- d. We must position Singapore's status as an **urban wellness haven**, different from Bali or Phuket –as a busy city yet with easy access to wellness offerings for everyone.
- e. Some of the offerings lined up include:
 - i. Multi-sensory pop-up at Gardens by the Bay together with wellness masterclasses
 - ii. An inaugural Livewell Festival at Sentosa
 - iii. Series of art, wellness and mindfulness programmes at National Gallery Singapore
 - iv. More details coming out soon.

17. We must also keep growing the supply of distinctive wellness-related experiences

- a. Today very few tours in Singapore focus on holistic wellbeing.
- b. But there are many existing tours focused on sports, nature, and the arts – which may easily incorporate wellness elements and experiences.
 - i. Tour operators can collaborate with those in the wellness sector to create these experiences
 - ii. E.g., Monster Day Tours is working with ClassPass to livestream wellness tours and outdoor fitness classes at tourism precincts for the Wellness Festival
 - iii. You can also tap on our Tour Experience Innovation Lab to design and plan for such tours.

18. Naturally, there are strong synergies between sustainability and wellness.

- a. Mutually support our efforts at transforming Singapore's tourism landscape to capture new, high-value tourism segments.
- b. I hope this video can show everyone the vision we have in mind.

2 x THE FUN

19. The fourth area that we must focus on is raising the "delight" or "fun" quotient of the events and experiences here in Singapore.

- a. Don't just rely on formulas or templates that worked in the past.
- b. We must come up with innovative ways to enable our events, experiences and offerings to surprise and stand out.

20. Let me suggest three ways you can dial up the "fun quotient" for your guests.

- a. First: Work with well-known lifestyle or entertainment brands and IP so that our events can stand out.
 - i. One example I am looking forward to is **Avatar: The Experience**, which we will welcome later this year at Gardens by the Bay.
 - ii. I loved the first Avatar movie when it came out in 2009.
 - iii. The Avatar experience is timed to complement the worldwide release of the sequel, and will transform the Cloud Forest into the world of Avatar.
 - iv. Will be very special, and not just for fans of the movie.
- b. Second: Develop hands-on or educational experiences that engage your guests – help them to feel that they have learned something after their visit.
 - i. Hells Museum at Haw Par Villa – the world's first museum dedicated to death and the afterlife, launched last year. Great job demystifying taboo topics very intelligently and thoughtfully; I came out learning a lot more.
 - ii. Homegrown brand Mr Bucket Chocolaterie will launch a new Chocolate Factory concept later this year at Dempsey that will feature Singapore's first build-your-own chocolate bar section, with distinctive Asian flavours.
- c. Third: Maximise the use of our existing spaces, refresh them so that visitors know that they are not coming back to the "same old places".

- i. Orchard Road is a prime example. Despite the pandemic, the private and public sector have continued our efforts to remake Orchard Road into a top lifestyle destination. Here's a short video.
- ii. That's not all. In 2021, we launched a tender for the vacant site next to the Somerset Skate Park for a new attraction concept to complement Orchard Road's existing offerings and the youthful identity of the Somerset area.
- iii. Today, I am happy to announce that the tender has been awarded to The Ride Side, for a new concept called the Trifecta, an integrated facility where visitors can skate, surf, ski and snowboard. I congratulate them on their successful bid and look forward to more details from them soon.
- iv. One more example of refreshing existing offerings: How many of you know that the Merlion sculpture at Merlion Park turns 50 this year? While the Merlion concept was born earlier, the sculpture was inaugurated by Mr Lee Kuan Yew in September 1972. We want to work with you to create fresh, new content, products and activities to commemorate "Merlion 50". Please give us your ideas!

21. STB will support your efforts at creating "2 X The Fun" in Singapore in many different ways.

- a. We have maintained enhanced levels of funding support and expanded funding parameters for some of our schemes.
- b. Our Experience Step-up Fund now supports virtual products and experiences
- c. And we have raised the grant cap of our Kickstart Fund – which supports pilots of new events – from \$200k to \$250k.

BUILDING A FUTURE-READY INDUSTRY

22. Even as we pursue these efforts at strengthening Singapore's attractiveness, please keep on building up your workforce capabilities.

23. **Manpower**. We know that manpower is a major concern for many of you.

- a. The reopening of the land borders with Malaysia should also relieve some of your bottlenecks.
- b. STB also worked with NTUC and Workforce Singapore to set up a new facility called the Tourism Careers Hub late last year, or TCH.

- i. Through the TCH, we work with the tripartite partners to extend end-to-end job facilitation, training and support for your workforce – essentially to enable displaced workers to bounce back quickly, and to help you find and train the workers you need with the right skillsets.
- ii. Please reach out to TCH if you need help to find workers with the right skills, or to upskill your workers to meet your needs.

24. **Digital transformation.** Since the start of the pandemic, we have been pushing as hard as we can on digital transformation.

- a. I launched Tcube – the Tourism Technology Transformation Cube – at this event last year.
- b. Many of you have benefited from the support of Tcube’s programmes.
- c. E.g., through Tcube’s Data Analytics Shift Programme, Chan Brothers Travel raised the data capabilities of its staff.

25. **Extended Reality (XR).** At last year’s TIC, I also shared about Augmented Reality as a new capability we need to build up.

- a. To kickstart this journey, STB has developed 100 3D models of our points of interests, and these are available for free via our Tourism Information and Services hub – so please use them.
- b. Since then, we have also broadened this concept into “Extended Reality”, or XR, which encompasses Augmented, Mixed and Virtual Reality.
- c. We are keen to pilot proof-of-concepts with you, to create engaging interactive content.
- d. E.g., we worked with S.E.A. Aquarium on an AR app for visitors to interact with marine animals digitally, and learn more about marine life, and Grand Park City Hall, on a solar-system themed AR app for its younger guests.
- e. To expand these efforts, we launched a grant call in February this year called “The Next Experience”.
 - i. To create XR-enabled experiences all around Singapore that motivate people to visit multiple points of interest
 - ii. We have received healthy interest and hope to receive your proposals by 23 April 2022.

CONCLUSION

26. Covered a lot of ground, so let me summarise my main points.

- a. As we accelerate SingapoReimagine, our international recovery campaign, please work with us to multiply and amplify our recovery efforts in key markets.
- b. Keep on creating distinctive, surprising products and experiences that we can introduce to visitors through our new tourist incentive programme.
- c. Grow Singapore as a home for high-quality MICE events and make sure we provide a great experience for these visitors in Singapore.
- d. Support our efforts to benchmark our sustainability performance against other destinations and get certified under GSTC's Destination Criteria.
- e. Raise three different "quotients":
 - i. **Sustainability quotient:** Weave sustainability into your touchpoints, stories, experiences and business and operational processes.
 - ii. **Wellness quotient:** Contribute to our first Singapore Wellness Festival and raise the wellness content in your products, activities and tours.
 - iii. **Fun quotient:** Partner with well-loved brands and IP, or introduce more hands-on, educational experiences.
- f. Build future-ready workforce and capabilities, e.g., through the Tourism Careers Hub, or building muscles in new areas such as extended reality.

27. A lot of ground to cover, but please take these challenges seriously

- a. To differentiate Singapore from our competitors and recover well
- b. So that we can defend our position as one of the world's most innovative and well-loved destinations
- c. And to create a more vibrant, sustainable Singapore for our visitors and for those of us who call Singapore home.

END