

Destination Asia

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Asia is leading the world's growth in the Meetings, incentives, conferences & exhibitions (MICE) industry. It is one of the fastest developing regions in the world and is poised for further expansion as it faces a relatively positive economic environment. The growing Asian economy has attracted the attention of international MICE players, with increasing focus on the region as the hub for hosting small to large scale events.

Governments have recognized the importance of leveraging tradeshows as an avenue to attract foreign investors or to promote local expertise to the international market. Many are reinventing themselves amidst stiff competition through the development of state-of-the-art infrastructure, pro-business environment and an excellent hospitality industry.

An increase in new convention and exhibition facilities and fresh government incentives enable these Asian markets to ride along the massive development boom that is currently underway.

China leads the pack with the largest number of convention centers in the entire region, with the opening of the Shanghai Convention & Exhibition Center of International Sourcing (SHCEC) - an international multi-functional complex that houses facilities for conventions and exhibitions. SHCEC will also host IT&CM China 2015, one of the largest and leading MICE events attracting both Chinese and International MICE professionals.

Experienced destinations like Singapore have held its position as the world's 'top international meeting city' for seven consecutive years according to the Union of International Associations (UIA) 2013 Global Rankings.

It houses leading MICE venues like the Marina Bay Sands Expo and

Convention Centre (MBS); Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre, which underwent a major transformation; and the Singapore Expo with its MAX Atria convention wing — all of which are designed to enhance the city's offerings.

Beyond the city's comprehensive MICE infrastructure, the country also has organizations that provide customized support for business events organizers. The Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau (SECB) has rolled out various schemes such as Business Events in Singapore (BEIS) and Approved International Fair (AIF) to meet the different clients' needs and expectations.

Furthermore, associations like the Asian Federation of Exhibition and Convention Associations (AFECA) work closely with industry players from the region to promote the growth and development of the exhibition and convention industry in Asia.

Emerging markets like Thailand have also joined the pack with the rapid construction of its MICE facilities and well-developed tourism industry.

Over the last few years, Thailand has been strengthening its development plans to meet the growth of the MICE market in Asia. The Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) was set up in 2002 to elevate Thailand's MICE awareness while offering incentives and support to international organizers.

Launched in 2014, TCEB's campaign, 'Thailand CONNECT the World,' aims to act as a strategic link between global businesses and the local experts, reinforcing international confidence in Thailand as a premier business events destination. Thailand is also home to the IMPACT Arena and IMPACT Exhibition and Convention Centre, one of the largest MICE venues

in Asia with a total area of over 1.5 million square feet, which was recently refurbished to include additional facilities and support such as the construction of a new hotel wing.

With Asia housing over two-thirds of the world's population, and boasting a diversified range of industry sectors

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from energy, construction and automotive, the region is on track to tap on a large growth potential. Additionally, with the ASEAN Economic Community 2015, there will be continued growth in economic activity and regional trade in the Southeast Asian region as countries become more closely integrated.

In addition, a focus on innovation, content development, adoption and adaptation of new technologies to improve visitors' and exhibitors' experience will be the key in supporting the continued growth of tradeshows for these countries. The world's increasing focus on economic engagement in Asia signals a strong growth in its conventions and meetings market for the entire region.

The contributor is the Sales & Marketing Director of Kingsmen Exhibits Pte Ltd, a leading communication design & production group in Asia Pacific & the Middle East.