

SKAL INTERNATIONAL ASIA AREA -MAGAZINE JULY 2020

SKAL BANGKOK SEES RECORD TURNOUT FOR RESTARTING TOURISM

by Andrew J Wood

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Panellists and industry experts share the challenges of restarting tourism in Thailand

BANGKOK: To a sold out gathering of travel and tourism professionals SKÅL INTERNATIONAL BANGKOK reconvened after a four month hiatus, with a networking lunch and panel discussion on “Restarting Tourism” at the Pullman Bangkok King Power Hotel.

Commenting on the meeting, club President Andrew J Wood said, “With 51 days and no new local Covid-19 infections in Thailand, and regrettably the closed borders and few flights allowed in and out of the country, we took the decision to have our first in-person physical meeting. With little evidence that the virus is still active in Thailand we did however take special precautions to restrict access to only registered and contactable members and guests and to record all attendees and have thermal imaging temperature scans on arrival

and special seating and table layouts plus higher than standard hygiene protocols in place and protection for all staff of the hotel wearing masks, shields and gloves.

“The Pullman Bangkok King Power Hotel did an excellent job keeping us all safe for our first physical meeting after lock down. We felt safe, protected and confident of a well managed hotel. There are no guarantees in life but feeling safe is very much part of travel today, even if its just travelling out of your house.

“We were able to welcome everyone back to the first in-person lunch post-Covid and to talk about the challenges of restarting tourism in Thailand. Thank you to Jerome Stubert GM for all the great arrangements and to our panellists, sponsors and all our members and guests for attending,” the Skål Bangkok Club President said.

The lunch commenced with a short presentation by Kingsmen Hospitality Service on Good Hygiene training program by COO Claus Enghave and MD Prem Singh.

In his article, Travel Weekly Asia journalist Vincent Vichit-Vadakan reported, “ A sign of easing concerns about physical distancing in Thailand, the Bangkok Club of Skål International hosted its first post-lockdown networking and panel discussion to examine an issue that is on everyone's mind: restarting tourism.



Skalleagues sponsors and panellists

“This time however, hard-hitting questions from moderator and industry veteran David Barrett steered the panellists away from clichés. Barrett pushed his guests to address wide-ranging questions like rate-dumping, threats to sustainability, the return of mass tourism, domestic market potential, and the role of technology in kickstarting business.”

Willem Niemeijer, Chairman of Yaana Ventures, in his assessment of prospects of a prolonged ban on international travel, said “I think the future will be very dark if the borders are going to be closed for six months,” he observed. “I don't think Thailand could survive, let alone the tourism industry. It would be bringing Thailand back to the 1970s.”



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Fomer SkalBkk President Willem Niemeijer later went onto discuss reaching out to the domestic market that is now the focus of Thailand's tourism recovery effort as its borders remain closed to foreign tourists. “It's not just dumping prices for no particular reason. You have to go to a lower price point to get the domestic market and get people in the door.”

We were honoured with the presence of Skål International Thailand President Wolfgang Grimm owner of the Anana Ecological Resort in Krabi who is passionate about the environment and how we as humans interact with mother nature. On the sidelines of the meeting he told me, "In a post Covid-19 world we must consider ways in achieving a more sustainable future of tourism. Tourism has come to a global stand-still presenting an opportunity to evaluate the lessons and consequences. It's important to take time to consider a reset to our industry, instead of returning to the old ways. We need to engage in mobilising the local community with small, easily achievable sustainable activities which benefit everyone," he said.

Luxury travel, technology and niche marketing were highlighted by Travel Weekly Asia in their report on the meeting , "IC Partners CEO and American Chamber of Commerce Travel and Tourism Committee Chair Charlie Blocker thinks a "systemic change" is underway, echoing a message hammered home by the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Ministry of Tourism about going after high-value tourists. "We've heard them talk quality over quantity before, but that's real religion now. Blocker also pointed to the newly launched Asia Travel Technology Industry Association, backed by Agoda, Booking-dot-com, Expedia and Airbnb, that will work with government authorities. "

Christian Stoeckli, General Manager at Diethelm Travel Thailand, predicts that customers will pay for enhanced health measures. "We are sure that consumers are ready to pay a little bit more. International travellers are looking for health and safety procedures that they can trust he also emphasised the importance of identifying niche markets. "What do Thai people want?" he asked. "Do they want a farm stay? A photo stop? You need to be a little more creative. We're thinking of family holidays, kids' camps, kid stays."

Skål International Phuket President Robert de Graaf, who also attended the lunch, raised the question from the floor of health over profit and expressed his concern that we are delaying restarting tourism with countries that have a good track record with controlling the coronavirus. He made the point that while it would not be advisable to restart international flights with ALL countries there are some however, that are doing very well. We must not make a blanket decision that is a lost opportunity to restart tourism and to start protecting jobs once more.

Andrew J WOOD

Thailand MICE: Tourism Students Shine at Contest

While practicing safe meeting protocol

[Andrew J. Wood - eTN Thailand July 11, 2020 19:38](#)

Students from Assumption University's MSME Business School returned victorious from the [2020 Thailand MICE Youth Challenge](#) competition held July 9, 2020 at the Hyatt Regency, Bangkok. The Assumption University team created the Illuminate Music Festival, a hybrid MICE event (workshop + expo)

and (concert + live stream), to compete against other team's innovative ideas for MICE events. Each team needed to prepare a detailed business plan and a five-minute sales presentation. The Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management HTM team is named Illuminate: Nattapat Ruckworakijkul (Copter), Sirapob Jirngsaard (Mix), Atibordee Noichan (Tib), and Donlaya Kluaphid (Benz).

15 teams competed in the [Thailand MICE](#) Youth Challenge 2020 representing nine universities in Thailand. The first round consisted of student online presentations. Qualifying teams then participated in an online Q &A with the judges. Finally, six teams were invited to present their MICE idea to the judges during a live event at the Hyatt Regency. The winning teams will meet again in the fall of 2020 to compete in the AFECA (The Asian Federation of Exhibition & Convention Associations) Asia MICE Youth Challenge. Team leader, Nattapat Ruckworakijkul (Copter) expressed the sentiments of the team, saying "We really appreciate the opportunity to compete against such a great group of universities. We are grateful to the organizer and our beloved Ajarn, Dr. Scott, for this experience and for gently pushing us to do our best throughout the entire process." While the students are justly proud of their achievement's they know they must prepare to compete again with teams from Mahidol University International College and Kasetsart University, the other winning teams, at the AFECA Youth challenge in September 2020.

HTM AU Team

Dr. Scott first created the MICE course for the MSME Business School in 2006 and has coached over a dozen MSME Business School teams at national and international competitions. "I was lucky to have access through my membership in SKAL International and my graduate studies at Assumption University to learn from the leaders in the MICE industry." Adding, "I am glad to see MICE studies becoming more popular in Thailand as students and faculty begin to understand the incredible world of MICE and event management." The MSME Business School has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with TCEB to continue developing event management professionals.

TCEB Youth Challenge Social Distancing

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau's (TCEB) MICE Capabilities Development teamed with the Thailand Incentive and Convention Association (TICA) and Mahidol University International College (MUIC) to organize this gathering of top university's offering MICE and event management studies. TCEB's MICE Capabilities Development department's goal is to generate well-trained professionals who are capable of delivering international standards of service while exuding traditional Thai warmth and friendliness, inspiring a new generation of students to pursue a rewarding career in Thailand's rapidly expanding MICE industry. The Thailand Incentive and Convention Association (TICA) is a non-profit organization established in 1984 to help the growth of Thailand as a preferred destination for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE). TICA's membership consists primarily of key players in the MICE industry.



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