

**Tourism Industry Conference 2023**  
**CE's Speech**

1. Good morning, MOS Alvin, friends and colleagues from the tourism industry. It's good to see you all at TIC 2023.

**RECAPPING 2022**

2. Let me start with a quick recap of 2022 – a year of reopening and recovery for us.
  - a. We saw the return of signature and large-scale leisure and MICE events, such as:
    - i. **Standard Chartered Singapore Trophy 2022;**
    - ii. **Formula One Singapore Airlines Singapore Grand Prix;**
    - iii. **Singapore Fintech Festival 2022,;**
    - iv. **Food & Hotel Asia (FHA) events .**
  - b. We also launched new, first-in-region events, such as
    - i. **FIND Design Fair Asia,;**
    - ii. **Agri-Food Tech Expo Asia 2022;**
    - iii. **Tour de France Prudential Singapore Criterium, including the Brompton World Championship 2022;**
    - iv. as well as the inaugural **Wellness Festival Singapore**. Here's what went down at WFS last year.
  - c. We introduced new and innovative experiences, and refreshed existing experiences, such as:
    - i. **Avatar: the Experience at Gardens by the Bay;**
    - ii. **Kindred Journeys**, a collection of exclusive, one-of-a-kind F&B-related experiences that tell the story of Singapore's culinary culture and heritage;
    - iii. **Central Beach Bazaar**, an all-day beachside destination at Sentosa;
    - iv. As well as the upgraded **Wings of Time show** at Siloso Beach.

- d. We welcomed new and refreshed hotel concepts, such as:
  - i. **Citadines Connect City Centre**, located at the site of one of Singapore's earliest railway stations;
  - ii. **Vibe Hotel Orchard**, the brand's first property outside of Australia;
  - iii. And **Pullman Orchard** that offers the only beach club in the heart of Orchard Road.
- e. We also resumed cruises fully from Singapore to different ports of call in the region;
- f. As well as scaled up our recovery marketing campaign, **SingapoReimagine** across 18 markets.
  - i. Just one example: In Southeast Asia, we launched the **UNSEEN SINGAPORE** campaign in collaboration with National Geographic CreativeWorks, which invited well-known Southeast Asian photographers to reimagine Singapore through their various lenses.
- g. We continued to work closely with strategic partners to amplify global marketing efforts to grow our mindshare. This includes:
  - i. HBO Asia Original series **Food Affair with Mark Wiens**;
  - ii. Korean drama, **Little Women** in collaboration with South Korea's Studio Dragon, which I hope many of you watched;
  - iii. Collaborations with global celebrity influencers such as **Billie Eilish, Charlie Puth, Jackson Wang**.
  - iv. And **Herr Raue Reist**, (Translated as Mr Raue Travels); a series featuring the travels of German celebrity chef Tim Raue. Let us take a quick look at a short clip from the series

#### **OUTLOOK FOR 2023 AND BEYOND**

- 3. If 2022 was the year of reopening and recovery, then 2023 must mark the year we return to our pursuit of quality growth.
- 4. So far, we have already crossed over 2.9 million visitors in Q1 2023, each staying an average of 3.97 days. I am confident that we can sustain the momentum of growth with the:

- a. Global resumption of outbound travel, including the reopening of Mainland China.
  - b. Increase in flight connectivity and capacity, especially with the reopening of Changi Airport Terminals 2 and 4.
  - c. A full return to normal life in Singapore and around the world.
5. However, to secure the future of tourism, we need to do more. We need to focus on three 'R's:
- a. Redefining our Destination
  - b. Reconnecting with our Fans
  - c. Reinventing our Industry

#### **REDEFINING OUR DESTINATION**

6. Let me first touch on the first 'R', Redefining our Destination. If we are serious about quality tourism, we must continue to anchor high quality and first-of-its-kind tourism concepts, and to continually refresh and rejuvenate existing products. This is so that Singapore has a portfolio of high-quality attractions, hotels, events, tour experiences and other offerings that differentiate us from our competitors.
- a. Beyond the opening of **Sentosa Sensoryscape** and **Bird Paradise**, as well as the **year-round exclusive homeporting of a Disney cruise ship in Singapore** as mentioned by MOS Tan, we will continue to develop world-class attractions:
    - i. Such as the magnificent **Peranakan Museum**, which recently reopened after a 4-year revamp;
    - ii. We will also welcome a new **Palm Ave Float Club** concept located in the heart of Dempsey. Known for their water-based floatation therapies, their new space will allow locals and travellers to tune in and reconnect with themselves.
    - iii. In the years ahead, I look forward to the **new Science Centre** at the Jurong Lake District and the fresh possibilities that the **Sentosa-Brani Masterplan** will provide.
  - b. One trend we have observed is that hotels are increasingly becoming attractions and destinations by themselves. Over the next two years, several new hotels will open, which promise to become **destination hotels**, including the **Pan Pacific**

**Orchard, the Mondrian Singapore Duxton, the Singapore EDITION and Raffles Sentosa Resorts & Spa Singapore.**

- c. We also have a robust pipeline of distinctive lifestyle events and experiences this year starting with:
  - i. **ART SG**, Southeast Asia's largest art fair and biggest art fair launch in Asia-Pacific in a decade, which welcomed over 42,000 visitors;
  - ii. **Sneaker Con SEA**, which made its Southeast Asia debut in Singapore this year;
  - iii. **LIV Golf**, which will bring the world's best golfers to Asia, marking the league's first visit to Singapore
  - iv. **And the World's 50 Best Bars 2023**, the first to be held outside of Europe.
- d. Turning to MICE, we have intensified efforts in attracting best-in-class business events:
  - i. Just two weeks ago, we have hosted the inaugural **China's Machinery & Electronics Show** and;
  - ii. We will look forward to the launch of **Caixin New Vision Forum, VinExpo Asia and SILMO Singapore** this year.
  - iii. We will also celebrate the **10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Milken Institute Asia Summit** in Singapore.
- e. The Integrated Resorts' (IRs) expansion plans have also continued to make good progress:
  - i. For Resorts World Sentosa (RWS), works have begun for the **Singapore Oceanarium**, which will be three times the size of the current S.E.A. Aquarium. Construction works on Minion Land, a new themed zone at Universal Studios Singapore, are also underway.
  - ii. Design and development works on the **Marina Bay Sands (MBS) expansion** are also progressing, with Las Vegas Sands announcing that they will start construction works by next April.
- f. Finally, we will continue our efforts to redefine Singapore as a sustainable destination.

- i. Over the past year, we have increased Singapore's sustainability quotient through all of your efforts.
- ii. We now have a clear roadmap for the hotels and MICE industry and will roll out similar roadmaps and strategies for attractions in 2024.
- iii. We achieved a milestone earlier this year with our GSTC-Destination certification where Singapore is the first to apply the certification process on a country level. Thank you to everyone who have played a role in making Singapore more sustainable.
- iv. A lot more work to be done, but we have made a great start.
- v. This year, STB is collaborating with the Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment to curate immersive, sustainable experiences for Go Green SG, previously known as Climate Action Week, to be held in July this year.
- vi. We will also embark on a study to measure the baseline carbon footprint of the tourism sector before setting targets in line with Singapore's enhanced international climate commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

## **RECONNECTING WITH OUR FANS**

7. The second 'R' is about Reconnecting with our Fans. To capture market share and build mindshare among future visitors, we will amplify our marketing efforts through a global network of strategic partners.
8. In 2016, we launched our marketing strategy to focus on stories, fans and delivery. We have refreshed these three pillars to drive our marketing plans for the next few years. Chee Pey, Assistant Chief Executive of the Marketing Group, will delve deeper into them during the plenary session later, but let me give a quick overview.
  - a. The first pillar is Story, which is to create impactful content about what Singapore can offer.
    - i. Later this year, we will launch a refreshed brand campaign focusing on Passion Made Possible – where we will seek to inspire travel by showing how Singapore turns ordinary moments into extraordinary experiences.
    - ii. To sharpen our international efforts, we will focus on six key competitive positionings of Singapore:

- **World's Best MICE City** – a leading MICE destination;
  - **Culinary Capital** – a top culinary destination;
  - **Family Playground** – an ideal family-friendly destination;
  - **Twice the Fun** – a vibrant and exciting city that maximises all opportunities and spaces to create fun experiences, including in our after-dark hours;
  - **City that Connects** – a multi-cultural hub that is well connected to the region; and
  - **Travel Well** – a sustainable city and wellness haven.
- iii. I encourage you to think about these key positionings and use them to design experiences and weave into your marketing, so that we can tell a great Singapore story together.
- b. The second pillar is Fans where we will use data to help us understand and target consumers better.
- i. More info to be shared at the plenary later.
- c. The third pillar is Delivery, where we will invest in new channels and explore innovative pilots in line with the shifting consumption habits of consumers.
- i. As MOS Alvin mentioned, we will be investing in branded entertainment projects by launching a \$10 million “Singapore On-screen Fund” with IMDA. This is the first time both agencies have come together to jointly co-share and kickstart a fund that will inspire travel and support local media talent.
  - ii. We will also launch a series of pilots to engage new audiences in virtual environments, such as gaming or the metaverse. One example is the **Tencent Super QQ Show Pilot** where the Singapore-themed environment will feature iconic landmarks and provide a platform for social interactions to help us engage with younger Chinese audience.
9. To support innovative destination marketing plans by the industry, we launched the **SingapoReimagine Marketing Programme (SMP)** last September.
- a. Out of the 83 submissions received, we awarded 10 campaign proposals to 7 tourism companies that demonstrate fresh, bold and creative ideas targeting our

key source markets such as China, India and Australia to inspire post-pandemic travel to Singapore.

- b. You can look out for interesting campaigns and activations across the year both overseas and in Singapore.

10. To encourage more industry stakeholders to embark on innovative destination marketing, **STB's Marketing College** will provide targeted marketing webinars and masterclasses to industry stakeholders as part of the SMP with the first masterclass scheduled to begin this month. Interested stakeholders can visit the STB Marketing College website for more information.

11. Partnerships will continue to be a key enabler for us to reach our fans and visitors.

- a. Over the last two years, STB has inked over 50 partnerships with a total value of more than S\$108 million, ranging from airlines, financial institutions, online travel agents, digital platforms and lifestyle aggregators.
  - i. STB has recently signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) with **Klook** to catalyse innovative destination marketing, drive inbound travel, enhance destination attractiveness and facilitate data sharing and collaboration.
  - ii. STB and **Ant Group** has also expanded its partnership to offer a more seamless travel experience. 6 foreign mobile wallets are now accepted in Singapore, allowing travellers to easily and securely transact with local tourism and lifestyle businesses that accept Alipay+.
  - iii. In the US, STB has collaborated with **Snap** to test the use of their Augmented Reality technology in a tourism context and its ability to enhance storytelling and drive discoverability of local shops and businesses.
  - iv. We are also working with the AR Core and Partner Innovation teams at **Google** to develop a proof-of-concept around utilizing an AR Tour Guide for destination exploration. Imagine a 3D Merli taking visitors through iconic landmarks and hidden gems in Singapore! STB will be Google's first tourism partner in their AR Core Early Access Program to co-ideate new innovative tourism use cases. More details of this will be released at Google I/O Conference on 10 May.

## REINVENTING OUR INDUSTRY

12. The third 'R' is about Reinventing our Industry. To do so, we need to double down on deepening the quality of our human capital.
  - a. Hence, we launched the **Tourism Careers Hub (TCH)** in Jan 2022 to support manpower needs by providing career coaching, support for upskilling and job matching for individuals and companies. As of December 2022, TCH has assisted over 800 jobseekers and placed over 500 of them in the tourism sector.
13. This has allowed the total tourism workforce to recover quickly to 66,000, as of Dec 2022, which is around 80% of 2019's pre-COVID levels.
14. We have also just soft-launched a new **Tourism Careers Campaign**. Tourism can offer diverse and meaningful careers with great prospects – and we want to inspire locals, including some students who are here with us today, to pursue a career in tourism.
15. I know that many of you are still suffering serious manpower issues. This is a global issue and there is no magic solution, no quick fix. STB will do our best to find sustainable solutions, but all of us must make necessary adjustments.
16. We cannot rely solely on hiring and expanding manpower. We need to drive productivity and innovate in order to alleviate labour needs. We will continue to support businesses in their transformation journey to raise productivity through the Business Improvement Fund, as well as digital transformation efforts.
  - a. Companies can enable their staff with data to improve business outcomes.
    - i. For example, **Citystate Travels** has built a culture around data and redefined staff and customer engagement through STB's Tcube programme. Through Tcube's Data Analytics SHift (DASH) Programme, Citystate Travel managed to fast-track their decision-making process significantly by more than 70%.
  - b. Technology can also help support front-line staff to improve guest satisfaction. Let's view a video where **Millennium & Copthorne International Limited (MCIL)** has shared how they implemented a smart task allocation solution and privacy-friendly acoustic sensors to increase their employees' efficiency.
  - c. Companies like Citystate Travel and MCIL have benefitted from digital transformation to drive positive business outcomes and seen improvements to their Tourism Transformation Index (TXI) scores. We strongly encourage our tourism stakeholders to take your TXI yearly to track your organisation's digital transformation journey and gaps, and leverage technology to drive productivity.



- d. To help attractions kickstart or push ahead with their digital journey, we will launch the **Attractions Tech Roadmap in Q2 2023** – a step-by-step guide that makes it easier for attractions to digitalise and transform their key business functions such as customer service, sales and marketing.

## RE-POSITIONING QUALITY TOURISM

17. So far, I have laid out some of our strategies and efforts for the next two years, to ensure that we recover strongly from the pandemic years.
18. I want to devote the last section of my remarks to thinking further into the future, and I want to do so by inviting us to think about the meaning of Quality Tourism.
19. In 2013, STB launched our Quality Tourism strategy, which focused on driving higher yield from the visitors who come to Singapore, as well as building productive and innovative companies that create good jobs for Singaporeans.
  - a. The strategy has served us well and
  - b. Has helped Singapore to move up the “value chain” of tourism.
20. This strategy is a logical step for us as Singapore’s fundamental economic realities mean that we will never be a low-cost destination for tourism.
21. These realities also mean that we cannot keep on attracting more and more visitors to Singapore, year after year.
  - a. We face land and manpower limitations
  - b. And soon, we will also have to deal with carbon constraints.
  - c. These are hard truths.
22. However, we must never scale down our ambitions despite these hard truths– that would hurt the tourism sector, and Singapore’s standing as a global city.
23. The tourism sector must also consider how to amplify and step up this sector’s contributions to Singapore’s long-term relevance and success.
24. Let me suggest two ways we can do so.
  - a. First, how can tourism strengthen Singapore’s position as the leading Global City in the heart of Asia?

- b. Second, how can tourism support a steady flow of investments and re-investments into the “lifestyle infrastructure” of Singapore?

25. The first lens that I want to use to think deeper about Quality Tourism is **Connectivity**.

- a. Today, Singapore is recognised as a Global City, deeply connected not just to our immediate region but to many other parts of the world.
- b. Unlike many other destinations, we have a diversified market portfolio which means our visitors come from all over the world – including close to 180k visitors from Latin America and Africa in 2019!

26. Singapore’s connectivity is our lifeblood. It’s embedded in our economic geography, and is the reason we have grown prosperous as a country.

27. COVID-19 showed us that we should not take our connectivity for granted. When tourism came to a standstill,

- a. Supply chains got snarled. Critical components to our manufacturing sector are often carried in the bellies of commercial planes, and they stopped coming.
- b. Our value as a business hub, with the world’s best access to many points all over South, Southeast and East Asia, became severely threatened.
- c. The experience illustrated the interconnectedness between tourism and our status as a hub for the region.

28. As we build better for the future, we must consider how tourism can continue to serve as a critical enabler of our connectivity and status as a hub for the flows of goods, capital, talent and ideas.

- a. What sort of MICE events do we need to secure and anchor, so that we bring together companies and organisations from all over the world to Singapore, a marketplace of ideas?
- b. What sort of lifestyle experiences do we need to grow in Singapore so that visitors from Southeast Asia – including those who live outside the “Tier 1” cities – look to Singapore as the “must-visit” destination?
- c. How can you – the tourism industry here – strengthen the connections with your partners in the region, especially your transport-related partners like airlines, ferry operators and cruise lines, to drive traffic to and through Singapore?

- d. And globally, how can we drive the attractiveness of Southeast Asia as a culturally-vibrant and exciting destination for visitors from mid- to longer-haul markets? If the region's tourism prospects stagnate, then it will become much harder for us to appeal to our longer-haul visitors who come to Singapore and other destinations in Southeast Asia.

29. Second, we need to think about Quality Tourism through the lens of **Investment**.

- a. You don't usually find the word "investment" associated with tourism or STB, but of course, that's not true.
- b. Everything that you do requires some sort of investment – whether into fixed assets like hotels or attractions, or into less tangible assets like branding and human capital.

30. Quality Tourism must focus on securing quality investments into the tourism sector here, to continually grow and upgrade the **"lifestyle infrastructure"** of Singapore.

31. We typically think of infrastructure as transportation systems and communication networks. And we take it as a given that basic infrastructure has to be continually upgraded to improve the quality of our lives.

32. But there's a lot more that defines the quality of our lives.

- a. How do we celebrate the milestones of our lives, such as birthdays, anniversaries, weddings and graduations?
- b. How do we conduct our team bondings or retreats, to build better teams and organisations?
- c. During the weekends or our off days, how do we recharge and gear up for a fresh week of work? (On a side note, all of us should read the ST's "My Perfect Weekend" every week very carefully.)

33. It is us – the tourism sector – that provides the answers to these questions. Our work in building up the lifestyle infrastructure of Singapore is necessary for making Singapore not just a liveable city, but a loveable one too.

34. The government will do its part – just look at what NParks has done over the years to intensify nature in our gardens and parks, and enhance recreational connectivity all over Singapore!

- a. But the government cannot do this alone.

- b. We need all of you to step up, to think about the investments and re-investments you need to make in order to improve the quality of life for our locals, and the quality of experience for our visitors.

35. Hence, earlier this year, MOS Alvin announced that we saw more than \$2 billion of investments and re-investments into our tourism sector in 2022.

- a. This is the first time we have compiled such a figure, and it was not easy!
- b. But important to signal that investor confidence in Singapore remains high, and that Singapore is a destination of choice for making high-quality investments into tourism and lifestyle infrastructure.
- c. STB will continue to monitor our investment figures carefully – anticipating that we will see a steady flow of such investments year by year.

### **Conclusion – Where we are headed?**

36. I will now wrap up.

37. A few days ago, I asked some of my colleagues in STB for their thoughts on what Singapore’s tourism sector could look like in in the mid-2030s. That’s more than 10 years away, so not so near that everything is already pre-determined, but also not too far away, and certainly well within most of our working lifetimes.

38. A repeated theme that came up was seamlessness and convenience. One colleague described the future Singapore as *“a compact yet dynamic destination that packs a punch with its seamless integration of physical and digital spaces . . . With AI as your trusty travel companion, you can leave the hassle of planning behind and fully immerse yourself in . . . enjoying a stress-free and unforgettable journey.”*

39. Emerging technological trends also featured in their inputs: One colleague asked us to imagine *“flying into Singapore on an electric flying taxi . . . enjoy a curation of the best culinary delights delivered seamlessly by drones, and invite your friends from anywhere in the world to join you at the Singapore Music Festival through state of the art hologram technology.”*

40. It wasn’t all just about tech and digital tools. One colleague wrote that he wanted Singapore *“to be a destination that is loved globally for our distinctive cityscape of nature and modernity, our harmonious co-existence of cultures and communities, and our creativity in fashioning extraordinary travel experiences.”*

41. For me? Well, my hope is that Singaporeans will no longer say that Singapore is “boring, got nothing to do on the weekends”. Instead, Singapore will be buzzing year-round, with

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an eclectic range of events and experiences for all ages and demographics – but also filled with plenty of blue and green spaces and opportunities to relax and recharge: the world’s most attractive and sustainable city destination for our visitors, and the best home for our people. As Captain Jean Luc Picard on Star Trek used to say, may you “make it so”.