SHARING GDS?
Shared economy companies like Airbnb could be sold via the GDS

NATIONAL ASSET
Japan’s ANA takes an equity stake in state-run Vietnam Airlines

SEA MONSTER
Royal Caribbean places order for another huge Oasis-class ship

INTELLIGENT CHOICE
Rising number of travel options drives customers back to agents,

Travelport execs tell Travel Daily...
Industry’s rapid growth drives customers back to travel agents

Travelport execs chat to Travel Daily in Macau...

The rapid expansion of the travel industry, especially in Asia Pacific, is helping to drive customers back to traditional travel agencies, senior Travelport executives have told Travel Daily.

Speaking at the Travelport Live 2016 event in Macau, Mark Meehan, Travelport’s managing director for Asia Pacific, told us that the proliferation of new options now available to travellers - from low-cost carriers to a plethora of new accommodation choices – has made the expert advice provided by agents more important than ever.

With such a vast amount of choice now on offer, he stated, agents can help travellers filter the options and work out the best available choice in an intelligent manner.

"For the agency community it’s about adding value in the travel chain through the expertise and the choice - the intelligent choice - that they’re giving to the consumer," Meehan told Travel Daily.

And Travelport is aiming to facilitate this “intelligent choice” by improving agents’ search capabilities. The company has invested more than US$800 million in its agent-facing Travel Commerce Platform since 2012, including the launch of ‘Rich Content & Branding’ for 160 airlines, Rich Content & Branding provides agents with more information about different airlines and their inclusions in a graphic on-screen layout. Rooms and More meanwhile, now incorporates TripAdvisor reviews and maps.

And initiatives like these, according to Meehan, are enabling agents to provide more informed advice to their customers.

"With the growth that we’re seeing in the industry, and Asia in particular, we had the foresight to go out and develop this capability," Meehan said. "The Travel Commerce Platform gives the agency community the ability to prove - as they are - that they are relevant, current and add value to the traveller.”

Continued on P3...

"No reason" Airbnb and Uber can't be sold via GDS

A irbnb, Uber and other shared economy companies could be incorporated into the GDS in future, if there was demand for it, Travelport has revealed.

Speaking at the Travelport Live 2016 event in Macau, senior Travelport’s executives told Travel Daily that “there is no reason” why Airbnb and Uber couldn’t be distributed via the travel agency channel, although there are no immediate plans to make this happen.

"I don’t see why not; I’m not aware of anything on the roadmap, but there’s no reason why not," Martin Herbert, Travelport’s general manager for Asia, told us. “We pull together and aggregate content, so there’s no technical reason why an Airbnb product couldn’t go into that.

"We have the technology to bring it in. It’s more about the demand from the agency channel themselves about whether they want to offer that," he added. Herbert noted however, that there are “duty-of-care issues” relating to the use of accommodation sharing sites, especially in the corporate travel sector.

"The challenge is around corporate travel policies. But it’s something we’d be completely open to. Watch this space; who knows what might happen. We would not rule it out," said Kate Aldridge, Travelport’s vice president of global corporate communications.
ANA completes Vietnam Airlines investment

Japanese airline seals 8.8% stake and takes seat on board...
Travelport Live 2016

Royal Caribbean orders another huge Oasis-class ship

Following the recent delivery of the world’s largest cruise ship, Harmony of the Seas, Royal Caribbean has continued the expansion of its huge Oasis-class with the placement of an order for another vessel. The company has signed a deal with the STX shipyard in France for its fifth Oasis-class cruise ship, following the Oasis of the Seas, Allure of the Seas, Harmony of the Seas, and an as-yet-unnamed fourth vessel which is due to be delivered in 2018.

In addition to the new Oasis-class ship, Royal Caribbean has also placed orders with STX for two smaller Edge-class ships. “The Oasis-class ships have delivered beyond expectations each time,” said Michael Bayley, president & CEO of Royal Caribbean International. “Harmony of the Seas’ warm reception is evidence that growing this class of ship will continue to drive exceptional performance for the brand.”

Oasis-class vessels typically stretch approximately 360 metres in length and have a maximum capacity of more than 6,000 passengers. The fourth Oasis-class vessels have not yet been delivered, but Royal Caribbean is positioning the brand as offering smaller vessels with luxury amenities. They will be operated by Celebrity Cruises.

The fifth Oasis-class ship is scheduled for delivery in spring 2021, while the two Edge-class ships are due to arrive in autumn 2021 and 2022. Click here for full story.

Vivid Sydney returns to light up city

Vivid Sydney, the annual light show, returned to the Australian city on Friday. This year’s edition runs until 18 June and features light installations created by more than 150 artists from 23 countries. As well as the harbour-side activities, this year’s Vivid Sydney has also been extended to Taronga Zoo for the first time. An estimated 1.7 million visitors attended last year’s festival.

V

Travelport Live 2016

by Martin Herbert, Travelport’s general manager for Asia, who said the new graphical displays give travel agents “an opportunity to sell more and engage with their customers.”

“You don’t want to turn the screen and show the old green screen - that doesn’t add value to the customer. But now we have TripAdvisor reviews, maps to hotels and all of these elements that are in the same interface for the agent to show the customer.” Herbert said.

“With the phenomenal growth that we’re seeing in the industry, the challenge is the sheer diversity and complexity of choice. The travel agent is uniquely placed... to intelligently filter what the needs and requirements of the customer are. There are more opportunities out there, due to the amount of choice there is out there. “Choice is a great thing, but you need to filter it. The future is very positive for the agency community,” Herbert added.

Meehan also noted that the new demographics of travellers, and their changing travel patterns, are providing new opportunities for agencies.

“The demographic is changing; there are younger travellers with disposable income, and they are already travelling and leisure travel, more, because they have the disposable income and leisure time. So there is more demand out there, and that needs to be fulfilled.”

And this, Meehan added, means that GDS companies like Travelport need to continuously expand and improve their content, so that agents can continue to “demonstrate their expertise.”

“We have all this content, and need adding to it all the time. But we have to make our tools smarter in terms of how we deliver that, and make it customisable,” Meehan stated. “We need to allow our technology to be optimised so that we can provide the search results that suit that agency and their customers,” he concluded.

And with all forecasts pointing to the continued expansion of the travel industry – from a 50% jump in international tourist arrivals by 2030 to doubling of the global air fleet over the next 20 years – it seems that, far from fading into extinction, as has been predicted in the past, traditional travel agencies are likely to become even more relevant in the years and decades to come.

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Airbnb lists Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles’ “secret lair”

Fans of the “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles” now have the opportunity to spend a night in their secret lair. UPI News reports that the amphibious crime fighters’ home is now available on Airbnb. Located in Manhattan, the turtles’ abode has three bedrooms and can sleep up to six guests.

“This high-tech den is fully loaded... a glow in the dark basketball court, a retro arcade, more video games with a pretty sweet ‘TV wall... anything for hanging ninja-style,” the listing states.

The property has been made available ahead of the release of the upcoming film, “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows.”

Passengers hurt in Gulf Air turbulence

A Gulf Air flight from Manila to Bahrain was forced to make an emergency landing in Mumbai, the airline. The flight made an unscheduled landing in Mumbai, the airline. The flight made an unscheduled landing in Mumbai, the airline. The flight made an unscheduled landing in Mumbai, the airline.

The flight, carrying 247 passengers when the incident occurred. Some of the passengers and crew sustained “minor injuries,” according to the airline. The flight made an unscheduled landing in Mumbai, where one passenger received medical treatment.

(Continued from P1)

This view was backed up by Martin Herbert, Travelport’s general manager for Asia, who said the new graphical displays give travel agents “an opportunity to sell more and engage with their customers.”

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V
Favehotel grows in and around Jakarta

Archipelago International has continued to expand its Favehotel brand in the up-and-coming areas around Jakarta, with the launch of its first property in the satellite city of Bekasi.

Located in the centre of the city, the new Favehotel Ahmad Yani Bekasi is positioned close to the West Bekasi Toll road and 30 minutes from the Halim Perdanakusuma Airport. The budget hotel features 152 rooms, all with free Wi-Fi, 32-inch LED TVs, universal power outlets and working desks, while facilities include six meeting rooms and a café that serves breakfast.

As well as having 12 Favehotels in Jakarta itself, Archipelago also operates properties in satellite cities in Jakarta itself, such as Bekasi and Bogor. The new Favehotel Ahmad Yani Bekasi is positioned close to the West Bekasi Toll road and 30 minutes from the Halim Perdanakusuma Airport. The budget hotel features 152 rooms, all with free Wi-Fi, 32-inch LED TVs, universal power outlets and working desks, while facilities include six meeting rooms and a café that serves breakfast.

AccorHotels opens trio at huge new Chinese theme park

AccorHotels has opened a trio of new hotels at a major new Chinese theme park. The three new hotels, which will operate under the Pullman, Novotel and Mercure brands, add almost 1,400 rooms to the new Nanchang Wanda Cultural Tourism City complex, which is located in southeast China’s Jiangxi province. Described by some as a rival to the new Shanghai Disneyland, the huge Wanda park covers 200 hectares and features outdoor and indoor amusement parks, hotels and resorts, interactive cinemas, large shopping malls and multiple dining options. Stand-out amenities include Asia’s largest aquarium, China’s fastest, highest and longest rollercoaster, and the country’s highest “drop tower”.

“The opening of three hotels in a single day symbolises AccorHotels’ continuous growth and development in the Greater China region,” says Michel Mollet, AccorHotels’ chief operating officer for Greater China. “This is our first and biggest hotel project in central China. The development of these three new hotels brings our Greater China network to 181 operating hotels and resorts across the country. The hotel cluster is strategically located at the heart of Nanchang’s landmark development, a major cultural tourist destination in its own right.”

The new hotels include the 403-room Pullman Nanchang Wanda, 504-room Mercure Nanchang Wanda and 481-room Novotel Nanchang Wanda. All three hotels feature their own facilities, including F&B outlets, while the Pullman also has an 800m² ballroom for events. As well as the three Accorhotels, Wanda is planning a further six hotels at the park including its own luxury Wanda Vista Hotel, which is already open.

Melbourne convention centre to expand by 40%

Plans have been unveiled for a significant expansion of the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre (MCEC). The project will add nearly 20,000m² of event space to the facility, including new exhibition halls and more meeting and banqueting rooms. Once complete, the MCEC will cover a total floorspace of more than 70,000m² and will enable the facility to handle an additional 74,000 visitors per year.

“This new boost will help our state bid for more events, which will see more people visiting, more jobs created as we become an even stronger state,” said Victoria’s Minister for Tourism & Major Events, John Eren.

The expansion project forms part of the South Wharf development that will connect the MCEC with a new 341-room hotel and multi-storey car park. While the development takes place, MCEC said that it would continue to be “business as usual” at the conference centre. Construction is expected to be completed in early 2018.

Disney dollars dropped

Disney has decided to stop producing its official theme park currency, the ‘Disney dollar’. The notes, which feature Disney characters such as Mickey Mouse, are accepted in Disney’s theme parks and pegged at a rate of one-to-one against the US dollar. But the company has now said it will phase out the currency, in light of the rising popularity of its gift card scheme. Disney dollars still in circulation will still be accepted at parks “indefinitely”.

Win a prize of Two nights stay in a SALA Pool Villa with breakfast for two.

Valid for 6 months (from 1 May – 31 Oct 2016)
1. How many swimming pool does SALA Phuket have?
2. On which beach is SALA Phuket located?
3. What is the Signature room type.

“Choice is a great thing, but you need to filter it. The future is very positive for the agency community.”

Martin Herbert, Travelport’s general manager for Asia

QUOTE OF THE DAY
Air China enters Dreamliner era

Air China has taken delivery of its first ever Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft. The new long-haul jet was officially handed over to the airline in a ceremony in Beijing last week. Air China becomes the fourth airline to receive the Dreamliner, but the first to receive the larger B787-9 version. In total, Air China has ordered 229 in economy. The new aircraft will be deployed on the airline’s long-haul routes to North America, Europe and Oceania, allowing it to expand its “non-stop point-to-point services”.

Captain Wang Yingnian, chief pilot of Air China, said the new aircraft would become the backbone of Air China’s international long-haul routes and play an important role in supporting Air China’s international development strategy. Click here for full story.

JAL expands MOS Burger tie-up

Japan Airlines has extended its partnership with Japanese fast food chain, MOS Burger. Effective 1 June, a new MOS Salad Burger will be available on the airline’s flights from Japan to North America, Europe and Australia. This marks the sixth collaboration between the two companies.

New upscale hotel opens in Mekong Delta

A brand-new upscale hotel has opened its doors in Vietnam’s Mekong Delta region. Located in the city of Ca Mau, in the southernmost part of the Vietnamese mainland, the new Muong Thanh Luxury Ca Mau Hotel rests 16 storeys and offers 177 rooms and suites. It also features a restaurant, outdoor pool, spa, gym and a vast amount of conference space, including two halls that are able to seat 1,500 delegates.

The hotel is located next to the Muong Thanh Commercial Center and becomes the 377th property in Muong Thanh’s Vietnamese portfolio.