

新任主席胡兆英先生專訪

Exclusive interview with new Chairman Mr Michael Wu

本刊記者 Staff reporter

(編按：胡兆英先生是錦倫旅運有限公司的董事總經理，由二零零四年十一月起，以香港旅行社協會代表的身份出任議會理事，多年來曾擔任議會多個委員會的召集人或委員。今年十二月三日，胡先生當選為二零零九至一二年度的議會主席。為了使會員更加瞭解新任主席的見解，本刊於十二月九日訪問了胡先生；以下是訪問的撮要。)

(Editor's note: Mr Michael Wu, managing director of Gray Line Tours of Hong Kong Limited, became a TIC director representing the Hong Kong Association of Travel Agents (HATA) in November 2004, and has served on many committees of the TIC as convenor or member over the years. He was elected Chairman of the TIC for 2009-2012 on 3 December this year. To help members know more about his views, The Voice interviewed him on 9 December. The following is an excerpt of the interview.)

主席其人

你在競選綱領裡說，當選之後會「竭盡所能」為議會服務。你不擔心會因此而影響到公司嗎？

我決定參加主席選舉後，估計有三分之一時間會花在主席的職務之上。因此，我除了增加人手外，還把一些工作分給了不同部門的主管，加上公司經營了很多年，相信不會有很大影響。

你一向都是做入境旅遊的，當選主席後會怎樣加深對外遊業的認識？

我擔任過香港旅行社協會主席五年，協會有很多外遊業的行家，過去幾年我都一直和他們不斷溝通，所以很瞭解他們的狀況。此外，議會的業界理事都是不同範疇的專家，相信他們都能提出有用的意見。

來港旅遊

上海終於要興建迪士尼樂園了，很多香港人都好像很擔心似的。香港的旅遊業一向都很強勁，為甚麼現在大家都失去了信心？

上海和香港的迪士尼樂園有不同的客源。上海應該會以內地的旅客為主，而香港則是國際、內地、本地的旅客各佔三分之一。主題公園最

Chairman the person

You said in your election manifesto that you would have “total commitment” to serving the TIC if elected. Are you worried that that may affect your company?

When I decided to stand for Chairman, I thought one-third of my time would have to be spent on the duties of the Chairman. I've therefore employed more staff and asked the heads of various departments to share part of my work. As my company has been in business for many years, I don't think it'll be affected.

As you've always been doing inbound business, how can you have a better grasp of the outbound trade after taking the office of Chairman?

I've been Chairman of HATA for five years, and it has a lot of outbound traders. During the past few years, I've had constant contact with them and know their situations well. Besides, the trade directors of the TIC are all experts of various sectors, and I believe they can give me valuable advice.



Inbound travel

Shanghai will have its Disneyland at long last, which seems to have unsettled many Hong Kong people. Hong Kong tourism has always been very robust; why does everyone lose their confidence now?

The Disneylands in Shanghai and Hong Kong have different target visitors. While the one in Shanghai will aim at drawing mainland visitors, Hong Kong Disneyland has an equal proportion of visitors coming from the interna-

重要的不是大小，而是裡面的景點、設施有多大吸引力。香港這幾年不斷有新景點落成，最近又有了國家級的地質公園，這些景點相互配合起來，能夠給予旅客多元化的體驗，吸引他們一來再來。事實上，初次來香港的旅客，即使逗留五天四夜，也不夠時間去遊覽所有景點。

兩年前議會推行了一連串措施，恢復了內地團體旅客對隨團購物的信心。你對於這個購物問題有甚麼看法？

議會兩年前之所以要推行嚴厲的措施，是因為那時在購物的安排上出了嚴重的問題，為了迅速挽回內地團體旅客的信心，所以才不得不那樣做。內地的外遊市場近年才開放，需要一段時間才會成熟。成熟的外遊市場，旅客都是回家後才向組團社投訴的。內地的旅遊局已經更加注重新組團社的服務水平，加強了監管，而內地團體旅客對消費權益也日益關注，相信日後投訴會逐漸減少。

內地旅客現在可以去的地方很多，鄰近地區會不會逐漸比香港更有吸引力呢？

過去十年，內地旅客的百分比由百分之二十左右上升到百分之六十，這充份證明了香港對他們的吸引力。要說原因，第一是語言：在香港到處都可以用普通話，內地旅客都覺得很親切；第二是交通：香港的交通系統非常發達，很少有鄰近地方能夠相比；第三是購物保障：議會的全數購物退款保障給予內地團體旅客很大信心。此外，來香港購物，在品質、價錢、款式等方面，都比鄰近地區優勝。

出外旅遊

去年環球金融危機爆發，航空業出現嚴重虧損，於是很多航空公司紛紛把旅行社佣金由百分之七減到百分之五，今年已有航空公司再減到百分之三，明年還要取消佣金。你怎樣解決這個零佣金問題？

金融海嘯之後，大小企業都要設法找尋自己的生存空間，這無可厚非。旅行社和航空公司緊

tional, mainland and local markets. What's essential for a theme park is not its size, but how attractive its attractions and facilities are. Hong Kong has rolled out new tourist sites continuously during the past few years, with a geopark of national status newly opened. Mix and match these sites, and you can provide visitors with varied experiences, luring them into coming back again and again. In fact, first-time visitors can hardly tour all attractions even if they spend five days and four nights in Hong Kong.

The TIC introduced a series of measures two years ago, which have restored the confidence of mainland group visitors in shopping at retailers picked by the receiving agents. What's your view on the problem relating to shopping?

The TIC put tough measures in place two years ago because there were some serious problems about shopping arrangements at that time. The TIC was forced to do so in an effort to quickly restore the confidence of mainland group visitors. The mainland outbound market wasn't opened up until a few years ago and needs some time to grow mature. In a mature outbound market, travellers will complain to their tour operators after returning home. The mainland tourism authorities have already paid more attention to the service standard of tour operators and tightened regulation. Mainland group visitors have also become more aware of their consumer rights. I believe the number of complaints will gradually decrease in the future.

Now that mainland visitors can go to a lot of places, will neighbouring regions gradually become more attractive than Hong Kong?

During the past 10 years, the percentage of mainland visitors has risen from about 20% to 60%, which shows the attractiveness of Hong Kong to them. As for the reasons, I think number one, Mandarin can be used everywhere in Hong Kong, which makes mainland visitors feel close to this city. Number two, Hong Kong has very advanced transport systems, and few neighbouring places can compete with us. Number three, the TIC's full refund protection can give mainland group visitors more confidence. Besides, in terms of quality, price and style, neighbouring places can't offer shoppers what Hong Kong can.

Outbound travel

Last year, the global financial crisis broke out, incurring huge losses to the aviation industry, and many airlines reduced agency commission from 7% to 5%. This year, there are airlines which have further cut the commission to 3%, with a plan to eliminate commission next year. How can you resolve this zero-commission problem?

After the financial tsunami, companies big and small alike have to strive

密合作了幾十年，我不希望航空公司只顧自己的賬目，而摧毀雙方長期的合作關係。另一方面，旅行社也要明白，零佣金已經在很多地方實行了很多年。現在迫切要做的，是教育消費者，使他們明白，旅行社提供服務後要收取服務費，這是正常不過的事。

過去幾年，雖然外遊業的整體市況非常暢旺，但仍然經常有會員說生意難做。去年發生金融海嘯，今年又有人類豬流感，今年的市況大概不會怎樣好。你怎樣看目前的經營環境呢？

在香港，一百家大旅行社可能已經佔有八成以上的市場，那麼剩下的一千三百多家旅行社，就要在餘下的一成多市場裡去找生意，這的確是很困難的。除此之外，互聯網也使問題加劇。以往大旅行社多數集中於B to B(企業對企業)的生意，小旅行社的生意則主要是B to C(企業對消費者)的，但有了互聯網之後，大旅行社也好，航空公司、酒店也好，都一起做B to C的生意，使競爭非常劇烈。小旅行社要抗衡互聯網，只有憑藉人與人的交流、溝通，不斷主動和顧客接觸才成。

互聯網在香港也不能算是新鮮的事物，大概在九五、九六年左右就已經開始普及了，怎麼到現在還說對旅行社造成問題？

旅行社的主要客群大多是二十八到四十歲的旅客。九五或九六年的時候，最熱中於使用互聯網的人可能只有十來歲，還不是我們的主要客群。這麼多年後，他們都成為我們的主要客群了，但因為他們習慣了使用互聯網，就未必想光顧旅行社了。香港的旅行社大多數是中小型公司，可能只有十來個職員，未必會有資源去做長遠的規劃和培訓。雖然話是這麼說，但今天旅行社必須加強培訓，提升水平，才能夠生存。

培訓

議會向來都非常關注培訓，也經常向旅行社職員提供各種培訓，但議會的資源畢竟有限，你有甚麼對策呢？

after their own survival, which is understandable. Travel agents and airlines have been close partners for decades, and I don't want to see airlines only looking at their bottom line at the expense of the long-term partnership between both parties. On the other hand, travel agents have to realise that zero commission has been implemented in many places for many years. What we need to do urgently is to educate the consumers and make them understand that it's a normal thing for travel agents to charge a service fee for their services.

The outbound market had been very brisk on the whole during the past few years, and yet some members often grumbled that business was bad. Last year, we had the financial crisis and this year, the human swine flu. The market performance for this year can hardly be good. How do you assess the current business environment?

In Hong Kong, 100 large travel agents may have captured over 80% of the market, which means the other 1,300 or so travel agents have to look for business in the remaining market, which is less than 20%. This is really difficult. Apart from that, the Internet has made the problem worse. In the past, most big agents have focused on the B to B segment, and smaller ones on B to C. However, once the Internet was around, competition has become very intense because big agents, airlines and hotels have all chased after the B to C segment. If small agents want to fight the Internet, they really have to rely on communication between people and actively reach out to their customers all the time.

The Internet is nothing new in Hong Kong, and it began to gain popularity in around 1995 or 1996. How can it still pose any problem to travel agents now?

The primary customers of travel agents are mostly between 28 and 40. In 1995 or 1996, the teenagers might be the keenest users of the Internet, but they were not our primary customers. After all these years, they've become our primary customers, but they may not want to buy from travel agents because they've already got used to the Internet. Most travel agents in Hong Kong are small- and medium-sized companies with just a dozen or so staff, and may not have the resources for long-term planning and training. Having said that, travel agents really have to step up training and upgrade their service if they want to survive.

Training

The TIC has always paid much attention to training and has regularly offered various kinds of training for staff of travel agents despite its limited resources. How can you tackle this matter?

We should talk straight to the Government: although the tourism and travel

我們應該坦白對政府說：旅遊業是香港的重要產業，如果政府不扶持這個行業，使得年輕人不願入行，這個行業就沒有前途了。因此，我們必須向政府爭取多撥出資源為整個行業做培訓。我所指的培訓，並不單純是指培訓前線員工，我覺得更加重要的，可能是對僱主的培訓。僱主接受過培訓，有了新思維後，起碼就會容許、甚至鼓勵員工接受培訓。

要培訓僱主，恐怕不是那麼簡單吧。比如說，公司目前的生意不錯的話，那自然無須培訓，但要生意不好的話，那就會變成沒有錢去做培訓了。有多少旅行社真的會做培訓呢？


我覺得僱主的眼光必須放長遠一點。今年的生意不錯，並不等於明年的生意也會不錯，因為可能會有新的競爭對手出現。我相信經營旅行社的人，都不會只想著賺一兩年快錢然後就轉行的。既然是這樣的話，就必須把眼光放長遠一點才行。培訓僱主的概念可能比較新鮮，但只有多數僱主都有了新思維後，整個行業才能不住發展。

議會與會員

在過去幾年，有些會員好像對議會挺不滿似的。究竟發生了甚麼事呢？

這幾年間會員的確多了些不同的意見，有些會員更說議會過份保障旅客，忽視了業者的生存空間。我想強調一點，旅行社的真正僱主是旅客，保障旅客的利益其實就等於保障旅行社的利益。還有些會員說議會的透明度不足，但其實議會一直都不斷通過各種渠道去加強與會員的溝通，例如由明年開始，會議的議程和紀錄都會放在議會網站。

你有甚麼大計去加強溝通呢？

在接下來的三年，我希望可以和五成的會員面對面地溝通。一對一的見面當然不可能，但我希望每次邀請十來位會員，大家一起坐下來談談。不過，溝通是雙方面的事，日後會員如果收到我們的邀請，請盡可能撥點時間出來，大家面對面地談談。議會很樂意打開大門和會員溝通，但會員也要走進門裡去才能夠溝通。 

industry is a very important industry in Hong Kong, it would have no future if young people were unwilling to join this industry because of the Government's reluctance to support it. We have to ask the Government to provide more training resources for the whole industry. What I mean by training is more than training for frontline staff. I think what's more important is perhaps training for employers. When employers are trained and have new mindsets, they'll at least tolerate, if not encourage, their staff to have training.

Surely it can't be simple to train the employers. Suppose the business of a company is pretty good now, that means there's no need to do training, and when its business turns bad, then it'll have no money to do training. How many travel agents are really willing to do training?

I think the employers have to take the long view. Your business may be good this year, but there's no guarantee it'll be good next year as new competitors may spring up. I believe those who do travel business do not want to switch to another field after making quick money in one or two years. If that's the case, we have to look further into the future. Employer training may be a rather new concept, but only after most employers have new mindsets can the industry keep moving forward.

TIC and members

Some members seem to have been quite dissatisfied with the TIC in the past few years. What's happened?

There're indeed more diverse views among members in the past few years. Some of them have even said that the TIC has provided too much protection for travellers at the expense of the survival of traders. I want to stress one point: the real employers of travel agents are travellers, and protecting the interests of travellers is the same as protecting the interests of travel agents. Some members have also said that the transparency of the TIC is not good. As a matter of fact, the TIC has kept using various channels to enhance communication with members. For example, starting from next year, the agendas and minutes of its meetings will be posted on its website.

Do you have any plan to enhance communication?

In the next three years, I hope to have face-to-face communication with 50% of all members. Although it's impossible to meet members one by one, each time I hope to invite a dozen or so members so that we can sit down and talk. Communication is a two-way process however. If members receive our invitation in the future, I hope they can try their best to squeeze some time so that we can talk to each other face to face. The TIC is more than willing to open the door and communicate with members, but members have to pass through the door in order for communication to take place. 