

外遊旅客定將更加受惠 Outbound travellers bound to gain more



旅遊業的監管架構將如何改革，看過政府向立法會提交的主要立法建議後，相信大家心中有了數了(見「議會簡報」)。對於有關建議，包括成立法定機構旅遊業監管局，由其直接發牌監管旅行社、導遊及領隊，以及業者需要為強迫購物等不當行為負上刑事責任等等，議會全都支持。希望為內地入境團提供接待服務的業者，可以提升服務水平。

「旅行社資訊科技發展配對基金先導計劃」評審委員會已完成了第一輪申請的審批工作，在二十份申請中有十七份成功，比率為百分之八十五(見「主題故事」)。第一輪申請的成功率非常高，這既證明了申請者清楚瞭解自己的公司在資訊科技上的需要，也顯出委員會明白業界的實際情況。其他會員該想想甚麼時候申請了。

整體來說，外遊業至今的市況算是不錯。雖然第二季的外遊印花費按年錄得跌幅，但一至十一月增加了百分之三點八，相信全年也會勝過去年，實在令人有點喜出望外。明年環球經濟有很多不明朗因素，香港也可能難以獨善其身。儘管如此，外遊業根深柢固，久經風浪，定可安然渡過任何難關。

為了促進競爭，理事會去年就已實行了好些措施，今年十一月更接納了出外旅遊委員會的建議，決定由明年三月起，撤除所有對團費及旅行團贈品的規限(見「特稿」)。這一決定對會員難免會有影響，但一來法例規定，不得不如此，二來近年網上旅行社等新對手湧現，規限撤除後，會員當可憑靈活手法、優良服務，與對手周旋。最後容我不厭其煩再說一次：請繼續以顧客為先，憑上佳服務取勝。✚

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After going through the key legislative proposals submitted to the Legislative Council by the Government, I believe we are all clear about what lies ahead for the industry as far as reformation of its regulatory regime is concerned (see "Council Bulletin"). **The TIC supports all the proposals, which include setting up a statutory body, the Travel Industry Authority, to directly license and regulate travel agents, tourist guides and tour escorts, and holding traders criminally liable for such misconduct as coercing tourists into shopping.** It is hoped that those who provide reception services for inbound tour groups from the mainland can raise their service standard.

The Vetting Committee of the Pilot Information Technology Development Matching Fund Scheme for Travel Agents (Pilot Scheme) has approved 17 first-round applications out of a total of 20, representing a success rate of 85% (see "Cover Story"). This high rate of success among the first-round applications has not only proved that the applicants clearly know what their IT needs are, but also demonstrated that the Committee understands the real situation of the industry. It is time for other members to think when to apply themselves.

Overall, the outbound industry has fared quite well so far. Despite a year-on-year decrease in the outbound levy collected for the second quarter, there was a 3.8% increase from January to November; and this year, I believe, will be better than the last, which is somewhat a pleasant surprise. **As the global economy next year is full of uncertainties, Hong Kong may not be able to do well alone. That said, the outbound industry, having laid a sound foundation for itself and weathered many a storm in its long history, can definitely weather any storms ahead.**

Following several measures implemented last year to promote competition, the Board decided to adopt the Outbound Committee's proposals in November this year to lift all the restrictions on package tour fares and tour-related gifts with effect from March next year (see "Feature"). **Even though members will unavoidably be affected by that decision, which had to be made as required by the law, members should be able to compete with their new rivals such as online travel agents, whose number has surged in recent years, through flexible business tactics and excellent services when the restrictions are lifted.** Finally, let me repeat this one more time: please keep putting customers first and win the game through quality service. ✚

Joseph Tung