

The pursuit of real-life industry experience also led Miss Yana Fomenko, a Ukrainian student enrolled in the BSc in Hotel Management programme, to apply to the SHTM. "I was fascinated with how everything works inside a hotel", she explained. She feels "very lucky and very happy" to have been given the chance to study here. The School not only offers a "wide selection of subjects and courses", she explained, but also allows students to gain practical experience through internships at Hotel ICON.

After completing his Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management at the SHTM, Mr Pierandrea Falchi, from Italy, stayed on to pursue the MSc in Global Hospitality Business. This programme enables students to study at three world-class institutions: the SHTM in Hong Kong, the University of Houston in the US, and the EHL Hospitality Business School in Switzerland. Despite his extensive international experience, Mr Falchi described Hong Kong as the ideal place to learn about the hospitality industry. "Hong Kong is truly Asia's World City", he said. "The population is increasingly heterogenous, allowing for a deep interculturalising experience while attending classes".

Miss Carla Vennin, who recently graduated from the SHTM with an MSc in International Hospitality Management, felt that she had gained a good understanding of the European tourism market during her Bachelor's degree in France, but she wanted to build on this by discovering how things work in other cultures. "Hong Kong was of course my first choice for this exciting journey", she said, "as it is undeniably one of the leaders in hospitality in the Asian and the international market".

For many of our European students, the most important reason for coming to Hong Kong is to gain first-hand experience of a different culture – particularly Asia's famed model of hospitality. When Miss Fomenko first arrived in Hong Kong, she found the culture "breath-taking". She believes that it is the "huge contrast in cultures, climate and food", combined with the preservation of "many customs and traditions", that makes the city so special and attracts so many international tourists.

Although culture shock can be daunting, Miss Vennin reassured prospective students that "if you are curious and willing to discover, it is not hard to get immersed in a new culture". Hong Kong is particularly welcoming, added Miss Muhlmann. "It is a city where you will feel safe and at ease, no matter your background".

Asia, the Future of Tourism

Looking more broadly at the Asian hospitality and tourism industry, Miss Fomenko highlighted that the "ethos and willingness to give excellent service are a very strong pillar of Asian hospitality". She was particularly impressed by how staff make guests feel at home by greeting them by name and anticipating their needs.

Miss Vennin noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has made people realise how much they "love travelling, staying in hotels and living exceptional experiences". Hospitality professionals need to "reshape the image of our industry,

become leaders of change and build the foundations of the new hospitality", she said. Asia, more than any other market, embraces such changes, and Miss Vennin is convinced that Asia will "gradually expand its footprint in the hospitality and tourism industry".

Advice for Prospective Students

Asked what advice he would offer to prospective students from Italy who are thinking of applying to the SHTM, Mr Falchi urged them to "prepare for the unconventional, have high expectations for a world leading education, and dive in with an open mind".

While acknowledging that Europe has many "great institutions for hospitality studies", Miss Vennin emphasised that "none of them will give you the same impetus to start an international career" that the SHTM does. Miss Fomenko reminded prospective students of the wide range of subjects on offer at the SHTM, as well as the chance to learn from both teachers and guests with first-hand experience of the Asian hospitality industry.

Miss Muhlmann had the perfect last words for all European students thinking of applying to the SHTM. "I would tell them it is an incredible opportunity to broaden their perspectives", she said. "It will definitely be a memorable experience, providing them with life-long benefits". ■

IMPACT2021

New Tourism, New Directions



Confidently Facing the Future

Leading the hospitality and tourism industry into a bright future has always been a priority for the SHTM. Eager to tackle head on the challenges brought by COVID-19, the School recently co-organised and hosted two major forums that united academics, industry professionals and policy makers with the shared mission of revitalising the industry. Thanks to the hard work of the SHTM and its valued partners, both events were a resounding success.

On 16 December 2021, the School and its Hospitality and Tourism Research Centre, together with STR, organised

the IMPACT2021 conference. This year, the theme was "New Tourism, New Directions". Planned and orchestrated by a team of undergraduates from the School's Special Events Class and delivered in hybrid mode, the conference attracted delegates from around the world to explore post-pandemic pathways for hospitality and tourism.

"We are still facing the challenges of the pandemic", said Professor Jin-Guang Teng, PolyU President, in his welcoming remarks. "But this conference aims to shed light on new opportunities arising from advanced technology, new trends in global tourism and hospitality, as well as the development of smart tourism".

Embracing new opportunities was also the goal of the 2nd GBA Smart Tourism Forum, held on 17 December. Themed "Connectivity and Sustainability for Better Travel", this hybrid forum focused on the development of smart tourism in the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

The spirit of both events was perfectly summed up by Ms Elizabeth Randall Winkle, STR Chief Strategy Officer, who delivered online opening remarks at IMPACT2021. "What makes our industry so special is its resilience", said Ms Randall Winkle. "We are moving forwards, even though the path is filled with obstacles".

New Tourism, New Directions

Kicking off IMPACT2021 was an Opening General Session chaired by Professor Kaye Chon, SHTM Dean, Chair Professor, and Walter and Wendy Kwok Family Foundation Professor in International Hospitality Management. In his opening remarks, Dean Chon set the scene for the event. "The IMPACT conference was conceived to translate research papers into layman's terms", he explained, "and thus have a great impact on the industry".



Building a Shared Industry Vision

The hospitality and tourism industry is constantly evolving, and organisations must stay up to date to thrive. To help them do so, the SHTM provides high-quality training programmes that allow professionals to collaborate, broaden their knowledge, and upgrade their skills. A plethora of industry engagement events were hosted by the School in the last academic year.

One highlight was the School's delivery of two Executive Development Programmes for Chimelong Group, which operates theme parks, hotels, and restaurants in China. An exclusive Demand Forecasting and Financial Management workshop was held on 19 November 2021. Dr Neil Li, SHTM Assistant Professor, and Dr Michael Lin, SHTM Assistant Professor, provided a thorough overview of current forecasting practices, financial and cost control, hotel operation budgeting and characteristics, analysis of corporate financial reports, and financial management analysis tools. The participants were brought up to

speed on forecasting and financial management, which are critical in the fiercely competitive world of hospitality and tourism.

Also on the agenda for Chimelong Group executives was a Conflict Management workshop held on 2 December 2021. Conflict in the workplace is commonplace, and it needs to be handled with tremendous care. During immersive discussions, participants shared their experiences, explored contemporary management issues, and learned how best to resolve conflicts and anticipate problems. The workshop was taught by Dr Pearl Lin, SHTM Associate Professor.

In association with the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute, the SHTM's annual Certified Hospitality Educator Workshop was held on 3-7 January 2022. This workshop was tailored to instructors with a strong industry background who wished to sharpen their interactive teaching skills. Eighteen SHTM faculty members, SHTM doctoral students, and Hotel

ICON executives attended five 3.5-hour sessions led by Dr Fred Mayo.

The SHTM is also delighted to have established a Think Tank in October 2021, under the Tourism Sub-Alliance with the University Alliance of the Silk Road. Marching alongside the SHTM are the three University Alliance of the Silk Road founding members, namely Xian Jiaotong University, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, and Mae Fah Luang University.

Led by Professor Haiyan Song, SHTM Associate Dean, Chair Professor and Mr and Mrs Chan Chak Fu Professor in International Tourism, the Think Tank was put in place to share research insights into tourism economics and policy, sustainable tourism and community-based tourism, tourism planning and development, and cultural, heritage and rural tourism. Perfectly reflecting the SHTM's dedication to industry engagement, the members of the Think Tank share a vision of propelling policy and planning along the Silk Road. **H**

In Brief . . .

Welcoming Day

On 23 August 2021, the SHTM greeted nearly 600 new students from across the globe at a **Welcoming Day** to kick off the new academic year. **Professor Kaye Chon, SHTM Dean, Chair Professor and Walter and Wendy Kwok Family Foundation Professor in International Hospitality Management**, welcomed the students and introduced them to SHTM staff members.

Another highlight of the event was the **Dean's Distinguished Lecture**, delivered by **Syed Asim Hussain, Founder of Black Sheep Restaurants** and a spokesperson for the industry at large. His passionate speech, entitled "Confessions of a Hospitality: What Actually Matters", inspired students and staff alike.



Dress Orange Day



Every year, the SHTM celebrates World Tourism Day by organising its own **Dress Orange Day**. This academic year, the event was held on 27 September 2021. SHTM staff and students dressed in orange, the School's colour, to join the fun and demonstrate solidarity with the global industry.

All SHTMers were invited to take part in the "Dress Orange Fashion Show" Contest. The winners were BSc students Ms Katharina Zechmeister and Ms Yan Zhang, who entered as individual contestants, as well as Ph.D. students Ms Mehrnaz Alizadeh, Ms Provia Kesande and Ms Hakimeh Nasiri, who entered as group contestants.

Book Publication by SHTM Faculty

The School is delighted to announce the 2021 publication of the book *Strategic Perspectives from Hospitality Leaders*, authored by **Professor Brian King, Dr Catherine Cheung**, and a co-author. This insightful study, published by China Travel & Tourism Press, sheds new light on the strategies of Chinese hospitality leaders, both within and outside the country.



Young Scholar Grant



The SHTM congratulates **Dr Crystal Shi** on obtaining a **Young Scholar Grant** from the National Natural Science Foundation of China for her study entitled "**An Actor-Centric Approach of Abusive Supervision: A Cross-Culture Investigation of Short-Term and Long-Term Influences on Managers**".