

K.S. Tong Unveils Vision for ITE 2025: From Post-COVID Recovery to Driving Asia's Outbound Travel Transformation

📅 Wednesday, May 28, 2025



In an exclusive interview with Travel and Tour World (TTW), K.S. Tong, Managing Director of TKS Exhibition Services Ltd, detailed the vision and strategy behind ITE 2025, the fifth live edition of Hong Kong's premier travel expo since the pandemic. Themed "From Recovery to Development", ITE 2025 aims to go beyond simply returning to pre-COVID norms by adapting to the long-term changes in global travel behavior.

One of the key shifts this year is a focus on younger demographics, specifically Gen Z and young families. These groups, previously underrepresented in early post-COVID travel rebounds, are becoming increasingly active as flight prices stabilize and confidence in travel returns. ITE 2025 seeks to attract them through tailored programs and features

during public days.

While 87% of exhibitors in 2024 were international, Tong remains committed to growing this base further by showcasing the market potential of Hong Kong—one of Asia's top per capita outbound spenders. ITE's promotional strategy now includes partnerships with global news agencies, wider engagement with non-Hong Kong trade associations, and organizing delegations from cities in China's Greater Bay Area (GBA). These efforts led to significant press traction in ASEAN and China, with over 369,000 views and 475 pickups in just 30 days.

Tong emphasized the importance of premium FIT (Free Independent Travelers), who make up over 90% of ITE's public visitors. These travelers are mature, well-educated, and willing to spend more on travel. ITE's strategy to engage this audience includes diverse international exhibitors, face-to-face consultations, and in-depth travel seminars—with last year seeing 77 sessions attended by 7,000+ people.

On the digital front, ITE is balancing online tools with in-person interaction. During the pandemic, the expo introduced livestreamed seminars and Zoom-based speaker sessions, but now focuses on restoring face-to-face engagement while supporting mobile and online bookings on-site. Exhibitors are encouraged to integrate online sales platforms into their booths to capitalize on the tech-savvy habits of modern visitors.

Regarding the Greater Bay Area, Tong explained how cities like Guangzhou and Shenzhen are contributing more through organized trade delegations, supported by HK Government advertising on speed trains. ITE is also providing simultaneous interpretation at key sessions to enhance accessibility for mainland visitors.

To revive Hong Kong's lagging package tour segment, ITE offers discounted participation for local agents and spotlights family travel—a key driver of package bookings. The event also provides clear guidance for non-HK resident exhibitors, stressing legal compliance and the benefits of enabling on-site online transactions over cash sales.

ITE 2025 positions itself not just as an exhibition, but as a global platform shaping the future of outbound travel in Asia.

The main goals for ITE 2025, especially as the fifth live edition post-COVID?

Our main theme this year is "From Recovery to Development". What is the difference? Not good enough nor possible for everything just going back to the past, as Covid-19 does change the travel industry. Developments are necessary to tackle changes to bring more potential business for exhibitors.

For example, this year we highlight young parents (Family Travel) and younger travelers (Youth / Gen Z Travel). From our past surveys they were not the major driving force in early recovery stage (2023 and before) but things may change as flight costs etc. are getting back to normal. We try attracting more of them to our public days.

Further grow its international exhibitor base beyond the 87% recorded in 2024?

Pre-pandemic, Hong Kong by total outbound spending often ranked Asia's top 3rd or 4th market. With a small population of around 7.5 million, Hong Kong will rank higher by per capita spending. Thus, ITE'S highly international exhibitors profile match well market need. However, 87% is already a very high percentage which we are quite happy with.

All the time, we been promoting for more exhibitors, including the locals but particularly those from abroad, by publicizing the business potentials (market size, number, source and types of visitors and programs) for ITE exhibitors. Yes, emphasize on the fundamentals. Below more about quality and quantity of our visitors.

On a nearly 50% buyers and trade visitors from outside and overseas in ITE2024, this year, we expand promotions say by engaging international news agency help distributing our press releases, and working with more non-Hong Kong resident trade associations to either distribute our invitations or even better organize trade delegations etc.

One example. Our press release in early April on ITE as sourcing platform for Asian Travel Trade, in 30 days, drew 369166 views / hits and published by 475 key national, international and industry-specific websites in ASEAN countries and China.

Post-pandemic, more traveling in FIT who account for over 90% of our public visitors. We held survey annually and publish our findings. Our surveys in 2024 find them mature (85% between 25 and 59, another 10% aged 60 or above); educated (over 50% university and another 20+ post-secondary); and over 60% to spend more on travel. Thus they are premium FIT.

Strategies to better engage premium FIT travelers driving the outbound recovery?

Since long ago, ITE been serving what they need which include plenty of suppliers, destinations and products of various travel themes to choose from (we had many international exhibitors from different destinations); direct and face to face to talk for "customerising" the itinerary and for replies to last mile question (we had many international exhibitors); new travel ideas and trends (last year we had 77 travel seminars in 2 public days which attended by 7000 audiences), which frankly require active efforts ensure seminar quality and attractiveness.

Our first live ITE held when still deep in the pandemic year of 2021 was attended by some 20000 visitors. It reflects our long term rapport with visitors. Our public visitor data base only use for communication on ITE related issues, not for rent.

Evolving its B2B and B2C programs to meet today's digital-savvy market?

Since many years we been using online to communicate with our visitors. In early post-pandemic editions, we broadcasted some of our onsite seminars by live-streaming, and facilitate exhibitors to use zoom for direct interaction between speakers staying at home and visitors in ITE. Recently we been more focus on face to face interactions inside the exhibition.

Leverage the Greater Bay Area to strengthen its role as Asia's outbound travel hub

For many years, other cities of GBA been contributing significantly as exhibitors. In 2023 when mainland China reopened borders, we started having again buyers and trade visitors who came individually from there. In 2024, additionally, we started having several Guangdong cities of the Bay to organize trade delegations.

This year, we step up promotions on both individual trade visitors and delegations. We facilitate their visits by installing simultaneous interpretation (English – Chinese in word) in some seminars. As MEGA EVENT, the government of HK also help say advertising in speed train between the mainland and Hong Kong to promote ITE.

ITE providing to help revive Hong Kong's lagging package tour segment

90% of our public visitors are FIT who many take multiple holidays a year, and some will nevertheless also join package tour at times, say, for family travel which by the way one of our new highlights this year. We also offer Hong Kong travel agents special discount in return for their consent to send relevant staff as hosted buyers.

Importantly, ITE public visitors are premium travelers. They are in ITE and all exhibitors can try their best to get business from them. But that understandably require the supplier to become an exhibitor.

ITE guiding non-HK resident exhibitors on what's allowed under visitor visas

Non-HK resident exhibitors under visitor visas can promote but not engaging say in cash selling etc. The best way is to check related HK laws.

For your info, we have also advised exhibitors the following growing trend: Since the pandemic, more and more **ITE public visitors use their mobiles inside the exhibition halls to book and pay online for holidays**, which save the trouble of handling cash etc. In addition to face to face discussion, exhibitors advisable to also facilitate visitors making online purchases to push for more online sale. While direct selling to public visitors are welcomed, exhibitors are reminded to comply with related laws in Hong Kong.

Travel and Tour World: https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/k-s-tong-unveils-vision-for-ite-2025-from-post-covid-recovery-to-driving-asias-outbound-travel-transformation/#google_vignette