

TAIWAN WILL TOUCH YOUR HEART

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This talk proudly highlights Taiwan's unique and vibrant tourism industry, and accentuates the holistic experiential approach that is prevailing in the marketing of its tourism resources. Taiwanese tourism places great importance in providing a 'humane touch' to everything they have to offer. Among the most valued tourism facets of Taiwan that are touched upon are its thriving Culinary Tourism and its numerous heritage sites.

Keywords: *Taiwan's tourism industry, culinary tourism*

I would like to extend my congratulations to the Ateneo de Manila University's Chinese Studies Program, which is celebrating its 25th year. Unfortunately, Ambassador Wang will not be able to come today because of previous commitments. Nonetheless, on his behalf, I am here to present his talk on Taiwan tourism entitled "Taiwan will touch your heart." I hope I can deliver it with as much order as he usually does.

A country's tourism industry is one of the major indicators of its economic and cultural development. Tourism can be viewed as a national commodity—a product that is designed and packaged to fit

the needs of the consumer market, which is, in this case, world travelers.

In the marketing of our tourism industry, the trend has shifted from an aesthetically-focused outlook to a more holistic “feeling”-based, experiential approach which takes the overall consumer experience into account. The idea of “feeling” refers to the attempt to satisfy the human being’s five basic senses, namely, sight, with your eyes; sound; smell; taste; and touch. We aim to capture the heart of the world by providing full sensory satisfaction in the services we offer. This kind of approach has been central in promoting our tourism.

One good example is Starbucks Coffee. I believe everyone knows that this establishment has completely revolutionized the concept of coffee. It adopted the unconventional technique of spending very little for advertising, in the belief that cultivating the brand and its product is better. What Starbucks offers is more than just coffee, but the entire in-store experience.

In just over 40 years, they were able to win the loyalty and support of consumers all over the world. As we can see, a lot of Starbucks Coffee shops lie at many street corners, business establishments, and malls here in Manila and everywhere, Kaohsiung and Taipei included.

Not long ago, Taipei coordinated with Starbucks Taiwan to collaboratively launch a project promoting the city’s international image. This endeavor led to the production of Taipei tumblers and the Taipei mugs, which became very popular among foreign tourists as souvenirs and gifts. It also helped boost Starbucks’ marketing and business as well.

Another example of a product offering a complete consumer experience is the iPhone – an electronic contraption that has become an indispensable part of many people’s lives. It features the perfect balance of a simple yet modern design, practical functionality, and top quality.

With these two examples, we see the importance of utilizing a holistic approach when taking consumers’ demands into consideration. This is where the sense experience becomes imperative. One of St. Thomas Aquinas’ quotes best describes the global trend in the tourism industry and economy today: “*Nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses.*” The current global trend in tourism places great importance on “experiential marketing,” connecting with consumers seamlessly on multiple levels by providing a holistic sensory experience. I am proud to say that Taiwan offers this to its tourists.

Food tourism or culinary tourism has always been one of the most valued facets of Taiwanese tourism industry. As we say in Taiwan, to a simple person, food is the most essential aspect of life. Then, there is a saying in Fukienese, “*jia peng hong te tong,*” when you are eating you are greater than the emperor.

Taiwanese cuisines are popularly known to be made through culinary workmanship. Perhaps the most famous Taiwanese delicacy is *Din Tai Fung*’s plump and delicate *xiao long bao*. Every piece of the sumptuous *xiao long bao* is meticulously plated by trained chefs 18 times to ensure its quality. They might be pricier than ordinary *xiao long baos*, but you are sure to get more than your money’s worth!

Another Taiwanese establishment that offers some of the best Taiwanese delicacies is the *Yung Ho Soya Milk Restaurant* where you can get the best-tasting soya milk in Taiwan. It also sells the famous sesame seed cakes, clay oven rolls, Chinese crullers, and even fried dumplings. The establishment serves these delicacies 24 hours a day, seven days a week—a great convenience for both locals and foreigners.

Besides our flourishing local delicacies, you can also sample the best Michelin French cuisines in Taiwan at the Landis Taipei Hotel and many other places.

When travelling around Taiwan, one of the most noticeable is the distinct fusion of tradition and foreign influence in the country – a clear proof of our firm belief in balance and harmony in many things.

The best example for this is the Taipei 101, a testament to the wonders of modern architecture and which is influenced greatly by traditional Chinese belief. Hailed as one of the tallest and most technologically-advanced buildings in the world, the Taipei 101 was constructed to emulate the bamboo, a symbol of strength, flexibility, modesty, and prosperity

While Taiwan has comfortably adapted the modern advancements and technology of the 21st century, it still proudly showcases its numerous historical heritage sites as attestations to its timeless culture.

Built in 1783, the Lin An Tai Historical Home is popular among tourists for its delicately-crafted carvings and the archaic materials out of which it is built. The Lin An Tai Historical Home was used as one of the exhibition halls during the Taipei International Flora Exposition.

Also, once you enter Taipei City on the highway from Taoyuan International Airport, one of the most splendid landmarks that will grab your attention is the Grand Hotel – a contemporary palatial hotel built to emulate the iconic classical Chinese architecture. Called “The Dragon Palace” because it has over 200,000 dragon carvings and images inside and outside its walls, this opulent hotel stands as a tribute to timeless Chinese history and culture. It was hailed as one of the best hotels in the world by the US Fortune Magazine.

Another vital part of Taiwan’s tourism industry is the National Palace Museum, which houses around 700,000 pieces of ancient Chinese artifacts. The entire collection holds more than 8,000 years of Chinese history—from the Neolithic age to the Qing Dynasty about 100 years ago. Each piece of artifact is a product of uncanny workmanship. If you want to see every piece of artifact kept in the National Palace Museum, you have to visit it every three months for about 30 years. But beyond the national treasures kept in the museum, the infrastructure of the museum itself is remarkable.

We have also invited numerous performing artists to Taiwan like Pavarotti and Michael Jackson. We have also arranged numerous exhibitions of the works of world-renowned painters like Picasso, Claude Monet, and Salvador Dali in our pursuit to increase artistic awareness in Taiwan.

Taiwan actually places great importance in the harmony of pop culture and the classical style. So, you see, art – be it traditional or contemporary – is an important aspect in our tourism surge.

Not only do we guarantee a unique and full experience in our famous tourist landmarks, we also incorporate the experiential

philosophy in its everyday life. In Taiwan, we have the widely-implemented policy to “*keep the trash off the ground.*” To promote the clean outlook and image of Taiwan, citizens uphold their responsibility to keep and dispose of their own trash properly. We also believe that we are obliged to preserve and care for the world where we all live in. Whenever the garbage trucks collect garbage, they loudly play the charming and relaxing melody of “The Maiden’s Prayer.” That’s true; everyone knows this and all households and even some Filipino OFWs wait at the street corners and carry garbage bags to be collected.

When they wait, they chat; they talk about the weather, how much remittances they have sent back home, etc. Most importantly, they have forged camaraderie with each other. Let me also note here that in Taiwan, there are very few garbage bins located in public places. In addition to helping urge the awareness of environmental protection, we are also cultivating a human touch, which is rarely seen in modern society.

We all know 7-11. It has almost become an indispensable part of our lives. The 7-11 convenience stores in Taiwan offer uniquely full services to everyone. For 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 7-11 not only provides all kinds of foods, drinks, and daily commodities of all sorts. You can also pay all your utility bills---electric, telephone, credit card, internet, and even shopping bills there and even meet with your girlfriend or boyfriend there because that’s the most popular place. Everyone knows where it is there. Also, to travel, you don’t need to physically go to the train station or the airport to buy tickets. Our 7-11 provides excellent services to get all passes and e-tickets you need to purchase for travel. One can also renew his

driver's license through 7-11, which lies very close to where one lives.

In Taiwan, we have successfully mobilized modern technology not only to provide excellent services but also to promote a better quality of life. If you want to buy a textbook you can order it through the internet, then you can fetch it – your book – at the 7-11 closest to your home.

As to transportation, our US\$15 billion high-speed rail, which runs the length of the island from Taipei in the north to Kaohsiung in the southern seaport area, makes it convenient for travelers to literally tour all over the country, around 400 kilometers from top to bottom.

A one-stop express train takes just 90 minutes to travel from north to south! Imagine being able to tour the whole of Taiwan in just one day! Moreover, our MRT mass transit systems in Taipei and Kaohsiung provide excellent and clean transportation networks for travelers. There are nearly 1 million travelers in Taipei using the MRT system everyday

With all these, what I am really trying to say is, young people, young friends, please come to Taiwan to meet its young generation and its culture.

Thank you.

About the Speaker: Mr. Chang Pong is the incumbent director of the Press Division of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in the Philippines. He served as the Director of the Information Division of TECO in Australia from 1996-2000 and was appointed as the Senior Officer of the Republic of China (Taiwan) Executive Yuan Domestic News Department in 2000-2003. He subsequently worked as the Director of the Press Division of TECO in Indonesia from 2003-2008. Before his posting here in the Philippines, Director Chang was the Deputy Director of the Audio and Visual Materials Department of the ROC Government Information Office (GIO) from 2008-2012.

Editor's note

This lecture was delivered on December 11, 2012 at the Ateneo de Manila University Social Development Complex Conference Hall.