

Modern workforce for a synergised tourism and hospitality industry

An innovative approach is imperative to boost Malaysia's tourism threefold by 2020.

To achieve this goal, the tourism and hospitality industry needs to increase its annual output of qualified personnel from 20,000 in 2009 to 50,000 in 2020, while raising the standards of the industry from the aspect of overall experience, service and quality. The National Key Economic Area (NKEA) Labs determined that an integrated approach represented the best solution. This is encapsulated in Entry Point Project 10 (EPP10): 'Building a Tourism and Hospitality Discipline Cluster', under the Education NKEA. Through this EPP, the tourism and hospitality industry players will work closely with market leaders to ensure that curriculum is in line with workforce needs.

EPP10 aspires to produce skilled and qualified tourism and hospitality manpower.



Arthur Yap,
GM, Grand Margherita and Riverside Majestic



University College Sedaya International (UCSI) is spearheading this EPP effort to ensure workforce readiness to enhance the 5-star experience for tourists. To this end, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Wong Kong Yew is leading an Independent Management Team (IMT) that works closely with industry leaders to identify key strategies and implement activities to ensure students receive the best in tourism and hospitality education.

According to Wong, "Education plays a crucial role in uplifting Malaysia's image as a superior tourism destination, and the learning process allows the keen and eager to reap successes of the industry."

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Assoc. Prof. Wong Kong Yew, IMT

In its efforts to produce a premier workforce, EPP10 offers students direct exposure to luxury hotels. One of its key targets is to ensure that graduates are able to land supervisory and managerial roles in the industry.

The IMT is continuously growing the list of participating institutions that can contribute to this intensive effort of training and teaching those who will play imminent roles in the future of tourism and hospitality.

Arthur Yap, general manager of Sarawak's Grand Margherita and Riverside Majestic hotels clearly sees the benefits of EPP10 towards the Malaysian tourism and hospitality industry. The two hotels, both part of the Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), are participating hotels that provide experiential learning opportunities to students enrolled under programmes with the EPP10 syllabus model.

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Arthur Yap, General Manager

Both Grand Margherita and Riverside Majestic are completely involved in the molding process from student recruitment, teaching and training, to graduating and securing careers in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Yap believes the EPP10 approach has been long overdue for hotels in the country. He said, "If all hotels were to adopt and incorporate the model into their development plans, the industry will benefit above all".

Many managers and hoteliers share Yap's belief, as other SEDC hotels have already signed memorandums of agreement to participate in EPP10.

The education and hospitality industry, in collaboration with market leaders, will ensure that graduates are ready to meet the needs of the industry. In addition, closer links will make certain that feedback is introduced into the curriculum, ensuring that by understanding the industry, graduates are better able to serve their customers. Combined, these factors will create a workforce that understands its target consumer intimately, and will ultimately contribute to the target of increasing tourism threefold by 2020.

