

Speech by STB Chief Executive Melissa Ow at Travel Agents and Tourist Guides Industry Forum (TATGIF) 2025 (24 July 2025)

Opening Remarks

1. Good morning, everyone. I am delighted to be here with you today at the 2025 edition of the Travel Agents and Tourist Guides Industry Forum.

2024 Tourism Performance

2. Let me begin with a quick recap of our tourism performance last year.
 - a. In 2024, Singapore welcomed **16.5 million international visitors**. More significantly, tourism receipts reached a record high of **29.8 billion dollars**.
 - b. This is a shared achievement, made possible by the efforts of everyone here, the businesses that adapted quickly, the guides who reimagined their craft, and the agents who kept innovating in a fast-changing environment.
3. This momentum has carried into 2025 with a strong start. In the first half of 2025, Singapore welcomed **8.3 million international visitors** — a 2% increase from the same period last year, driven by Mainland China, Indonesia, and India markets. Tourism receipts also held steady at **8.1 billion dollars** in the first quarter, in line with last year's performance.
4. Despite global uncertainties and intensifying competition, STB is maintaining our forecast of **17 to 18.5 million international visitors and 29 to 30.5 billion dollars in tourism receipts** for the full year. Some of you have observed a softening in demand from certain key markets. I assure you that STB is actively deepening market engagements with industry partners to strengthen Singapore's appeal as a preferred destination.

T2040 Direction

5. Looking ahead, we have laid out a long-term vision through Tourism 2040, or T2040.
6. Our vision for Singapore in 2040 is to be
 - a. a world class destination with diverse, unique and inspiring experiences for visitors,
 - b. a vibrant and endearing home that Singaporeans and residents can proudly advocate for, and
 - c. a global hub of innovative and productive tourism enterprises, where companies and talents co-create sustainable tourism growth.
7. Our aim is not just to attract more visitors, but to drive quality tourism: where growth is sustainable, experiences are meaningful, and benefits are shared widely with our businesses and workers.
8. To realise this vision, we need a skilled and adaptable workforce. Tourist guides and travel agents are key to delivering authentic experiences and connecting visitors to Singapore's stories. Supporting your growth and innovation is vital to a vibrant, future-ready tourism ecosystem.

Tourist Guides

9. Let me begin with our tourist guides. Guides shape how visitors experience Singapore. As traveller expectations evolve, we must adapt in how we train, support, and grow the profession.
10. A key milestone under Future of Guiding 2.0 is the revamped Tourist Guide Training Programme which was rolled out in July 2024.
 - a. It is now shorter and more accessible to a wider community, with a sharper focus on applied learning. Trainees are equipped with essential skills to meet today's guiding needs.

- b. This revamped programme has already drawn a more diverse group, including mid-career switchers, creatives, and professionals; who are passionate about the Singapore story.
- 11. To better support continuous learning, we are updating the licence renewal conditions through the new Learn & Do framework for Continual Learning.
 - a. This approach provides greater flexibility and ownership in learning and personal development for tourist guides. More will be shared in the following presentation shortly.
- 12. Together, these refinements will help strengthen and future-proof our guiding ecosystem.

Travel Agents

- 13. For travel agents, your role today goes beyond bookings. You are designing experiences, reaching new markets, and adapting to evolving traveller needs. Many of you are focusing on growth areas such as MICE, luxury and family travel. Some are building cross-border itineraries that place Singapore at the heart of regional journeys.
- 14. To guide the next phase of growth, we have refreshed the Travel Agents Roadmap. This was co-created with many of you over the course of last year. In essence, it is a roadmap by the industry, for the industry.
- 15. To all the TA partners who had spent the time with STB on brainstorming and engagement sessions, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your efforts. We will cover the roadmap in greater detail in the next presentation, including the focus segments that align with T2040, and support areas.

Closing Remarks

16. Let me close by returning to the spirit of this year's theme, **“Navigating the Future of Tourism through Innovation”**. The future of Singapore tourism cannot be shaped by technology alone, or by policymakers behind closed doors. It needs to be co-created, with your ideas, your energy, and your belief in what Singapore can offer the world.
17. Whether you are a passionate guide or a forward-thinking travel agent, your work adds colour and meaning to every visitor's experience.
18. Let's continue shaping the future of tourism in Singapore, together. Thank you.