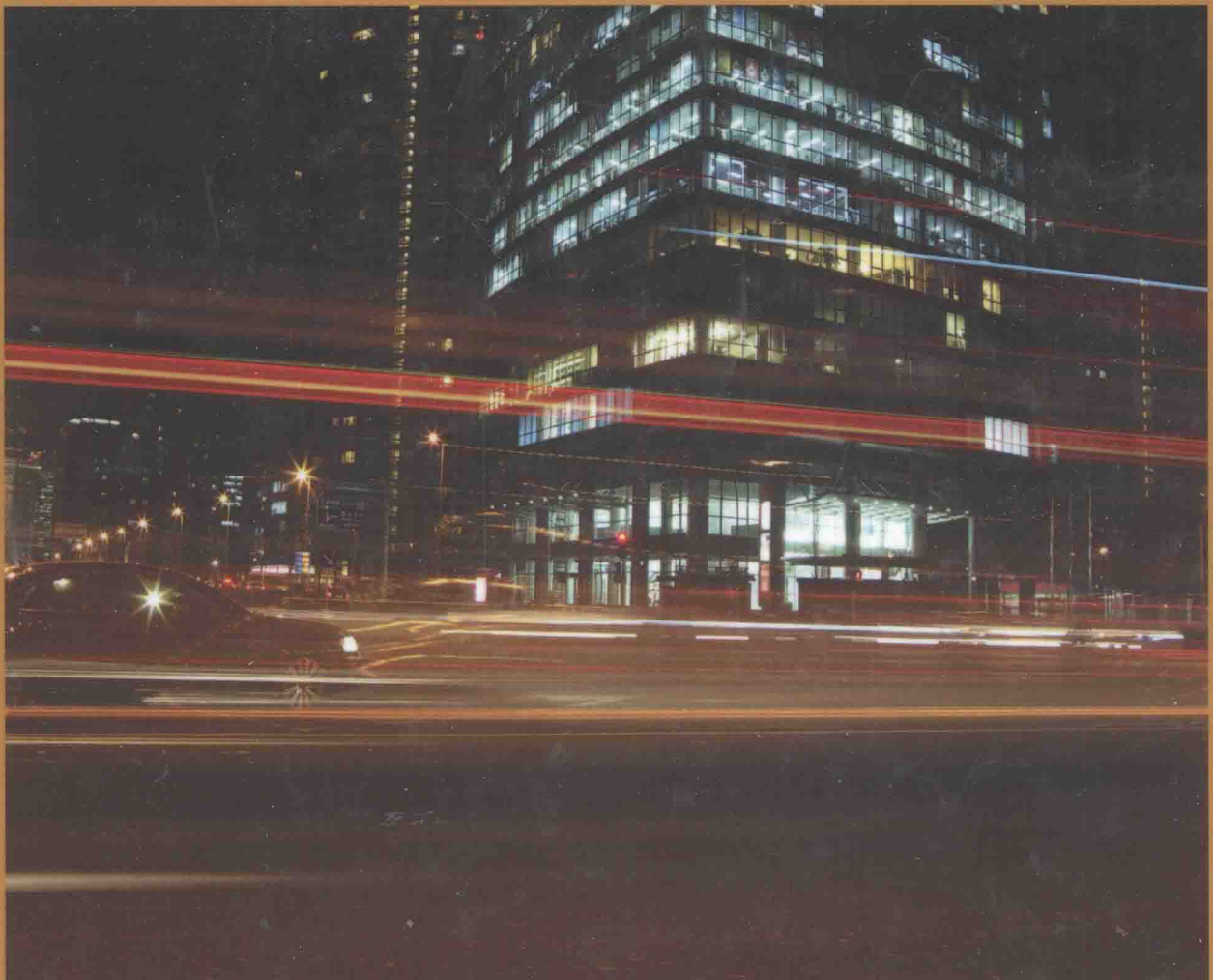


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# **Business, Technology, and Knowledge Management in Asia**

**Trends and Innovations**



**Patricia Ordóñez de Pablos**

# Business, Technology, and Knowledge Management in Asia: Trends and Innovations

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# Preface

## INTRODUCTION

In recent months, certain European Union countries such as Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain have been intensely suffering the painful effects of the economic and financial crisis threatening their markets. The media has been continually launching news about companies closing down, workers being fired, tax increases, wage reductions for civil servants, flexibility of the labor market, and an extension of the retirement age, among other adjustment, which have all been creating major economic and social uneasiness. Moreover, rumors about the possibility that certain euro zone countries will abandon the euro or doubts about the survival of the currency have been generating uncertainty in financial markets and an increase in the risk premium, which in the case of Spain, reached 693 points (July 24, 2012).

The effects of the European Union debt crisis, together with the increase of crude oil prices and the Chinese economic slow down, could affect the growth of Asian economies. Recently, the International Monetary Fund pointed out that the expected growth for China in 2012 was 8%, although this forecast could decrease if the debt crisis continues. One of the main markets for Chinese exports is the Euro zone and if the debt crisis continues, there could be a decrease in the demand for products from the Chinese market.

## Tourism in Asia

Tourism is becoming an ever growing source of income for Asian economies. According to the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) (May 22, 2012) international arrivals to Asian and Pacific destinations increased by 7%, when compared with the previous year, in January and February of 2012, and 10% in March and April. Southeast and Southern Asia are two destinations that are growing at the greatest rate. According to the report “Tourism Towards 2030” drafted by UNWTO, about long-term predictions, the arrival of international tourists to Asia and Pacific regions will increase from 204 million (in 2010) to 535 million (in 2030).

One of the objectives of World Tourism Organization activities for the Asian and Pacific zone is to improve their competitiveness and sustainability. It is precisely these regions that have experienced the strongest growth with the arrival of international travelers. The statistics speak for themselves: in 2011, 217 million international tourists and an increase of 6.1% when compared with arrivals the previous year (UNWTO, 2011).

On the other hand, the 2012 Asia International Tourism Forum held in Gyeongju, South Korea from the 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of June this year, stated the need for greater intra-regional cooperation to achieve prosper-

ity for those countries. Tourism is becoming the driving force behind economic development and the creation of employment in this region.

The main tourist destinations in Asia are expanding the range of services they offer and are also trying to spread out the tourist demand throughout the year. For example, Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido, an ideal location to enjoy the snow in Japan, is intensifying its efforts to promote the city as a city for other activities, not just winter, snow-related activities. Recently, Business Traveller Asia-Pacific noted the opinion of Satoshi Nagahashi, the person responsible for Hokkaido International Tourism, who indicated that with Asian growth in recent years Hokkaido has expanded its traditional tourist source—including Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Korea—to incorporate new zones such as Malaysia and Thailand. To respond to this new situation, Thai Airways, for example, will increase the frequency of its flights to Japan as of January 2013, to cover the needs of this new demand.

Being aware of the growing interest in studying Korean as a language, the Korea Tourism Organization has designed a new tourist package known as “Fun Korean Lesson Trip.” This package offers the possibility of participating in a program to study Korean in Korea while at the same time, taking a number of cultural tours.

In an interview published in May of 2012, the Malaysian Minister of Tourism, Ms. Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Ten, expressed her satisfaction with the results for last year’s tourist sector: 24.71 million tourists, in comparison with 24.58 million in 2010. Malaysia receives most tourists from Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, China, Brunei, India, Australia, United Kingdom, Japan, and the Philippines, although others countries such as Iran and Kazakhstan are starting to show interest in Malaysia as a tourist destination. The Minister of Tourism pointed out that the Malaysian tourist transformation plan, presented in 2010, had established, “as its objective, to welcome 36 million tourists and earn one billion dollars a week by the year 2020. With this objective, a variety of projects were implemented, all of which were based upon an affordable luxury, family fun, business tourism, and nature adventure” (UNWTO, 2012, p.13). Among the new tourism products that Malaysia offers, it is noteworthy to mention helicopter tours, Johor Premium Outlets, Legoland Malaysia and KL City Walk.

On the other hand, and in an effort to attend the needs of the various tourist types, Macau offers Audio Guiding Service since July 27, 2012. This system provides tourists with greater information about the sites they are visiting and the many activities. This service is available in Cantonese, Korean, English, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese and Portuguese (PATA, 2012).

Likewise, the increase of economic ties with Asian countries has pushed airlines to offer more frequent flights to these destinations. For example, the good perspectives of the economic ties between the United Arab Emirates and Vietnam have motivated Etihad Airways to announce that as of October first of 2013, there will be daily flights to Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam). Also, in an effort to offer improved services to its more special customers, Asiana Airlines has introduced the “OZ First Suite” service for first class passengers on B777-200ER aircrafts on route between Incheon and Chicago, Narita, or Ho Chi Minh. This new service concept allows passengers to enjoy greater privacy, comfort and rest, with a number of other services, including sliding doors around their seat (Business Traveller Asia-Pacific, 2012).

Countries such as Bhutan, Mongolia, and Myanmar are opening up to tourism and developing infrastructures to launch this sector.

## The Case of Mongolia

In 1990, Mongolia began a transition towards democracy and a market economy, to experience extensive economic growth. According to the World Bank, in 2011, its population was 2,800,114 inhabitants, with a GDP of \$ 8,557,529,910, a GDP growth of 17.2% and an inflation rate of 9.7%. In 2012, the economy continued with this rapid growth rate, around 16.7% during the first quarter of 2012, in comparison with that same period the previous year. Inflation was around 17.8% in April 2012 (9.4% in December 2011). The national currency, the Togrog, underwent a slight increase at the onset of 2012: 11% increase during the first quarter of this year in comparison with the last quarter of 2011) (World Bank, June, 2012).

Mongolia seeks to receive one million tourists per year by 2015. Despite development of the tourist sector in recent years, its weight in the GDP is only 5%. As an objective, the government is promoting investment in the nation's tourist industry as well as creating incentives for private investment. What are the country's most urgent needs to develop this sector? It is essential for Mongolia to have flight connections with new international destinations and increase the frequency of certain, already existing flights. The government is investing in the construction of the Khushigiin Khundii International Airport, which undoubtedly, will be a stimulus for tourism.

Also, it is important to promote the development of transportation and communication infrastructures as well as to have hotels that offer high quality accommodations and services. In 2005, the World Bank began boosting the development of information and communication technologies in the country's rural areas, where one third of the Mongolian population is located. This country is one of the least densely populated, with almost 2.9 million inhabitants and 1.5 million kilometers of land. These characteristics mean that offering this type of infrastructure in rural areas is particularly costly. Among other achievements by the World Bank in information and communication technologies, is that all districts of Mongolia have access to cell phone voice service access and in this regard, a network with 152 public satellite phones has been established for shepherds in areas where there is no cell phone coverage (World Bank, 2012).

Another important factor when developing the tourist sector in Mongolia is the human capital. It is essential to have well-trained workers to be employed as translators, tour guides and managers of hotels, restaurants, and other tourist related services.

For the first time, and since June of 2012, Mongolian Airlines Group (MIAT) offers seven international flights (Monday, Thursday, Saturdays, and Sundays) from Ulaan Baatar to Hong Kong. With the increase of travelers to and from Japan, Mongolian Airlines will increase its flights to Tokyo (5 weekly) and also to Osaka, twice a week, during July and August.

Mongolia celebrated Naadam, a national festival from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of July this year. The event incorporated the sixth edition of the "Deeltei Mongol," an opportunity to promote local craftsmanship, folklore, national culture, and attract international tourists interested in learning about the country's history and traditions. Mongolia offers an extensive and interesting tour package to attend the various traveler preferences: learn about the nomad culture, sleep at a Yurt camp on the steppe, trekking on horseback, adventure sports (kayak, rafting, canoes, etc), visit to country's most emblematic sites—including the Gandan Monastery, Manzushir Monastery, Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, the Orkhon water falls, Naiman Nuur or the Eight Lake Region, the National Museum of Mongolia, and The Mongolian Natural History Museum—purchase handcrafted products (boots, traditional craftsmanship, cashmere clothing, typical Mongolian garments, and jewelry). The cultural activity program is extensive, with a number of festivals, such as the Camel Festival, the Golden Eagle Festival, the National Naadam Festival, the Winter Nomad Festival, Tsagaan Sar, and the Mongolian New Year's Festival.



An especially interesting tourist product is one that offers travelers the opportunity to live with the local community, such as the Gurvanbulags in central Mongolia. The actual community is responsible for supplying milk, meat and other dairy products to the Yurt camp where the tourists are accommodated. This, in turn, favors the economic development of the community.

Nevertheless, Mongolia is not only attracting more tourists in recent years, but it has caught the eye of investors who are interested in its huge mineral wealth. The contribution of agriculture to the country's GDP has decreased in recent years, which indicates a transition from agriculture to a mining based economy. According to the 2012 Risk Report for Mongolia, it is estimated that the country has deposits of more than 80 different minerals, including coal, copper, gold, molybdenum, and uranium.

The economy of Mongolia is enjoying rapid growth due to the development of the Oyu Tolgoi (OT) or Turquoise Hill mining region, in the Gobi desert. The initial phase has completed 87% of the project (as of April 2012) and commercial production is expected to begin throughout the first half of 2013. Government forecasts estimate that this mine will represent a third of Mongolia's GDP in 2020. However, the turbulences of international financial markets could affect the financing that is necessary to develop the mining wealth of the country.

On the other hand, the country is negotiating with its powerful neighbors, China and Russia, to alter the construction path of the natural gas pipeline that transports natural gas from western Siberia to western China, through Kazakhstan and Mongolia.

However, the development of these economic sectors and more specifically the mining industry, can not compromise environmental questions nor damage the nomadic culture and the lifestyle of Mongolia. Therefore, it is essential to achieve a balance between economic development and environmental sustainability. Mongolia faces a number of important challenges for which it must seek solutions, including, among others, the economic diversification of the country, decreasing the wealth gap between the urban and rural inhabitants, as well as the sustainable management of natural resources and the protection of the Mongolian culture (Ordóñez de Pablos, 2010).

## **The Case of Bhutan**

Bhutan, a small Himalayan kingdom, is an example of equilibrium between economic development and environmental sustainability. With barely 700,000 inhabitants, Bhutan is multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic society.

This country is promoting community-based tourism, facilitating economic development to reach remote areas of the country, such as certain areas in the Jigme Singye Wangchuk National Park. At the same time, area inhabitants maintain their traditional lifestyle and preserve the privileged natural environment of Bhutan. Merak and Sakteng, the "twin jewels" of eastern Bhutan, are two regions which were, for many years, closed to tourism. With an altitude of more than 3,500 meters, a visit to Merak and Sakteng offers the opportunity of seeing the Brokpa community, who has lived in this area since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, after abandoning Tsona, in southern Tibet. The Brokpas, as well as the people of Laya, Lingshi and Lunana, have a semi-nomad lifestyle, with yaks being their main source of sustenance. These regions were closed to international tourism until only recently in an effort to preserve the unique culture of the Brokpas (Ordóñez de Pablos, 2012; Tourism Council of Bhutan, 2012).



In winter, the Brokpas generally live in homes built of stone and with little ventilation to protect them from the harsh, cold winter. In summer, they travel with their yaks to grazing areas. The Brokpas exchange the few products they generate (yak meat, butter, cheese) with neighboring inhabitants, who in turn, cultivate rice, corn and vegetables as well as silk.

A visit to the Merak and Sakteng valleys offers the possibility of trekking to the Jomo Kuengkhor Mountain and walking alongside the Donmong Chu River. Amu Jomo, the goddess who protects the Brokpas and Kukhor, lives in the Jomo Mountain. A two-day festival is held in her honor in autumn. The men of this community intone songs about Amu Jomo, their yaks and life as herders. Also associated with these beautiful valleys are the stories that the Brokpas tell about the yeti (“migo”), an illusive creature that is mentioned in numerous legends. The Nachung La pass (4,153 meters) offers some impressive views of the valley.

The country’s two main sources of income are the generation of hydraulic energy and tourism. Bhutan has the potential to generate some 30,000 MW of electricity.

Tourist products on offer from Bhutan focus on: 1) festivals, 2) culture, 3) adventure (fishing, mountain bike, rafting, kayaking, rock climbing), 4) nature (bird-, flora- and fauna-watching), 5) spirituality and well-being (meditation and retreats, hot water therapy, traditional medicine and 6) trekking (Table 1).

Within the many festivals on offer, the following are most outstanding: Black Necked Crane Festival, Chorten Kora Festival, Gomphu Kora Festival, Haa Summer Festival, Jampa Lhakhang festival, Kurjey Festival, Lhuentse Festival, Merak Tshechu, Mongar Festival, Nimalung Festival, Nomad Festival, Paro Tsechu, Pema Gatshel Festival, Punakha Festival, Sakteng Tshechu, Takin Festival, Thimphu Festival, Trashigang Festival, Trongsa Festival, Ura Yakchoe, and Wangdue Phodrang Festival. In the category of trekking, Bhutan offers a wide variety: Bumthang Cultural Trek, Bumthang Owl Trek, Chelela Trek, Dagala Thousand Lakes Trek, Dongla Trek, Druk Path Trek, Dur Hot Spring Trek, Gangjula Trek, Gangkar Puensum, Gantey Trek, Jomolhari Trek, Laya Gasa Trek, Lingmithang, Zhemgang Trek,

*Table 1. Main dzongs in Bhutan*

Chezo Dzong
Daga Dzong
Darkar Trashy Yangtse Dzong
Dobji Dzong
Dogar Dobji Dzong
Drukgyal Dzong
Gasa Dzong
Haa Dzong
Jakar Dzong
Lhundrup Rinchentse Dzong
Lhuntse Dzong
Paro Rinpung Dzong
Punakha Dzong
Simtokha Dzong
Singye Dzong
Ta Dzong
Trashy Yangtse Dzong
Trashichho Dzong
Trashigang Dzong
Trashiyangtse Dzong
Trongsa Dzong
Wangdue Phodrang Dzong (it was destroyed by fire on June 23, 2012).
Zhemgang Dechen Yangtse Dzong
Zhongar Dzong

Merak-Sakteng, Nabji Korphu Community Based Trek, Nubtsona Pata Trek, Punakha Winter Trek, Rigsum Goenpa Trek, Royal Heritage Trek, Sagala Trek, Samtengang Trek, Sinchula Trek, Snowman Trek, and Wild East Rodungla Trek.

The Snow Man trek, lasting 4 weeks, offers impressive views of mountain passes and brings travelers close to areas barely seen by tourists, such as beautiful villages and monasteries.

## **The Case of Myanmar**

Another attention-deserving case is Myanmar, an emergent tourist destination, which has recently shown interest in becoming a part of the World Tourism Organization (WTO). Myanmar is the second largest country in south-east Asian and one of the poorest in the world. For decades, the tourist policies of this country were modeled by internal and external political factors (Henderson, 2003).

The State Law and Order Restoration Council Law No. 13/90) and The 13<sup>th</sup> Waning Day of Nayon, 1352 ME (20th June, 1990), in Chapter II (Basic Principles) indicate that the tourist industry will work to “preserve and develop historical locations, traditional arts and the customs of the various ethnic groups, which represents the cultural heritage of Myanmar (3.d); “preserving and developing the natural beauty and environmental heritage of Myanmar” (3.e) and “developing technical knowledge about the tourist industry and creating employment opportunities” (3.g)

Myanmar, aware of the importance of human capital in developing the tourist sector and the competitiveness of the country, has launched various training courses for tour guides, which are taught by the Tourist Guide Association.

In May 2012, U Thein Sein, President of Myanmar, expressed the importance of the tourist sector for the economic and social development of the country. Myanmar, an unknown for the general public, has considerable natural resources and an extremely valuable cultural heritage that, without a doubt, will attract a certain type of traveler, interested in such tourist destinations.

The Mekong Tourism Forum, held in June 2012, closed with the commitment on behalf of Myanmar to promote sustainable tourism and intensify its tourist cooperation with countries of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), made up of Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

According to statistics by the Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (2011), the development of turnover from tourism for 2007-2011 has been very positive: 182 million (\$), 165 million (\$), 196 million (\$), 254 million (\$) and 319 million (\$). The number of international travelers coming to Myanmar during this period increased: 656,910, 660,206, 630,061, 716,434, 731,230, 762,547, 791,505 and 816,369. Travelers visiting the country can be classified into four categories: groups coming through tour-operators (26%), independent international travelers (38%), business travelers (21%) and others (15%). Of the total number of tourists welcomed by Myanmar in 2011, 66.39% came from Asia. Among these, China (15.85%) and Thailand (15.17%) contributed the most tourists.

For the first time, and due to growing interest in Myanmar as a tourist destination, airlines have begun offering flights to the country while others have increased flight frequency. Taiwanese EVA will offer 3 flights per week to Yangon as of October 2012. China Airlines will add one more weekly flight to Yangon to the five it currently offers, starting in September of this year. Deluxe tourism is also interested in Myanmar and super-luxury resorts such as the Ngapali Resort have been created.

In terms of resources dedicated to the tourist sector, Myanmar has 3160 official licensed tour guides, 759 official tourist agencies (743 are local companies, 15 are combined companies and only one is a

foreign company). With regards to tourist transport, there are a total of 178 transportation firms by land, sea and even air (1 hot-air balloon).

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has a population of over 60 million. The major racial groups are Bamar, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rakhine, and Shan. Myanmar offers diverse tourist products; one is associated with the cultural and religious festivals that take place every month of the year.

According to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism the main festival held in Myanmar are as shown in Table 2.

The country is home to more than 130 ethnic groups, which undoubtedly creates major cultural diversity. The spectacular landscapes and flora and fauna of the country also allow eco-tourism products to be offered. Myanmar has numerous national parks and wild life sanctuaries: Kakaborazi National Park, Alungdaw Kathapa National Park, Hlawaga National Park, Popa Mountain Park and Nat Ma Taung National Park; and Shweseetaw Wildlife Sanctuary, Chatthin Wildlife Sanctuary, Moneyingyi Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary, Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, and Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary.

The growing arrival of tourists is encouraging the development of the country's traditional arts, because tourists demand handmade fabrics (cotton and silk), pictures, handcrafted silver items, jewelry, ceramics, tapestries, and traditional marionettes, among other products. Restaurants have also adapted to the needs of the tourist influx by offering more traditional dishes, such as Mohinga (noodles with rice and fish) and Oho Kaukswe (chicken and coconut soup with noodles).

In Myanmar, tourist leisure time is also an opportunity for economic development and the creation of employment. The interest in Buddhism shown by tourists has led to specific packages being created to offer the possibility of retreats, where Buddhist meditation can be carried out. On the other hand, the wealth generated by tourism has motivated local entrepreneurs to start learning golf, with golf courses being made available in the nation's capital, both for the local businesspeople and tourists.

*Table 2. Main festivals in Myanmar*

Ananda Pagoda Festival	Pakokku Thiho Shin Pagoda Festival
Kachin Manaw Festival	Fullmoon of Waso
Naga New Year Festival	Waso Full Moon Festival
Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda Festival	Warso Chin-Lone Festival
Kyaik Khauk Pagoda Festival	Taung Pyone Spirit Festival
Maha Muni Pagoda Festival	Yadana Gu Spirit Festival
Glutinous Rice Festival	Manuha Pagoda Festival
Ko Gyi Kyaw Spirit Festival	Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda Festival
Novitiation Ceremony	Festival of light
Maw Tin Zun Pagoda Festival	Kyauk Taw Gyi Pagoda Festival
Inn Daw Gyi Shwe Myitzu Pagoda Festival	Dancing Elephants Festival
Bawgyo Pagoda Festival	Kaunghmudaw Pagoda Festival
Zalun Pyi-Taw-Pyan Buddha Image Festival	Shwe Kyin Light Festival
Pindaya Shwe Oo Min Festival	Tazaungmon Full Moon Festival
Shwe Myet Hman Pagoda Festival	Hot Air Balloon Festival
Kekku Pagoda Festival	Shwezigon Pagoda Festival
Shwe Sar Yan Pagoda Festival	Phowintaung Pagoda Festival
Shwedagon Pagoda Festival	Shwesandaw (Pyay) Pagoda Festival
Alaungdaw Khathapa Pagoda Festival	Mae Lamu Pagoda Festival
Thingyan (Water Festival) and Myanmar New Year	Popa Guardian Spirits Festival
Shwe Maw Daw Pagoda Festival	Kyaik-hti-yo 'Golden Rock' Pagoda Festival
Salon Festival	Nine Thousand Lamps
	Ritual of Pouring Water on the Bodhi Tree

## *International Journal of Asian Business and Information Management in 2011*

As mentioned in the previous section, Asian countries have a big potential for tourism and therefore for generating social and economic development of local economies. Exploiting their idiosyncratic resources can help to attract new kind of tourists interested in visiting remote villages and unknown areas. Research areas focused on business, tourism and social development will be of especial interest for the *International Journal of Asian Business and Information Management*.

In 2011, the *International Journal of Asian Business and Information Management* published four regular issues, with a total of 20 academic articles. I would like to highlight one paper of the each issue published in 2011.

The paper “General Enterprising Tendency (GET) and Recommendations to Boost Entrepreneurship Education” in Sarawak by Lee Ming Ha, Edith Lim Ai Ling, Balakrishnan Muniapan and Margaret Lucy Gregory, “explores the General Enterprising Tendency (GET) test used to examine the enterprising tendency among business students in Sarawak. The findings from a sample of 75 final year business students indicate low scores in five key enterprising tendencies, namely: need for achievement, need for autonomy, calculated risk taking, drive and determination and creative tendency (innovativeness).[...] This paper has a practical implication for universities and business schools to re-examine their current business and entrepreneurship curriculum, as one of the purposes of a business school is to produce entrepreneurs or business leaders to contribute to economic growth and development” (IJABIM, Vol 2, No.1, 2011: p. 1)

The paper “Financial Reporting of Intellectual Capital and Company’s Performance in Indian Information Technology Industry” by Karam Pal and Sushila Soriya, analyzes “the relationship between Financial Reporting of Intellectual Capital and Company’s Performances in Indian Information Technology Industry. For the purpose of this study, sixty companies listed on NSE were taken for a period of 1999-00 to 2008-09. Value Added Intellectual Co-efficient (VAICTM) method developed by Pulic (1998) was used for the analysis of the data” (IJABIM, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2011, p. 34).

The paper “Impact of Structures on Knowledge Contribution in Virtual Organizations: The Asian Case” by Xi Zhang “uses data collected in conjunction with a global virtual team project to empirically examine aspects of adaptive and proactive structuration to contribute to knowledge in this area. The authors are interested in these research questions: (1) To what extent is the influence of proactive intervention? (2) What is the impact on team dynamics, with special attention to knowledge sharing, of the interplay between aspects of adaptive and proactive structuration?” (IJABIM, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2011, p. 40).

Finally the paper “The Essential Leadership Wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita”, by Patrick Kim Cheng Low and Balakrishnan Muniapan, “The Bhagavad Gita, a part of the Mahabharata composed more than 5,000 years ago by Vyasa, is a timeless leadership classic and its wisdom is highly relevant to leaders of today. Here, in this paper, the authors examine the various tenets of the Bhagavad Gita and provides its wisdom to contemporary leadership. Some of these teachings will certainly inspire the leaders to change from within and transform their leadership from transactional to transformational and towards transcendental. In presenting this wisdom, the authors have employed hermeneutics, which is a method to interpret ancient texts combined with some qualitative inputs received from leadership seminar participants. This paper is significant for both leadership theory and practice” (IJABIM, Vol. 2, No.4, 2011, p.1).

Two issues published in 2011 included a book review section, with information about editorial novelties related with the journal topics, as well as other suggestions regarding books of interest for the readers.

The titles reviewed were *Statebuilding and Justice Reform: Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Afghanistan*, *A Beginner's Guide to Tajiki*, and *Persian Grammar: For Reference and Revision*.

One of the short-term objectives of the journal is to increase the number of articles coming from Central Asia and the Himalayan region. Central Asian countries, such as Kazakhstan and Afghanistan, play a geo-strategic role in world economy and politics, and academic articles about these countries do not abound.

Another objective is to publish special issues about business, tourism, information and communication technologies, and sustainable development in specific Asian countries. As was mentioned above, Mongolia is laying stakes on the development of information and communication technologies. It would be interesting to analyze the impact of these technologies on the economic and social development of the rural and urban areas and how they contribute to improving the standard of life for local inhabitants. On the other hand, countries such as Bhutan, in the Himalayas, are experiencing a major economic and social development due to tourism. The policies of this small Himalayan kingdom are summarized in the following expression "high revenues, low impact;" in other words, they are looking for quality tourism, travelers willing to pay the elevated daily fee the country charges to enjoy the privilege of traveling through its beautiful valleys (Paro, Haa, Ura), impressive monastery-forts (Punakha Dzong, Paro Dzong), or the incredibly beautiful Taktsang Monastery, where tradition states that Guru Rimpoche arrived flying on the back of a tiger.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **WEB LINKS**

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). [www.aseansec.org](http://www.aseansec.org)

Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office [www.MekongTourism.org](http://www.MekongTourism.org)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar [www.mofa.gov.mm](http://www.mofa.gov.mm)

Myanmar Hotelier Association [www.myanmarhotelier.org](http://www.myanmarhotelier.org)

Official Tourism Website of Mongolia [www.mongoliatourism.gov.mn/page/336](http://www.mongoliatourism.gov.mn/page/336)

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