

**SENTIMENT WITHIN STRATEGY –  
CELEBRATING TOURISTS THROUGH  
THEIR TRADITIONS**

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It happens each and every year. And every year, it is the source of even greater awe. As calendars in Asia turn to call in a lunar new year, the world's hundreds of millions within the Chinese community venture out to come together as one in celebration of the Spring Festival. From China's Mainland to Macau, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, across all centres of the Chinese diaspora and descendants, the imminent arrival of the annual festival activates 'Chunyun.' It is the largest worldwide human migration that crescendos with an occasion of global celebration.

Come midnight of the first night of week-long festivities, fireworks turn the skies above into a smile-provoking shower of colour and light. Bamboo sticks glow through the streets being strolled by lion dancers, music and merriment filling the air. Timeless traditions unfold, determined to chase off evil spirits, calling in a new year of luck, laughter and love. It is a time of remarkable anticipation, preparation, migration, and finally celebration. It bridges cultures as billions of people worldwide pause to mark the festive occasion with its symbols, sentiments and sensational display.

Just as awe inspiring are the headline making numbers of people travelling within China to be with family and friends over the holiday period. Estimates of 2015's pre-Spring Festival period traveller numbers within China have reached as high as 6.2 billion. All forms of transport, and all types of temperament, undergo their greatest pressure tests. Long and often tedious and tiring journeys are made to reach loved ones well in advance of the official start of the Lunar New Year. It's packed with piles of gifts and goodies to be distributed while paying respects, partaking in traditional ceremonies, and sharing the magic of the season's most special moments.

Year after year, more and more members of the global Chinese community are choosing to spend their celebrations overseas. They are calling in the New Year and wishes for new luck from neighbouring countries in Asia (with Korea, Thailand, and Japan currently on top), or even farther afield including Australia, New Zealand, the UK and continental Europe). In 2015, CNTA estimates an excited 5.19 million plus people of Chinese descent planned for the annual event, up 10% versus 2014, while spending grew as much as 15% versus the prior year in some markets.

New Year means new purchases, especially those most luxurious and lavishly recognised. Making travel bookings and personal shopping lists, a breathtaking US \$22 billion is expected to be spent on gifts. For one and all, this is the one time in the year to treat others, and oneself.

### **STRATEGIES TURN TO INVITATIONS**

As national tourism strategies of destination marketing organisations across the globe prioritise the Chinese market for their destination growth, the increased desire of upper class and upwardly mobile Chinese travellers over the Spring Festival period is a blessing of overwhelming proportion. With greater wealth, greater desire for quality time during the week long holiday, and greater mobility as a result of increased air access and decreased visa restrictions, travelling further and further abroad is becoming a new tradition.

As a result, this rich window of opportunity to welcome Chinese travellers inspires hotels across the region and world to valet and roll out their red carpets in sweet anticipation of one of the most lucrative times of the year for the travel and tourism industry. It turns international airports into Mandarin messaging spaces. Duty Free halls are adorned with red and gold lanterns, special displays are set up with Chinese New Year promotions, with space made for that year's symbolic animal. This year, room was made for the horned animal, be it a sheep, goat or ram.

The symbols and sentiments have an impact, not only on minds, hearts and credit cards of the much sought after travellers, but also on the strategic mindsets of the destinations courting this invaluable source market's attentions and wish lists.

The critical learning? The courtship must make a personal connection.

Strategies identifying top target markets are not enough to entice travellers to invest their time, destination wishes and shopping whims. Speaking to the massive, lucrative Chinese marketing needs to be in their language, and directly to their hearts. In the case of Spring Festival, it is about understanding and celebrating what is important to them – the marking of the most important time of traditions in their calendar year with proverbs and products that matter most.

A global brand making a personal connection with the Chinese traveller, especially during the Lunar New Year period is Dubai-based Jumeirah Hotels and Resorts. With a rapidly growing portfolio of hotels, resorts and ongoing expansion into new markets East, Jumeirah has been at the forefront of celebrating guests for over a decade. Most impressively, each year as the Lunar New Year arrives, the group's iconic Burj al Arab hotel, the repeatedly awarded, loudly applauded, world's first 'six star' property turns its magnificent facade into an enormous canvas of red, the year's symbolic expression projected boldly and brilliantly for guests, locals and the world to see. Going several steps further, the President and Group CEO hosts the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to a spectacular display of fireworks and traditional lion dance. 2015 was of elevated star power as tennis champion Roger Federer honoured the occasion, colouring the eyes of the lion, thereby giving the lion its spirit, and bringing it to life. It was a great honour at this year's occasion. This was a great example of the Jumeriah brand's salute to the world's Chinese community. It was clear, consistent, credible and deeply connecting.

And of course, there is the lovely retail example from London's elegant boutique-lined streets: Burberry, the globally recognised brand with deep, distinctive British roots dating back to 1856, accenting its signature tartan scarves with boldly embroidered symbols reflecting of the 'Year of the Goat'. Fanning across a polished wooden table, their Chinese New Year collection is fashionably on display alongside a beautifully ornate stuffed goat ornament dressed head to hoof in Burberry's finest. Central to the success of these two brands? Insights before statistics. It is not about 5+ million Chinese tourists travelling for the festive shopping season with wallets and 'must find and buy' lists in hand, it is 1 visitor x 5 million.

### YEAR-ROUND OPPORTUNITIES TO CELEBRATE VISITORS

The opportunity to connect with special occasions of specially targeted travellers does not begin and end with Chinese New Year. Quite the contrary.

A year of annual events are there to be leveraged. Whether it is celebrating Diwali half way across the world from India to attract Indian tourists, marking the occasion of Eid as a means of making the destination more meaningful and booking worthy for Muslim travellers, or looking closer at any of the main cultural or religious festivals celebrated by target markets. The approach is simple: thoughtful understanding, execution, an invitation, in their words, to their hearts, to make decision making simple. As our travel world opens wider, so too does the opportunity for making cross-cultural, year-round, sector building connections with travellers.

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