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# Passenger experience the focus at China Airport summit

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Airport authorities, retailers and brands owners were all in attendance at the recent fourth China Airport Commercial & Retail Summit at the Marriott Hotel in Shenzhen.

The event, entitled Travel Experience— Operational Excellence versus Commercial Opportunities was hosted by the China Civil Airports Association and Pincaux media, and supported by Shenzhen Airport Co. DFNI was the only trade press present.

Day one began with a welcome address from China Civil Airport Association secretary general Chen Xiaoning, who indicated airport commerce was not just about opening and renting shops. This was followed by an insightful presentation from Beijing Capital International Airport Commercial development and operation practice deputy marketing department manager Chen Lie, who discussed the status quo of commercial airport development. Lie outlined six major practices of commercial development including retail, food and beverage, advertisement and convenience. He said: "We want to innovate the commercial portfolio and upgrade the brand portfolio. We have already introduced popular brands such as Bulgari and Shanghai Tang and want to offer a local flavour."



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survey of 1,000 passengers, 49% were unhappy queuing for security, 47% at having to pay to drop off or pick up passengers at airports and 41% at having to queue at check-in.

Felix then highlighted some personal observations from years of regular travel. She said: "Security is usually the first frustration for everybody. It is a question of good people management. Some airports run [security] videos but people do not take too much notice of them."

Speaking of frustrations, Guangzhou Baiyun International airport head of airport concessions Lin Peiqun hinted that some Chinese airports are not doing enough in terms of driving non-aeronautical revenue. He said: "Non aeronautical revenue is important. In the past it was all about safety and aeronautical revenue. Now we look at non-aeronautical sectors. The non-aeronautical sector can promote overall development of the airport and has been supported by the government. It is frustrating that some airports do not cooperate."

SSP China managing director Great China Li Yang then emphasised the requirement of airports to understand Chinese travellers' food and beverage needs in order to tailor the offer. Food and beverage was again the topic at the end of the day during a panel discussion headed by Intervistas vice-president commercial Johan Schölvinck. The panel, including SEA Milan Airports non-aviation commercial director Luigi Battuello, analysed the key elements which make great airport food and beverage tick.

Other presentations on day one included Taho general manager Huang Heming, whose vending machine company is the largest in China and provides services for the country's major airports such as Beijing Capital International and Shanghai Pudong. Incheon International airport Corporation director of concession team one Sang Ahn (pictured above left) also urged airports to focus on the collection and analysis of data. He said: "We all use data which is more real-time based. We need data to lead the market. We are living in a big data world. Those retailers adopting an analytical approach are performing better,"

In addition, TravConsult managing director Trevor Lee evaluated the importance of time, passenger experience and non-aeronautical revenue in airport environments. Guangzhou Baiyun International airport head of concessions Lin Peiqun also looked at consumer services which can drive travel-retail in the future at Chinese airports. Peiqun commented: "We need to emphasise a brand or service and remind our customers of some principals. We believe we still have a long way to go."

"Different cities may have different understandings of the function and role of airports. Management of operations may be different. Airports need to find a balance between safety and commercial operations and service."

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