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Destination Canada rebrand at RVC

Canada Tourism Commission chooses the backdrop of Rendez-vous Canada to announce its rebranding to Destination Canada. The transition to the new identity will be completed by November 1, 2015.



DEEPA SETHI FROM RVC NIAGARA FALLS

Maxime Bernier, Canada's Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism and Agriculture, used the platform of Rendez-vous Canada in City of Niagara Falls, Ontario in May to unveil the new operating name of the former Canadian Tourism Commission, as Destination Canada. The new corporate identity, effective immediately, was created to reflect the vision

of Canada's government tourism body, where advocacy and content have become the new marketing mandate.

The rebranding exercise will clearly define Destination Canada in the international marketplace as a significant global tourist board. The following months will see a full rebranding overhaul to Destination Canada's corporate websites, social

media handles, assets and collateral materials to reflect the new name. The well-known consumer brand identity, "Canada, Keep Exploring", will remain in use as Destination Canada continues to connect with travellers through media, social and content marketing campaigns. The transition to the new brand identity will be completed by November 1, 2015, heralding an exciting new chapter for the industry.



(L-R) Chris Alexander, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, David Goldstein, President & CEO, Destination Canada, and Maxime Bernier, Minister of State for Small Business, Tourism and Agriculture in front of the new Destination Canada branding

Over 1 lakh eTV arrivals from Jan-May

The Government of India has extended e-Tourist Visa (eTV) scheme to 77 countries. The US, Germany and Australia are among top 10 source countries availing e-Tourist Visa facility during May 2015.



TT BUREAU

During May 2015, a total of 15,659 tourist arrived on e-Tourist Visa as compared to 1,833 during May 2014, registering a growth of 754.3 per cent. From January

to May, 2015, a total of 1,10,657 tourist arrived on eTV as compared to 9,841 during January- May 2014, registering a growth of 1024.4 per cent. This high growth may be attributed to introduction of e-Tourist Visa for 77 countries



as against coverage of earlier TVoA scheme for 12 countries. The percentage shares of top 10 source countries availing e-Tourist Visa facility during May 2015 are - USA (37.82%), Germany (9.35%), Australia (8.95%), Russian Federation

(5.85%), Republic of Korea (4.30%), UAE (3.53%), Mexico (3.16%), Ukraine (3.01%), Japan (2.89%) and Singapore (2.43%).

The percentage shares of different ports in tourist

arrivals on e-Tourist Visa during May 2015 are New Delhi (43.65%), Mumbai (22.14%), Bengaluru (9.66%), Chennai (7.25%), Hyderabad (4.55%), Kochi (3.97%), Goa (3.81%), Kolkata (3.24%) and Trivandrum (1.73%).

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Maya’s second stint in the East

Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences is ready to host the second edition of East India Travel Awards. The award show that honours the best in the tourism and hospitality industry will take place in Kolkata on June 25.

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

After a successful first stint, East India Travel Awards is back with a bang. Having regaled the travel and tourism industry of the North, South, West and East India, last year, the much sought-after awards now occupy pride of place in everyone’s hearts and shelves.

The award, to be held on June 25, returns to Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences, second time in a row. The categories for the award show includes Aviation, Hotels and Resorts, Domestic, International Tourism Boards, Travel Agents, Technology partners, among others from the eastern region of the country. Explaining the idea behind the awards, **SanJeet**, Mentor, India Travel Awards, says, “The awards are a true specimen of the contribution of various companies/indi-



SanJeet
Mentor
India Travel Awards

viduals to take tourism to a different level. These awards are to recognise extraordinary examples of people who made the real difference. A first-of-its-kind formal event, India Travel Awards, will make a difference to the industry by accommodating recognition for regional talent thereby raising the bar.”

As Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences sets the



Jai Kishan
General Manager
Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences

stage to recognise the hard work and applaud the true leaders for their dedication and commitment towards tourism, **Jai Kishan**, General Manager of the hotel, prefers to remain tight-lipped about the preparations afoot for the award show. “About how we are preparing for the award show, that will have to remain a surprise, and it will be revealed only on the D-Day.”

Talking about hosting the eastern awards second time at the hotels, he says, “It feels absolutely great! We hosted last year’s event within a month of our opening and had put up a fabulous show as our first major event after launch. This year the teams are geared up to do an even better job and hopefully delight everyone who attends the event. The idea is to showcase the largest, newest and best property in Eastern India to those in the business of hospitality.”

He also acknowledges the importance of such award shows in the region and says, “Such shows, though rare, are a fitting tribute to the new surge of development and infrastructure in the region, they provide the much-needed recognition for year-round efforts and an impetus to the entire industry as a whole.”

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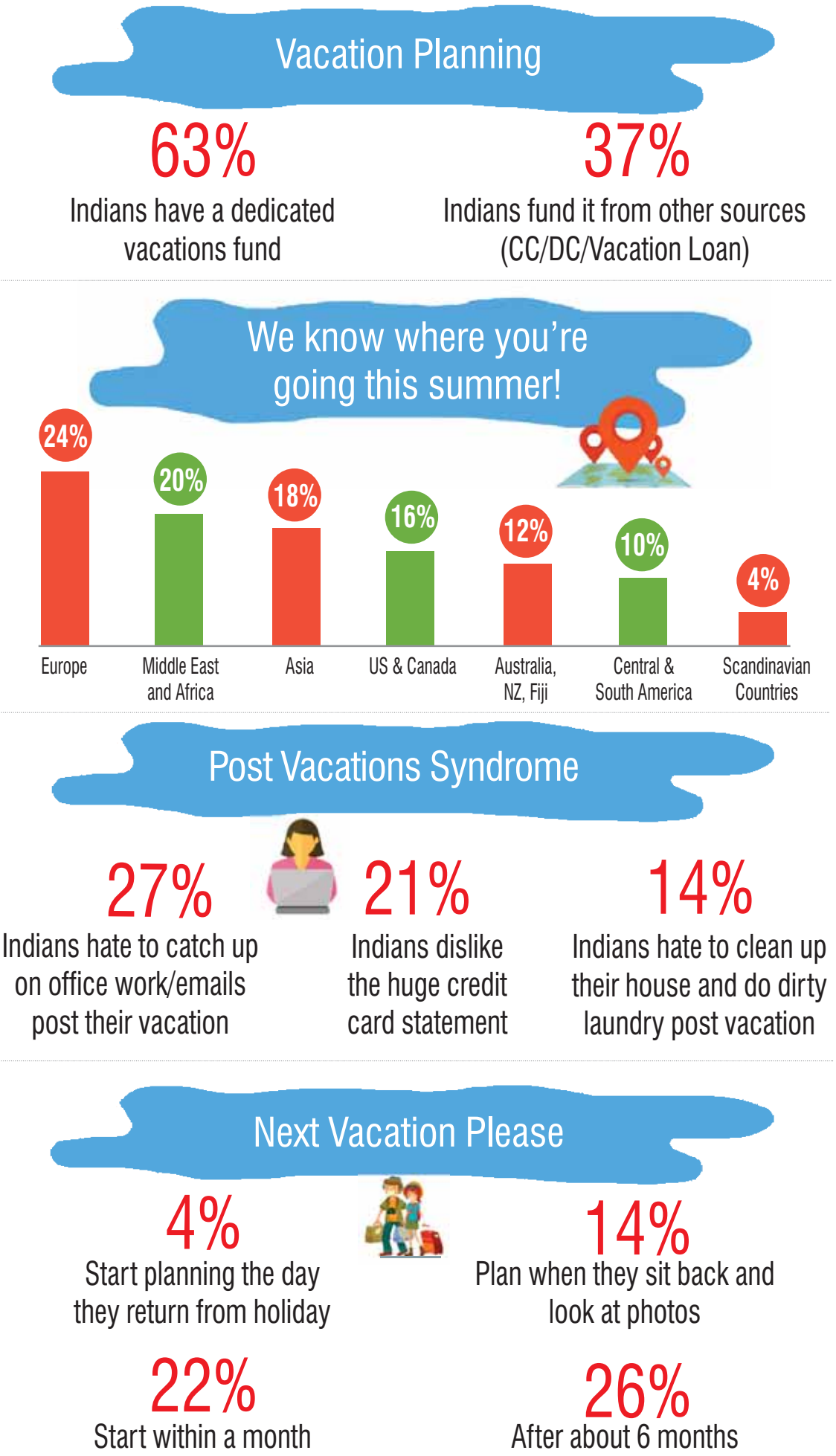
With June setting in well with the summer, it is holiday time for all. Outbound this season is growing in leaps and bounds. Even the proportion of travellers planning to venture out has increased. RBI has also doubled annual overseas investment ceiling for individuals to \$250,000. This will go a long way in boosting outbound. What is interesting to see is the rise of new unexplored outbound destinations. Today's neo-traveller is seeking new experiences beyond the regular holiday spots that are just a tick in the box. Technology is also enabling inspiration-based search and is facilitating greater choice of options as well as more customised and relevant choices based on the travellers' behaviour, past purchasing decision, etc.

With the rapidly increasing number of outbound tourists, it is but obvious that the NTOs are concentrating big time on the Indian market. The increase in travel budgets and plans this holiday season also means more work and busier, better times for the travel operators in our country. Going forward, it is personalisation that will allow the travel industry to offer customised products. The travel agencies and providers, who know their travellers better, by collecting and using this personalisation data, will be at a competitive advantage. Personalisation would also help in improving conversions and profits. Other opportunities will lie in Indian travel companies leveraging online and mobile to provide previously unavailable levels of engagement, touch points and service right through the various phases of the travel booking, experience and post travel cycle. Thus, the travel operators should now serve the role of an expert curator.

However, as the outbound grows, many Indian destinations are also waiting to be explored. While the Ministry of Tourism is doing a commendable job to boost inbound to our country with a slew of dynamic measures, connectivity to far-flung domestic destinations needs to be enhanced to give a fillip to domestic footfalls as well.

Europe: Top summer destination

Expedia released its Summer Trend Report 2015, an analysis of vacation destinations and travel preferences across multiple cities in India. The survey was conducted with 520 respondents across Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Pune and Hyderabad.



SAT to hike Indaba budget

The CEO of South African Tourism, Thulani Nzima, says he will be increasing the budget spend on Indaba next year which will be held in Durban again. It is also in the process of finalising a partner for its flagship show.

 HAZEL JAIN FROM DURBAN

QHow much budget went towards Indaba this year?

I can't disclose that because it would be competitive intelligence. But we will be increasing the budget for next year by a measure of our Consumer Price Index — that is the South African inflation rate — and this would be around five to six per cent. Planning for Indaba 2016 has started and the date will be announced after our review.

QDid the xenophobic attacks affect this year's show?

There was a big outcry about the impact of xenophobia. Some countries had indicated they will not be here. But of the 15 southern countries, we had 14 of them here. Mozambique announced that they will not exhibit but they attended. Only one country that was absent was Democratic Republic of Congo citing xenophobia as the reason. In fact, we saw an increase in floor space sold, with 90 per cent of it being taken. No amount of marketing could have brought us the kind of goodwill that we have built through Indaba.

QHow many meetings were recorded during the show?

When business closed on day three of Indaba, the number of meetings had increased by 69 per cent from 17,191 in 2014 to 29,058 meetings. Imagine the business that will come from this. The Online Diary and the Match Making System were a key driver in improving the quality of this Indaba and gave exhibitors better access to quality hosted buyers.

QHow many meetings were recorded during the show?

Prior to the start of Indaba, we had about 10,000 meetings confirmed. By the end of the first two days, about 8,700 meetings were recorded as against just 2,500 meetings last year. You can extrapolate on the kind of value and business such meetings will generate.

QWas there a fall in buyer numbers this year?

Yes, the total number of buyers is down by about 20 per cent as compared to last year. But our focus is on quality of buyers and sellers and not quantity. So we are happy with Indaba stabilising in terms of numbers. A ratio of 1:3 is good with more buyers keeping the exhibitors busy.

QWhy are you looking at outsourcing the management of Indaba?

We started this conversation in 2012 and invited Reed and few other companies into the conversation. We realised that although SAT has done a good job at Indaba and Meetings Africa — another one of our shows for MICE — we felt that there could be a gap. We want to focus on our core business of marketing the destination. We want a partner that will shoulder a lot more responsibility and the element of risk.




“When business closed on day three of Indaba, the number of meetings had increased by 69% from 17,191 in 2014 to 29,058 meetings.”

Thulani Nzima
CEO, South African Tourism

Rajeev Nayan Choubey takes over as new Civil Aviation Secretary

Rajeev Nayan Choubey has taken over as the new Civil Aviation Secretary. Choubey, a 1981-batch IAS officer of Tamil Nadu cadre, took over the charge from V Somasundaran. He is the third Civil Aviation Secretary at Rajiv Gandhi Bhawan after the formation of the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre in May last year. Prior to becoming the Civil Aviation Secretary, Choubey was Additional Secretary in the Power Ministry. Somasundaran, a 1979-batch Kerala cadre IAS officer, who had joined the Civil Aviation ministry last September has been shifted to the Ministry of Women and Child Development as its Secretary.




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Steering outbound travel

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has doubled annual overseas investment ceiling for individuals to \$250,000. TRAVTALK speaks to industry stalwarts to understand how this move will boost outbound travel.



MEGHA PAUL

In its bi-monthly monetary policy statement recently, the RBI states, "On a review of the external sector outlook and as a further exercise in macro-prudential management, it has

been decided to enhance the limit under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) to \$250,000 per person per year." The apex bank had in August 2013 reduced the ceiling from \$200,000 to \$75,000 per person in a year under LRS.

Consequently, with improvement in forex situation, it was raised to \$125,000 in June 2014. LRS allows residents to acquire and hold shares, debt instruments or other assets outside India, without prior approval of the RBI.



We welcome this RBI move. It comes as a great relief for the entire outbound industry. Also, it comes at the right time as our holiday season has just begun. With the apex banks's move to enhance the quota under LRS, the new-age outbound traveller who is exploring beyond the conventional holiday destinations, will have more disposable income to spend. The average spend of the Indian traveller while abroad is also going to increase now.

Guldeep Singh Sahni
President, OTOAI

Our reserves are at an all-time high, which is why our PM wants to encourage businessmen to invest abroad. But this won't encourage the travel industry to do so. We might see a slight surge in travel but nothing significant. If an Indian tour operator wants to have an office in UAE or Mauritius or Switzerland, he will benefit from this move by having a global presence. But he will still have to pay taxes in India whereas in those countries you don't have to pay tax. The government also needs to reduce taxes for this move to be completely beneficial to Indians. With regards to service tax and other tax related issues TAAI has already sent a representation and is in discussion with officials at the Finance Ministry.



Marzban Antia
Treasurer, TAAI



People are now looking at extreme adventure travelling to obscure locations that can be far away as well as expensive. In addition, adventure travel is being embraced by well-

travelled individuals who take at least two to three trips a year. An increased LRS will now make it possible for discerning travellers to indulge in such holidays without having to worry about how to work around the rules. Going forward, this move is expected to give a significant boost to not just adventure travel but to overall outbound travel as well.

Gauri Jayaram
Founder, Active Holiday Company



Enhancing the quota/limit under LRS is a welcome step and we applaud RBI for this positive initiative. This is great

news for all travel verticals and foreign exchange businesses. This move would boost spending by Indians when they are on a foreign visit. The initiative has also created opportunities to invest more in real estate, stocks, debt instruments, etc., abroad without prior permission from the RBI.

Vineet Raina
Head-Ofbound Tours, Jetair Tours



We wholeheartedly welcome the recent announcement of enhancing the quota under LRS. This move will greatly aid the overseas travellers across the spectrum and will serve to catalyse India's outbound travel growth trajectory. The limit is all-inclusive and will have travel for all purposes subsumed within this; categories like emigration, medical treatment, and study abroad, however being allowed the facility of a quota in excess of the \$250,000 limit. This offers public the ease and convenience of being able to avail of a larger amount of foreign exchange for bona fide purposes. It is music not only to the ears of our foreign exchange business and travel-related business verticals, but the industry as a whole.

Mahesh Iyer
COO- Foreign Exchange & Head - Visas, Thomas Cook (India)

Teeing off with golf and wellness

Going beyond history, culture and heritage, the nine-year-old company, Wish Bone India, is now looking at new segments such as adventure, rural, golf and wellness tourism.



TT BUREAU

Specialising in bespoke travel to India's exotic and unique locations, Wish Bone India helps plan an inspiring journey that brings you close to the very essence of the locations. According to **Rishi Khandelwal**, Managing Partner, Wish Bone India, the focus is on extending authentic and immersive experience of each destination with personalised and seamless service. The company is targeting

France, Belgium and UK markets in a big way.

Talking about the evolution of the company, Khandelwal says, "We started operations in 2006. Thus, we are a nine-year-old company. Besides history, culture and heritage, we are now looking at new concepts such as adventure, rural, golf and wellness tourism segments. Each

with its distinct characteristics and offerings are increasingly playing a pivotal role in attracting tourists to our country. In addition, customised tour packages with offbeat destinations and newer experiences are fast gaining ground."

Regarding the USP of the company, he adds, "Each itinerary is created and developed after detailed research of

our customer's requirements. We discuss the destination, style of accommodation, mode of travel and experiences you will have to ensure the combination is just right for you. Our experience comes from long expertise and unrivaled knowledge acquired and enhanced from years of organising tours for individuals, couples, families, small parties of friends and private label groups.



"Besides history, culture and heritage, we are now looking at new concepts such as adventure, rural, golf and wellness tourism segments."

Rishi Khandelwal

Managing Partner, Wish Bone India

Eye for Detail

Wish Bone India discuss the destination, style of accommodation, mode of travel and experiences a traveller will undergo to ensure the combination is just right

The company is targeting France, Belgium and UK markets in a big way.

Kadapa Airport inaugurated

■ Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.Chandrababu Naidu inaugurated the new airport developed by the Airports Authority of India (AAI) at a cost of Rs 42 crores, in the presence of Civil Aviation Minister Ashok Gajapathi Raju and Union Minister M Venkaiah Naidu.

As a mark of inauguration of the new airport, the fifth in Andhra Pradesh, the maiden flight from Bengaluru landed at around 1130 hours.

Air connectivity to Kadapa is expected to enhance the business potential and employment opportunities besides providing impetus to the economic growth of the city and the region. As part of the development, undertaken by the AAI as part of the focus on promoting regional and remote area connectivity in Tier-II and III cities, Kadapa airport got a new, compact pre-fabricated terminal building that can handle 100 passengers at a time. The runway is capable of handling ATR-72 type aircraft operations, while the new apron can accommodate three such aircraft. The state government has made available 520 acres for the airport development.

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Tap mid-level China cities

Surinder Kumar, China Specialist, speaks to TRAVTALK about India extending eTV to China and how we are not doing enough to tap the Chinese outbound market.

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

QIs India doing enough to tap the Chinese outbound market?

I think we are far behind in tapping the Chinese outbound market. Even Nepal is doing better than us to attract Chinese tourists. We have so much to offer to Chinese tourists but it has to be done with deep study and understanding the demands and mindset of the Chinese tourists.

QWhat do you make of the Government's move to issue eTV to Chinese travellers?

Yes, e-Tourist Visa to Chinese tourists is a good move to a certain extent. It will definitely help in reducing visa hurdles. It will also save lot of time for those who are applying for Indian visa. At the same time it will reduce all the malpractices.

QWhat are the hurdles in promoting India in China and vice-versa?

There is an urgent need to promote Indian destina-

tions in China, especially in the middle level cities of China. People in China lack information about Indian destinations and culture. The Tourism ministry has to promote India in a big way and in a strategic manner as per the ground realities. China Tourism also needs to do the same in India.

knowledge and idea about China. At present, business is on the low side and declining.

QHow was business in 2014? What are you looking forward to in 2015?

We had problems in attracting tourists from China due to lack of promotion.



“Chinese agents are not showing much interest in promoting India. Hope that the relaxed visa conditions and personal interest of the PM will help improve the situation.”

Surinder Kumar
China Specialist

QHow is business for Indian travel agents?

Indian travel agents are trying individually to attract the business. But need a coordinated effort with the ministry and the people who have in-depth

Chinese agents are not showing much interest in promoting India. Hope that the relaxed visa conditions and personal interest of the Prime Minister will help improve the situation in the coming season.

Reunion Island calling

Located in the Indian Ocean and about 200 kms on the south-west of Mauritius, the French island is betting big on the high-end outbound leisure and MICE travel.

TT BUREAU

One of the island wonders of Indian Ocean, Reunion Island, is the latest entrant to the Indian niche tourism market. The French territory, located about 200 kms on the south-west of Mauritius, is planning to cash in on the high-end outbound traveller in the country. This has been facilitated further by the introduction of new simpler rules for Indians.

Patrick Serveaux, President, Regional Tourism Board, Reunion Island, informs, “Reunion Island wants high-value, low-impact tourists from India. Over the next one year, we hope to welcome 5,000 Indian tourists to Reunion Island. Currently, we receive a small number from India. In 2014, about 800 Indians visited us.” Reunion Island can offer adventure of all sorts. The island has the greatest diversity of landscapes and cultures. Whale watching, deep sea fishing, paragliding, micro flights, etc., are popular leisure activities in the island, he affirms.



Patrick Serveaux
President, Regional Tourism Board, Reunion Island



Vineet Gopal
Representative-India, Reunion Island

The island is betting big on MICE offerings as well, says Serveaux. “In the west, hotels can accommodate about 250 people in meeting rooms; in the north, 150; in the south 160; in the east 35 people can be accommodated. We have different showrooms situated on the north and the west of Reunion, which are specialised in business facilities and could accommodate about 700 people in meeting and over 10,000 people in general,” he adds.

Vineet Gopal, Representative-India, Reunion Island points out, “Indian nationals no longer need a visa

for stay of up to 15 days. To organise their stay, they have three options. Firstly, they may buy an entire package tour from a travel agency in India offering Reunion Island as a destination. This agency will then contact an incoming agency in Reunion Island with a licence to request visa waivers. Secondly, they may apply to an incoming agency on Reunion Island which can also sell a package tour. Thirdly, they may book their flight directly with the airline and apply to a local agency with a licence to organise their stay (accommodation, activities, transport on the island, etc.)”



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Resurgent Nepal beckons trade

According to Tourism Recovery Committee Nepal (TRC), the heritage sites of Kathmandu Valley will be open to tourists from June 15, 2015. This was decided during a meeting of government officials with private sector, TRC and Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), on May 25, 2015.

TT BUREAU

The meeting held at Nepal Tourism Board was headed by **Suresh Man Shrestha**, Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) and Chairman, NTB. Also present were Joint Secretaries from the MoCTCA, Director General of the Department of Tourism, immediate and past Director Generals of the Department of Archaeology, Executive Committee Members of NTB, Tourism Association Presidents, archaeological experts and the Administrative Chief of NTB.



Andrew Jones
Vice Chairman
PATA

I don't find Nepal unsafe to visit. There are many places in Nepal that have escaped the disaster, and there are many places to visit

At the meeting, **Bhesh Narayan Dahal**, Director General, Department of Archaeology, confirmed to open the Kathmandu Durbar Square, Swayambhunath and Patan Durbar Square, for tourists officially from June 15. He further added that Baudhanath, Budhanilkantha and Pashupatinath were safe for sightseeing. Sharing ideas on rebuilding of Nepal's tourism, Shrestha emphasised on the necessity to initiate international media marketing through exercises such as extending invitations for familiarisation trips to popular celebrities, tour operators and travel writers to Nepal. He said this would provide a clear picture of what Nepal could offer to tourists even after April 25. Supporting this view, Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) committed on providing complementary accommodation and Nepal Association of Tour Operators (NATO) agreed on handling ground transporta-

tion and guide for groups of tourists travelling to Nepal in such cases. During interaction, it was noted that very few trekking routes and some cultural heritage sites were destroyed, remaining several destination safe. The participants mainly concerned that Nepal should focus to the diversification of tourism des-

tinations and product while emphasising on safety, security and quality assurances. More equally, it was also stressed to concentrate on rebuilding of the destroyed monuments in a coordinated manner.

Andrew Jones, Vice Chairman, PATA, says, "The international media reports

showed that everything had been destroyed. But when I arrived here, it was much better than I had anticipated. To be honest, I didn't have any problems visiting the country. No dangers at all. In general, I don't find Nepal unsafe to visit. There are many places in Nepal that have escaped the disaster, and there are many places to visit."



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IATA session for Indian agents

A three-member delegation led by Tony Tyler, Director General and CEO, International Air Transport Industry (IATA), will address travel agents in Mumbai on July 15, 2015. The Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) and the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) will be a part of this.



HAZEL JAIN

Zakir Ahmed, President, TAFI, says, "We have been pushing IATA to come to India and conduct a program for our members and they have finally agreed. It will be a half day session and will be by invite only. Both TAAI and TAFI are involved in this. All airlines, of course, will also be present."

circulated amongst its members either through YouTube or through its mobile app. "There will also be a Q&A session so we have requested our members to send their queries in advance to the TAFI Secretariat. Since there is time constraint, the Q&A session cannot be kept open to all," Ahmed adds.

On the reasons for continuously requesting IATA to come to India, Ahmed says that the agents felt that IATA has not been doing much for them. "So we want IATA to come and build confidence among the agents and to tell them that IATA is there to look after their interests. They also want clarity on NDC as there are a lot of misconceptions about it in the minds of agents. We will also discuss other day-to-day issues.



Tony Tyler
Director General
IATA

Ahmed says that there will be three speakers from IATA—**Tony Tyler**, **Yanik Hoyles**, Director (NDC Program), IATA and **Eric Leopold**, Director (Transformation) Financial Distribution Services, IATA. "IATA will be discussing their plans for now and the future, as well as the new things they plan to do that will benefit the agents, plus the future of airlines distribution system. There will also be a special session on NDC explaining what exactly it is and how it will work. This will be conducted by Hoyles," he adds.

He says that one person from each member company that has been invited will be accommodated. For those who are not able to attend, TAFI will have a recording which will be

"IATA moved out of India with only representatives here who are not in position to actually give a lot of details. Therefore, most of the communication happens between their Singapore office and India which results in time and communication gaps. We will be requesting them to have a full fledged office in India again. They don't realise that India is

Tapping IATA

- ↓ TAFI will be requesting IATA to have a full fledged office in India again
- ↓ Agents want clarity on NDC as there are a lot of misconceptions about it



Zakir Ahmed
President
TAFI

We want IATA to come and build confidence among the agents and to tell them that IATA is there to look after their interests.



Jay Bhatia
Chairman (Tourism Council) and
Co-Chairman (Airline Council), TAAI

TAAI has called for a Managing Committee meeting on June 11 to discuss the association's stand and our plan of action

a vast country, not like Hong Kong or Singapore or Dubai. It's like a continent. This is a good opportunity for us to talk about important issues," Ahmed says.

Managing Committee meeting on June 11, 2015 to discuss the association's stand and our plan of action," Bhatia says.

There is no confirmation about this event from IATA, which recently concluded its two-day AGM and World Air Transport Summit in Miami on June 8-9, 2015. It covered areas such as the relationship between airlines and manufacturers, what's on the mind of the industry's CEOs, evolving traveler expectations, infrastructure challenges, and how to make airlines attractive investments. ↓

Also gearing up for this event is **Jay Bhatia**, Chairman (Tourism Council) and Co-Chairman (Airline Council), TAAI. "We will also take this opportunity to discuss the recent issue regarding the Lufthansa Group airlines charging a surcharge of €16 for every ticket issued by a booking channel using GDS from September 1, 2015. TAAI has called for a

Skål beats the heat with May meet



Skål International Delhi-125 organised a meeting on May 27 at the Shangri La Hotel, New Delhi. The guest speaker for the event was the distinguished journalist Sir William Mark Tully who kept Skål members engrossed with his knowledge and antidotes on India. The meeting was well attended with almost 120 members.



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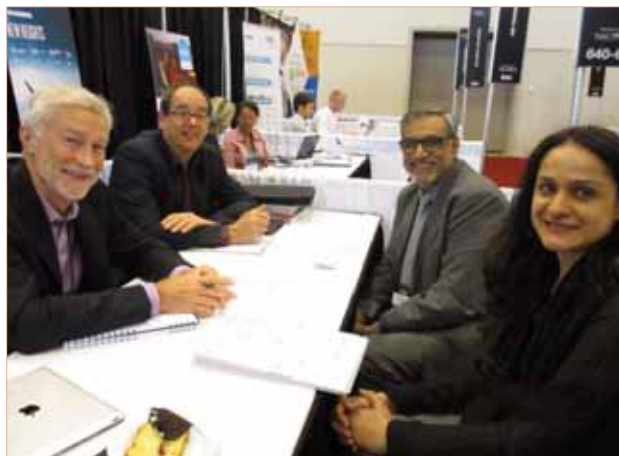


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DATE	TRAVEL	SESSION
Monday 13 July 2015	Goa	09h30 – 13h30
Tuesday 14 July 2015	Ahmedabad	10h00 – 14h00 • 14h00 – 18h00
Wednesday 15 July 2015	Ahmedabad	10h00 – 14h00
Thursday 16 July 2015	Jaipur	10h00 – 14h00
Friday 17 July 2015	Delhi	10h00 – 14h00 • 14h00 – 18h00
Monday 20 July 2015	Jalandhar	09h30 – 13h30
Tuesday 21 July 2015	Delhi	10h00 – 14h00
Wednesday 22 July 2015	Lucknow	10h00 – 14h00
Thursday 23 July 2015	Kolkata	10h00 – 14h00 • 14h00 – 18h00
Friday 24 July 2015	Mumbai	12h00 – 16h00
Saturday 25 July 2015	Pune	10h00 – 14h00 • 14h00 – 18h00
Monday 27 July 2015	Hyderabad	10h00 – 14h00 • 14h00 – 18h00
Tuesday 28 July 2015	Chennai	14h00 – 18h00
Wednesday 29 July 2015	Trichy	09h30 – 13h30
Thursday 30 July 2015	Chennai	09h30 – 13h30
Friday 31 July 2015	Bangalore	10h00 – 14h00 • 14h00 – 18h00
Saturday 1 Aug 2015	Cochin	09h30 – 13h30
Monday 3 Aug 2015	Mumbai	10h00 – 14h00
Tuesday 4 Aug 2015	Nagpur	10h00 – 14h00

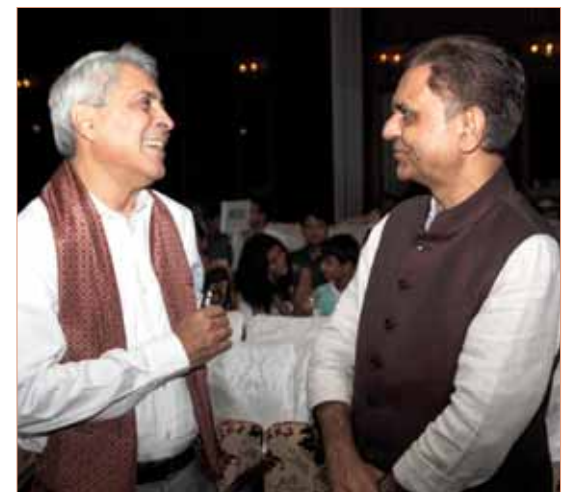
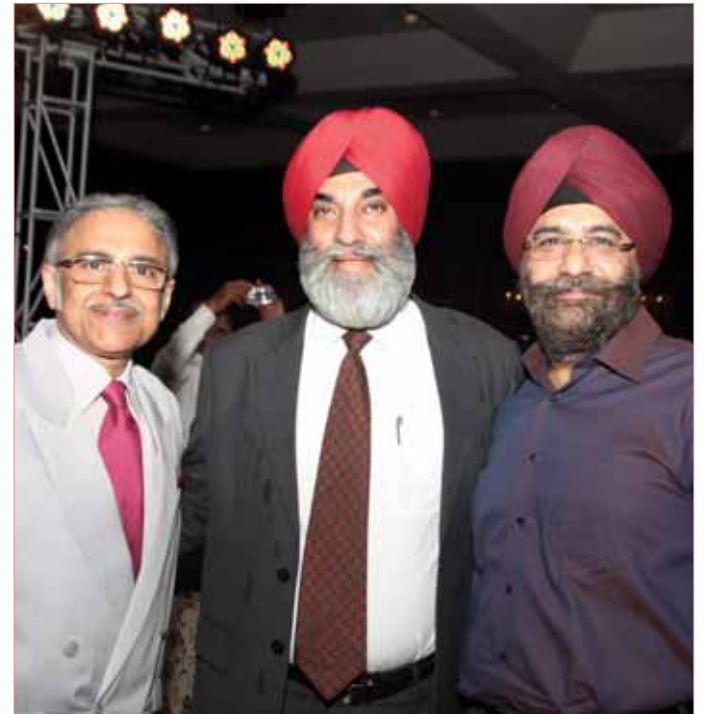
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SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

MP extravaganza for the industry

Madhya Pradesh Tourism organised a get-together for the travel trade and hospitality fraternity at The Ashok, New Delhi. The get-together showcased destinations, handicrafts, tribal dance forms, cuisine, Tourism Year, Simhashta 2016 and investment opportunities in the state. It was attended by a galaxy of people from travel trade, industry associations, trade associations, media and dignitaries from various walks of life.



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With most parts of the Bollywood movie *Dil Dhadakne Do* being shot on Pullmantur Cruises' Sovereign, its GSA in India, Griffon Cruises, held a special screening of the movie for the travel trade before its official release. The preview was held at a PVR cinema hall in Mumbai with TRAVTALK as its exclusive media partner.



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Oman's 25-year strategy

After completing a successful four-city roadshow, Oman's Ministry of Tourism has announced a long-term plan for its key markets including India that will be unveiled by 2015-end.

HAZEL JAIN

QHow were 2014 numbers for Oman from India?

We received a little more than 2,56,000 tourists in 2014 which was an increase of four per cent as compared to 2013. Oman has recorded a growth of 36 per cent in Indian arrivals over the last five years. India is one of the top five markets for Oman and we want it to be number one soon.

QHow does the rest of 2015 look like?

Since we opened the India office five years ago we have been concentrating mostly on leisure. It was the first time we started to create the image of Oman in this market. It is very difficult for any country, not only Oman, to cover the whole of India at once. So we are taking one step at a time.

QWhich cities show good potential?

We have focused mainly on four to five regions in India so far and we will try to cover other



Salim Al Mamari
Director General of Tourism Promotion,
Ministry of Tourism - Sultanate of Oman

states in the coming years. But existing cities like New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru will remain our priority. We haven't decided on the newer cities we will focus on as we are finalising a long-term strategy that we will execute once it is ready.

QCan you share some details of this plan?

It will be a long-term strategy called the 'Oman Tourism Strategy 2015-2040'. This will include a marketing strategy which will serve as a bible. There will be study on each market including India that will tell us how to start, when to start,

where to start and which segment to focus on. This market study will also tell us how much budget we need to invest in India. But I can say for sure that there is always an increase in budget of not less than 20 per cent every year.

QWhen can we expect to get more details on this?

We hope that this strategy will be done by 2015 end and we will be able to start implementing it by early 2016. It will be implemented and evaluated in phases of five years. So based on the results of the first phase, we will re-evaluate and action the second phase.

QDo you have any message for the Indian agents?

The mentality of today's tourists has changed. They do not travel for a change anymore, but seek value-add to their knowledge and life experiences. We are trying to create those reasons and experiences.

Mentoring young leaders

The selection process for Travelport Galileo's Student of The Year started on March 1 and it recently culminated in five students fighting it out for the title.

TT BUREAU

In a bid to stress on skill development in the travel and tourism industry, Travelport Galileo held the second edition of the Student of the Year contest in Delhi recently. The contest aims at creating a talent pool for the travel industry and inculcating high standards of excellence among students from travel institutes. The selection process that started from March 1 had over 80 students participating in an online evaluation; the programme was open to all travel institutes associated with ITQ. However, after a strict selection process, five candidates made it to the final round to fight for the title.

Each of the five finalists underwent a presentation and Personal Interaction session with the panel of judges, after which one student finally claimed the 'Student of the Year' title. Applauding the winner, on the occasion, **Anil Parashar**, President & CEO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient, said, "We



Anil Parashar
President & CEO,
InterGlobe Technology

are very pleased to have this event for the second year running. We wish to create a platform for these students wherein they can showcase their mettle. We would like to expand this for the travel industry by creating a talent pool which can benefit all. The travel industry is growing and so is the enthusiasm of travellers at being more educated about their travel, therefore the need of the hour is to have well qualified professionals serving them."

Sandeep Dwivedi, Chief Commercial Officer, InterGlobe Technology Quotient, said, "We

are extremely delighted that we had more than 80 students who participated in this year's Student of the Year programme. The objective of this programme is to provide skill sets and knowledge base to students who are keen to be a part of the travel industry. By undertaking this venture we are enabling them to broaden their horizon." In association with over 90 travel academies, Travelport Galileo imparts training through theory cum interactive modules, such as Galileo Basic GDS course and Automated Ticketing course which consists of text data, examples, case studies and practical exercises for students.

Experts' Lessons

- The programme was open to all travel institutes associated with ITQ
- It imparts training through theory cum interactive modules

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Travstarz interacts with Indore agents

Travstarz Global Group recently organised a successful product presentation along with Abu Dhabi-based YAS Viceroy Hotel for travel agents in Indore.

TT BUREAU

Travel wholesaler and B2B company, Travstarz Global Group, recently hosted a networking evening with cocktails and dinner for the travel trade fraternity in Indore. This was done on May 21, 2015 at Hotel Sayaji in association with YAS Viceroy Hotel, Abu Dhabi for which Travstarz is the only wholesaler in India.



Pankaj Nagpal
MD
Travstarz Global Group

uct knowledge about YAS Viceroy Hotel presented by Vani Singh, Head – North India, Heavens Portfolio. This was the first ever event conducted by Travstarz in Indore where YAS Viceroy Hotel made its presence.

Pankaj Nagpal, MD, Travstarz Global Group, made a brief presentation about the company's profile and the lat-

est products and offerings and interacted with the audience in a one-on-one talk explaining the company's line of business and future expansion plans including the launch of its dedicated online B2B portal www.travelrezonline.com.

This was the fifth such event by Travstarz in association with YAS Viceroy in last six months starting from Ludhiana

in November 2014 and later going to Lucknow, Kolkata and then Chandigarh.

Nagpal further added that there will be more such events in the coming months with YAS Viceroy besides their other hotel partners as the company gets more aggressive in their marketing campaigns and spreading wings across the country.

In Attendance

More than 30 travel agents from Indore attended the event

This was the fifth such event by Travstarz in association with YAS Viceroy in last six months

The event saw attendance from more than 30 travel agents from Indore who were very impressed with the prod-

Multiple entry visa for UAE

A 30-day multiple entry tourist visa (for all countries) and a 90-day multiple entry (long term) visa (only for India, Jordan, Pakistan, South Africa, UAE citizens) will help drive tourists to the country. The UAE Government, for the first time ever, has launched two new



multiple entry visas — a 30-day multiple entry tourist visa (for all countries) and a 90-day multiple entry (long term) visa (only for India, Jordan, Pakistan, South Africa, UAE citizens).

TT Services, the official worldwide visa partner of Etihad Airways, shall now process these visas to all guests of Etihad Airways, globally. TT Services has made the process one step simpler. Guest simply apply for a visa online and can get visas by email.

The visas can benefit tourists who would like to break their journeys into parts - visiting the UAE in the first leg, going out of the region and returning to the UAE after a few days and frequent flier corporate travellers. Sridhar Krishnamurthy, Director-Operations, TT Services, says, "The UAE Government has given a reason to cheer. And we at TT Services have made it as easy as possible for anyone to get these visas."

The TT Services Etihad Airways co-branded website — www.ttsuaevisas.com — provides a simple, user-friendly application process for the two new visa types along with other existing visas.



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Summer's more fun at Nira Montana

A new summer campaign launched by Nira Montana ensures travellers a different experience this time. There are packages suiting various preferences. MPS Puri, CEO, Nira Hotels & Resorts, discusses what the region has to offer.



This summer, Nira Montana launches the 'Summer time' campaign. Whether it is a family holiday or a romantic getaway, there's a right package for all. From relaxing moments with a dear one at Nira Spa to chocolate tasting for gourmands, Nira Montana offers a cheering Alpine experience. **MPS Puri**, CEO, Nira Hotels & Resorts,

“The Aosta Valley has great traditions of wine and chocolate making. We would like to proliferate that and acquaint guests with what the region has to offer.”

MPS Puri
CEO, Nira Hotels & Resorts



says, “Whilst La Thuile is perceived as a skiing destination the Aosta Valley is equally beautiful in the summer and we want everyone to know the beauty and the glory of the area. Our motto this time is ‘The simple pleasures of life’ and we invite you to come and experience these simple pleasures to the fullest at Nira Montana.” Nira Montana is located in the heart of Europe's highest mountains

in the Aosta Valley. Being one of the smallest regions in Italy, guests are free to enjoy the natural beauty of Valle d'Aosta featuring the four giants Mont Blanc, Matterhorn, Monte Rosa and Grand Paradiso.

Puri adds, “The Aosta Valley has great traditions of wine and chocolate making as well. We would like to proliferate that and acquaint guests

with what the region has to offer — 4500 kms of trekking and 500 for mountain biking, 31 castles, the highest vineyards, Gran Paradiso, Mont Avic national parks, and the Piccolo and Grand San Bernardo Passes.”

Special spa relax summer package — ‘Montana Breeze’ includes special services for both women and men.

The ‘Pic Chic’ package offers the guests an experience surrounded by nature where the key ingredients are fresh products of the region and the creativity of Nira Montana chefs.

La Thuile Chocolate package celebrates the famous chocolate of La Thuile, offering the guests the sweetest experience.

The ‘secrets of a real pizzaiolo’ has the pizzaiolo chef disclose the secrets of the authentic Italian pizza. The guests may take on a challenge of creating a real Italian pizza cooked in an original Florentin wood oven.

Health and anti stress package provides a team of health and well-being professionals to offering a quality and professional service.

The ‘Secrets of Alpine dry herbs’ package has a surprising excursion to discover the forgotten Alpine herbs and their beneficial properties. Together with Fiorenza one will discover the secrets of the plants followed by a tasting of Alpine infusions at Stars Bar & Lounge.



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➔ The ‘secrets of Alpine dry herbs’ package has a surprising excursion to discover the forgotten Alpine herbs

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Southern stars shine on

The winners and guests of South India Travel Awards look forward to participate in the event again next year. Here's what they have to share with **TRAVTALK**.

Chief Guest

Ganta Srinivasa Rao
Minister of Human Resource Development
Govt of Andhra Pradesh

This is a moment for all of us to celebrate the achievement of all South India tourist organisations which have contributions in nurturing tourism. They are all being recognised by DDP Publications. I congratulate all the winners as well as India Travel Awards. It is the need of the hour for entire India where we have to think seriously to develop our nation as a tourist hub.



Guest of Honour

Neerabh K Prasad,
Principal Secretary Tourism
Govt of Andhra Pradesh

This is a great event organised by DDP Publications. I am really happy and would like to thank India Travel Awards for giving us this chance to be a part of this event. I look forward to it next year too.



Face of the Future

The industry is going through a major revolution at the moment in the distribution space. Ten years back when the Internet transformed the online distribution, the airlines were left out of an opportunity that they could have more innovatively reached to their customers. After receiving the 'Face of the Future' award a lot of responsibility has been put on me. It feels nice and is a humbling experience.

Rajeev Kumar G
Founder, MD and CEO, Mystify Consulting (I)



Best Hospitality Professional

I would like to congratulate the India Travel Awards team and SanJeet for thinking regional. This is the need of the hour and going regional is not only about the awards but it is also about giving the regional teams the kind of impetus that they need to further develop tourism. I think it's a brilliant idea.

Nikhil Dhodapkar
Regional Director, Sales & Marketing-India, ACCOR

Mittu Chandilya

Best Airline Professional

I am thankful to India Travel Awards for this award. It is a great honour to be acknowledged by the peers and stalwarts of the industry. The award for AirAsia India as the best emerging airline is a confirmation that we are indeed on our way to revolutionising aviation in India. This comes at a time when we have just announced the launch of Delhi as our hub in North India for increasing our network reach.

Mittu Chandilya
CEO, AirAsia India



Novotel Hyderabad Airport

Best Airport Hotel

The award is a great platform for all of us to showcase our capabilities and features to the industry. It is also a platform which brings all of us together and talks about the industry as we are maturing towards the international events and a lot of business towards tourism as well as towards hosting diplomats. So altogether it is a great platform where people come together and get to appreciate each other.

Javed Parvez
Director of Sales



Novotel Hyderabad Airport

Best Airport Hotel

I think it's great to have won this award and it is a great recognition for the South India hotel and tourism fraternity. I feel great about it as Novotel Hotel Hyderabad is operational for just seven years and this fantastic recognition is coming from everybody in the industry. This is really great.

Maverik Mukerji
General Manager



Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Mysore

Best Debut Hotel

I would like to congratulate India Travel Awards for their significant effort to recognise accomplishments of the fraternity in each zone. This promotes a healthy competitive spirit within these zones to strive for the best. We are hugely motivated and honoured to receive this award which is a testimony to our wonderful product and its people. Thank you India Travel Awards!

Harikumar B
General Manager

UAE Exchange and Financial Services

Best Travel Management Company

I think the idea of India Travel Awards is wonderful. The arrangements were also amazing. The idea of having the awards region wise is great as everyone from each of the region gets their due recognition. If it is centralised then people don't get what they deserve.

Akula Srinivas Kumar
Branch Head, Visakhapatnam



Reunion Island

Best Emerging Destination

It is a great moment of pride when your work is recognised in the industry by the people and to hold this pretty black lady (Maya) in your hand says it all. I would like to thank DDP Publications for doing such a wonderful thing. Bringing this award in a regional platform and recognising people is really amazing.

Vineet Gopal
Head India, India Marketing Partner



Maya only for the best in trade

The who's who of tourism industry gathered for the second edition of South India Travel Awards hosted at Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach to celebrate the best in trade. **TRAVTALK** features some of the proud winners of Maya.

Best Hospitality Professional



The **Best Hospitality Professional** Award was given to **Nikhil Dhodapkar**, Regional Director, Sales & Marketing - India, Accor from **Ganta Srinivasa Rao**, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Neerabh K Prasad**, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Sindhura Kaviti**, Miss Vizag and SanJeet, Director, DDP Group

Best Airline Professional



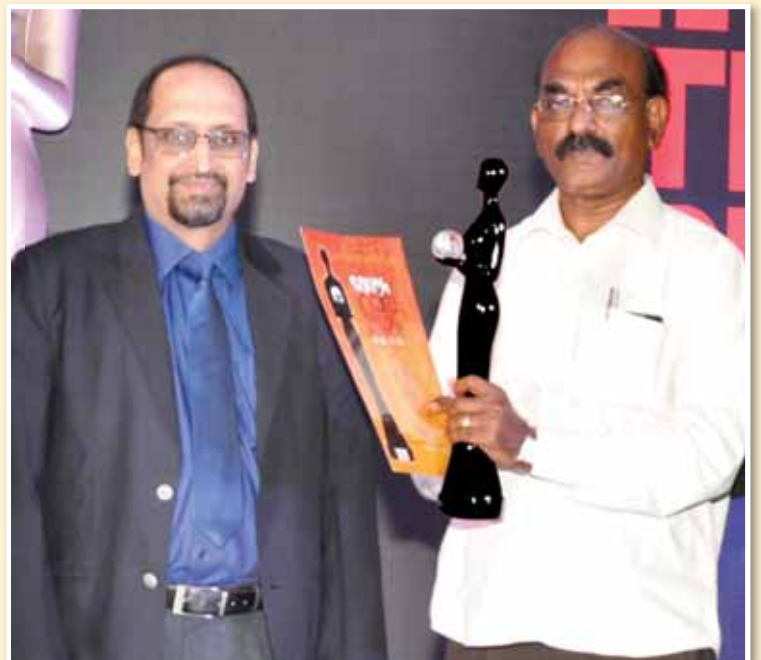
The **Best Airline Professional** Award was given to **Mittu Chandilya**, CEO, AirAsia India, received on his behalf by **Gaurav Rathore**, Commercial Director, AirAsia India from **Ganta Srinivasa Rao**, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Neerabh K Prasad**, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh, **Sindhura Kaviti**, Miss Vizag

Best Airport



The award was given to **Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru** and received by **Raj Andrade**, Vice President Business Development Marketing & Strategy, and **Lokesh Matta**, Head of Airlines Marketing (Passenger & Air Cargo Network)

Best State Tourism Board



The award was given to **Andhra Pradesh Tourism** and received by **G. Venkateswarlu**, s.e. APTDC



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| 20th August | Thursday | : Coimbatore & surrounding cities. |
| 21st August | Friday | : Hyderabad & surrounding cities. |
| 25th August | Tuesday | : Ahmedabad & surrounding cities. |
| 26th August | Wednesday | : Kolkata & North-East cities. |
| 27th August | Thursday | : Pune & surrounding cities. |
| 28th August | Friday | : Chandigarh (Amritsar, Jalandhar & Ludhiana). |

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Growth opportunities for trade@JKTM

Jammu & Kashmir Tourism organised the J&K Travel Mart 2015 at SKICC, Srinagar. This initiative was taken in order to promote J&K as an all time tourist destination and to showcase the state as a unique tourism product. A large number of domestic and foreign buyers and sellers were a part of the event. This is the first travel mart of this magnitude held in Kashmir that provided opportunities to the local tourism sector to grow in an efficient way.



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EVENT TALK

JUNE 2015

INTERNATIONAL

21-25 Melbourne Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE)

NATIONAL

15 Pune Why Spain? – Presentation & Networking Dinner for Travel Trade

25 Kolkata East India Travel Awards

JULY 2015

NATIONAL

10 Delhi VKonect MICE : B2C

10 -12 Bengaluru India International Travel Mart

11 Delhi VKonect MICE: B2B

13-14 Mumbai Kiwi Link India workshop, Tourism New Zealand

13 Goa Learn South Africa

14-15 Ahmedabad Learn South Africa

14 Delhi Atout France Presentation

15 Mumbai Tourism New Zealand Frontline Training

15 Kolkata Singapore Tourism Board Networking Cocktail Dinner

15 Chandigarh Atout France Presentation

16 Kolkata Singapore Tourism Board Networking lunch

16 Mumbai Atout France Press Networking Dinner

16 Delhi Tourism New Zealand Frontline Training

16 Jaipur Learn South Africa

17 Mumbai Atout France Presentation

17 Delhi Learn South Africa

17-19 Chennai India International Travel Mart

17 -19 Kolkata Tourism Expo India

18 Chandigarh Singapore Tourism Board Networking Lunch & Cocktail Dinner

20 Jaipur Singapore Tourism Board Networking Lunch & Cocktail Dinner

20 Jalandhar Learn South Africa

20 Kolkata Thailand Road Show

22 Lucknow Learn South Africa

22 Pune Singapore Tourism Board Networking Lunch & Cocktail Dinner

22 Delhi Thailand Road Show

23 Kolkata Learn South Africa

23 Hyderabad Singapore Tourism Board Networking Lunch & Cocktail Dinner

24 Vizag Singapore Tourism Board Networking Lunch & Cocktail Dinner

24 Mumbai Thailand Road Show

24 Mumbai Learn South Africa

24-26 Hyderabad Travel & Tourism Fair

25 Pune Learn South Africa

27 Hyderabad Learn South Africa

29 Trichy Learn South Africa

30 Chennai Learn South Africa

31 Bengaluru Learn South Africa

31-Aug 2 Kolkata Travel & Tourism Fair

AUGUST 2015

INTERNATIONAL

5-7 Beijing CIBTM

NATIONAL

1 Cochin Learn South Africa

3 Mumbai Learn South Africa

4 Nagpur Learn South Africa

4 Kolkata Tourism Authority of Thailand B2B Roadshow

4 Bengaluru Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow

5 Delhi Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow

6 Mumbai Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow

6 Lucknow Tourism Authority of Thailand B2B Roadshow

7-9 Vadodara Holiday Expo

For more information, contact us at: talk@ddppl.com

Learn South Africa the SAT way

TAAI has signed an MoU with South African Tourism to conduct the sixth module of their workshop ‘Learn South Africa’ in 15 cities across India.



TT BUREAU

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and South African Tourism (SAT) signed an MoU on May 28, 2015, in Mumbai to conduct their workshop ‘Learn South Africa’ - Module 6 in 15 cities across India from July 13 to August 4, 2015. It was signed by **Jay Bhatia**, Chairman, Tourism Council and Co-Chairman, Airline Council, TAAI, and **Alpa Jani**, Manager (Trade Relations), SAT.

The workshop is organised by TAAI for all tourism professionals including frontline staff and managers. Each participant will receive certificates and will also qualify for a familiarisation trip to South Africa. They will be chosen from every city, possibly from every session as certain cities will have multiple sessions. In total, there



Alpa Jani, Manager Trade Relations, SAT with Jay Bhatia, Chairman-Tourism Council, TAAI

will be 25 sessions spread over 15 cities. Bhatia says, “TAAI’s endeavour is to educate the trade about destinations that shall enable agents to promote the destination as well as the products available there. SAT is looking to train at least 1,500–1,800 frontline and mid-level tour operators who are TAAI as well as non-TAAI members. We want to educate the entire fraternity because we want everyone to benefit.”

Giving details of the workshop, he adds that each four-hour workshop will have an hour of presentation followed by round-table discussion with each supplier sitting on one table with a group of around 10 buyers that will change every 10 minutes. This will ensure personalised attention. “In the end it is the agent that convinces a client to choose South Africa over any other destination. SAT is flying

down DMCs and hoteliers from South Africa but we don’t have a confirmation on the number of suppliers yet,” Bhatia says.

Each session will accommodate around 65-80 people with multiple people from one company. For Mumbai, Bhatia is expecting at least 300 people in total. TAAI will be coordinating for all sessions including the RSVPs. Agents can confirm participation at learn-southafrica@southafrica.net or call the TAAI Secretariat.

Break even

➔ SAT is looking to train at least 1,500–1,800 frontline and mid-level tour operators who are TAAI as well as non-TAAI members.

India No. 1 in overnight stays

On a high from record-breaking overnights received from India in 2014-15, SouthWest German Tourism is keen to add more travel agents to its specialists fold.



HAZEL JAIN

Despite 2014 being a challenging year tourism-wise, SouthWest German Tourism has recorded enviable figures from India making it the second-fastest growing market in percentage terms after China.

Revealing some figures is **Hector D’souza**, Director (India), SouthWest German Tourism and President of L’orient Travels. “India holds the record for the highest number of overnights which is an average of 7.1 nights per visit in SW Germany as compared to other nationalities that stayed for 2.4 nights. If this is multiplied by number of visitors, it takes India to the top 10 source countries,” he says. Year 2014 recorded 1,65,000 overnights



Hector D’souza
Director (India), SouthWest German Tourism and President of L’orient Travels

from India. The total number of overnights from India for the period January-March 2015 reached about 40,000 representing a 35 per cent increase as compared to the same period last year. D’souza adds, “These three months, between January to March, is generally the off-season for travellers. We hope to close this year with

more than 2,00,000 overnights from India which will amount to a 20 per cent increase.”

Citing good connectivity as one of the many reason for this growth, he added, that the region has very good connections whether it was rail, road or air. “We have a new airline entering the Stuttgart airport now – Etihad with Air Berlin on the Mumbai-Abu Dhabi-Stuttgart route besides all other airlines like Turkish Airlines, KLM, Lufthansa and Air France,” he says, adding that self-drive is also becoming popular in SW Germany.

The region has also seen an increase in the number of specialists in India through its professional online training program – Going Cuckoo. “There are 475 specialists across India

now who have completed the training program with 1,500 agents who are registered with the program. One in three who register is a qualified specialist. Our target is to reach 1,000 specialists by 2018,” D’souza reveals. It is the only state in Germany offering an online training program. This year, two lucky winners from the 475 specialists will go on an all-expense paid trip to SW Germany. D’Souza says that the tourism board may even introduce an app next year but did not confirm the same.

Going Cuckoo

➔ There are 475 specialists across India now who have completed the training program.

9 airlines to test IATA’s NDC scheme

■ The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announces further growth in the number of airlines participating in pilots and live deployments to test and evaluate the New Distribution Capability (NDC) schemas. The airlines participating in this are Lufthansa, Qantas, China

Southern Airlines, Swiss Airlines, Hong Kong Airlines, Avianca, Gol Linhas Aereas, Insel Air, and Ukraine International Airways. “We welcome the participation of these airlines as well as their travel agent and technology partners in helping to test and implement the NDC Standard. NDC

will modernise the way that airline products are presented through travel agents as well as help to promote efficiency and innovation. NDC is a pro-consumer move that is unleashing innovation. With NDC, travellers shopping through agencies will be able to compare the full product

offering—tailored to their specific requirements,” said **Tony Tyler**, Director General and CEO, IATA. IATA also announced the launch of the NDC microsite with information on how to get started with NDC, including links to instructional videos.



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Location: Lower Parel, Mumbai (Vacancies 5)

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- Knowledge of Abacus or similar CRS is must.
- Having experience in working for a Online Travel Portal will be a added advantage

Designation: Corporate Sales Manager
Location: Bangalore (Vacancies 2)
Location: Lower Parel, Mumbai (Vacancies 2)

Designation: B2B Sales Managers
Location: Bangalore (Vacancies 2)
Location: Lower Parel, Mumbai (Vacancies 5)

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- Analyse business potential, conceptualize & execute sales strategies to drive sales & achieve desired targets. Accountability for revenue generation.
- Generation of New leads through all available sources and converting the leads into sales.
- Candidate should have min 5 years sales experience in TRAVEL INDUSTRY ONLY.
- Help top mgmt in Strategist and plan the sales process mgmt
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- Should have good communication skills.
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Airbus Group India

Bengaluru

Pierre de Bausset, a 25-year veteran of Airbus Group and its former Corporate Secretary, is taking over as President of Airbus Group India. His mandate is to further boost the Group's collaboration with India and embed it durably in the overall Airbus Group's industrial organisation. Bausset served as General Executive Manager at European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company EADS since April 2008. He has also served as Director of Investor Relations at European Aeronautic Defence & Space and a Director of Dassault Aviation.



Roots Corporation Limited

Mumbai

Rahul Pandit has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer by Roots Corporation (RCL) which operates 'Ginger' chain of hotels, a wholly owned subsidiary of The Indian Hotels Company (IHCL). An industry veteran with over two decades of experience in the hospitality and travel industry, Pandit first started his career with Taj. He is one of the founding members of Lemon Tree Hotels where he played a multi-faceted role in developing diverse aspects of new business including Operations, Human Resources, Technology and Sales.



The Grand

New Delhi

Deepak Behl has been appointed as Director Human Resources at The Grand New Delhi. In his new role, he will be responsible for talent management, leadership development, employee reward strategy and implementation, organisational capability and operations support. Behl, an alumnus of IIM - Lucknow started his career as Dy. Supdt. of Police though later shifted to corporate world and has over 20 years of extensive work experience with companies like BPL, The Oberoi Group of Hotels, Gap Inc., InterContinental and Hilton Hotels as Director HR.



Eastin Hotel

Ahmedabad

Suma Menon has been appointed as the new Director of Sales by Eastin Hotel Ahmedabad. In this role, she will focus on developing and executing sales strategies that emphasise enhanced property performance, meaningful and long-lasting client relationships and the identification of new revenue-generating opportunities. Menon comes to Eastin with 10 years of experience in the hospitality industry. She developed her career through a series of appointments with luxury hotels including Le Meridien Hotel Ahmedabad, The Fern, Sheraton Udaipur Palace Resort & Spa, and Four Points Sheraton.



The Suryaa

New Delhi

The Suryaa, New Delhi, has appointed Chef Sanjay Thomas as F&B Director. He will oversee all of the hotel's food and beverage programming including menu creation and execution for some of Delhi's most high-profile events, galas and weddings hosted at the hotel. Thomas began his career at The Leela Kempinski, Bombay, and later travelled to Seychelles, the UAE and Kuwait. Chef Thomas has over two decades of culinary experience and specialises in developing new menus, planning and strategising for F&B department.



Om Prakash has been appointed as Director of Engineering at The Grand New Delhi. Prior to this appointment, he has been associated with Dusit Devarana, Lebua, ITC Fortune and The Lalit. With more than 30 years of technical experience, in which 10 years were with the Indian navy, Prakash possesses in-depth knowledge and solid experience in engineering. In his new role, Prakash will lead the Engineering Department and contributing innovative ideas in energy saving and green technology.



Hotel The Royal Plaza

New Delhi

Faisal Nafees has been newly appointed as the Executive Assistant Manager at Hotel The Royal Plaza. This is a promotion from his previous role as Director – Food & Beverage at the same property. With over a decade of exalted experience in the industry, he has trained well on key management disciplines of Operations, Sales & Marketing, Administration, Finance and Training. In his capacity as the Executive Assistant Manager, Nafees will be spearheading the planning and implementation of all operational procedures, recruitment, among others things.



Courtyard by Marriott

Gurgaon

Puneet Sharma has been appointed as the new Food & Beverage Manager by Courtyard by Marriott Gurgaon. He will be responsible for the day to day operations of the F&B unit, achieving revenue targets and driving strategic food and beverage promotions in the hotel. Sharma comes with over a decade of experience in the hospitality industry. He has worked with hotels like the Sheraton Bangalore, JW Marriott, Mumbai, JP Palace Hotel and Convention Centre, Agra, Olive Beach Bar and Restaurant, Bangalore and Graviss Foods Pvt. Ltd. (Baskin Robbins).



Orana Hotels & Resorts

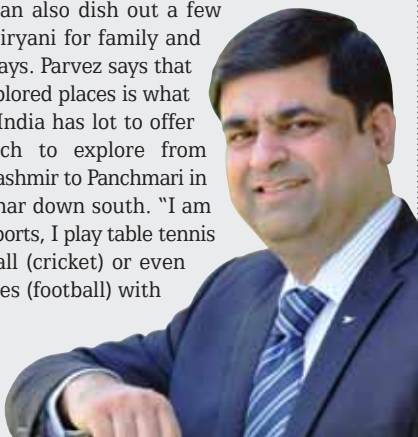
New Delhi

Sushil Kumar has been appointed as Resident Manager by Orana Hotel & Resorts, New Delhi. He comes with 19 years of experience in the hospitality industry. Kumar is a graduate and holds a diploma in Hotel Operation. Kumar was working with The Umrao, before joining Orana Hotels and Resorts in New Delhi. Previously, he has also worked with Le Meridien, Crowne Plaza (IHG), and Park Plaza (Carlson Group).



TALKing People

Javed Parvez, Director of Sales & Marketing, Novotel Hyderabad Airport, loves to travel and fine dine. "Being a true Indian, I love to explore food from across all regions in India with biryanis being my all time favourite, I can also dish out a few varieties of biryani for family and friends," he says. Parvez says that visiting unexplored places is what excites him. India has lot to offer with so much to explore from Gulmarg in Kashmir to Panchmari in MP and Munnar down south. "I am also fond of sports, I play table tennis or throw a ball (cricket) or even kick sometimes (football) with my kids."



Sonica Malhotra, Director, MBD Group, says she likes to take time out to relax and visit spas to unwind after a hard day's work. "I love to eat out. I like going to the spas and relaxing. Well, in my job it's very important to relax so I make sure I visit spa regularly," she says. Malhotra loves to travel to London. "I love London as a destination. It is one of those places where I like to spend time in. Also, I am a person who loves beaches. Destinations with beaches never miss my sight and I make sure I visit them whenever I can," she adds.

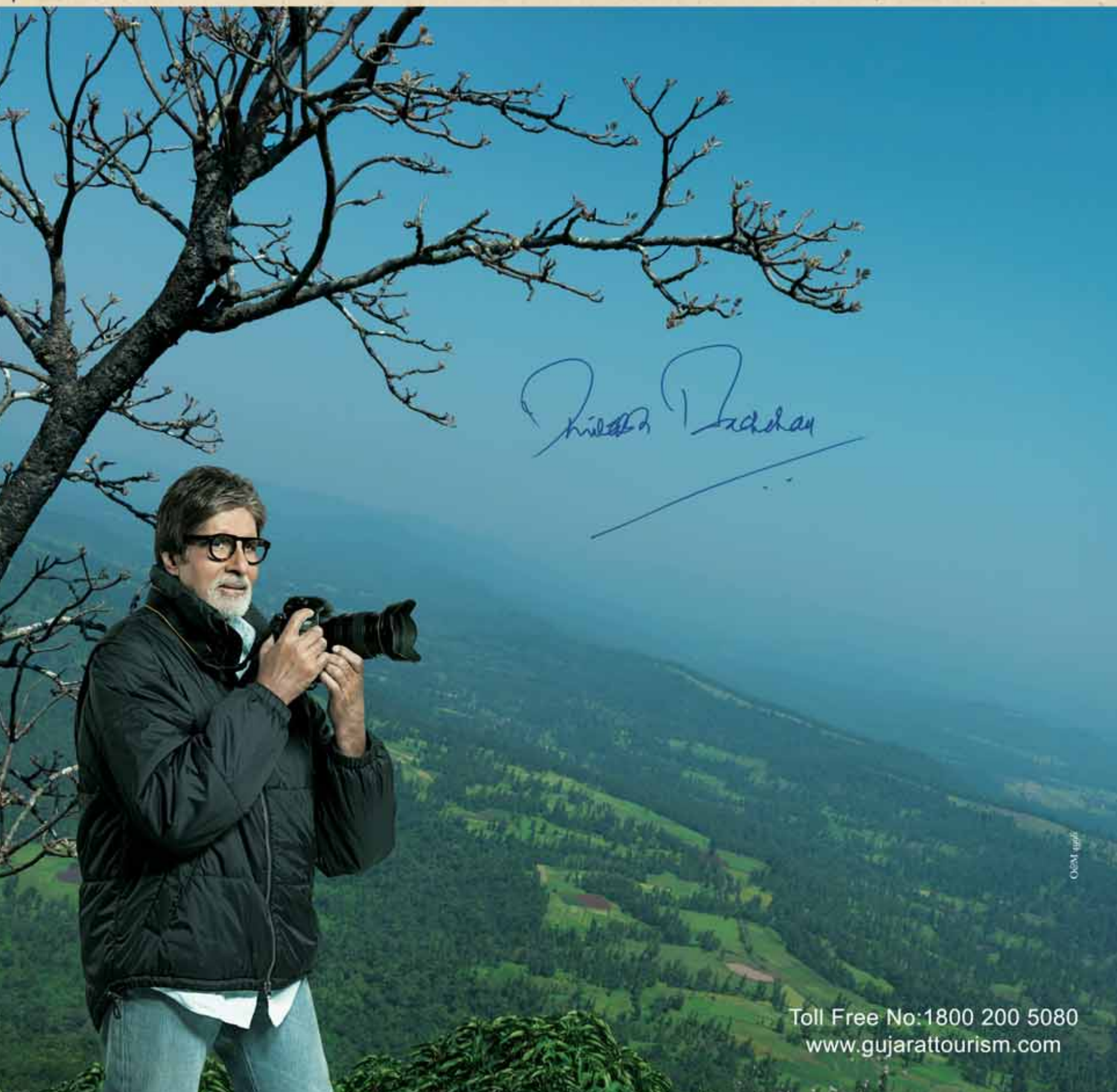


"I am a birder. Birding is a big interest of mine," says **Shoba Mohan**, Founder and Partner, RARE Destinations & Experiences. Mohan says she loves travelling and exploring people and places. "For me travelling to any of my hotels or any hotel is a part of exploration that I do," she adds. Mohan invests her time in writing poems and other general writing. She's not a big foodie and always likes to keep it simple, whatever she has or cooks. Mohan loves travelling to Ladakh, a place which she has visited thrice. "The barren landscape, the people and the Buddhist atmosphere brings one's focus back inwards," she concludes.



You can't lose your way when there are no wrong turns. That was the feeling I got in Saputara. Here, every turn offered me new things. Like the meandering Ambika river. Each step brought me closer to nature. In the dense jungles of Dang, I felt as if all the trees and shrubs were my old friends.

The local tribesmen, their art, culture and traditions made me experience a harmony we city dwellers miss. Saputara gave me the solitude I always craved for, with just clouds and fine weather for company. How can one even think about leaving a place like this?



Shilpa Bhatnagar

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Going beyond vanilla bookings

Addressing the complexities of creating and delivering effective strategies as technology continues to transform travel trade, Rabih Saab, President and Managing Director-Africa, Middle East and South Asia, Travelport talks about the significance of India for the company and current trends in the Indian travel industry.

 MEGHA PAUL

Tapping online market
At the recently concluded ATM in Dubai, Travelport released a report saying that Middle East's \$72 billion travel market is set to grow further. We have predicted that online travel bookings will represent 36 per cent of all bookings in the region by 2017, as opposed to 25 per cent currently. We have no recent report for India. But the online penetration here is much larger than in the Middle East. The burgeoning OTA market in India is facilitating this growth. There has been a big growth in online space here, whether it is through existing travel agen-



the travel agent. And he knows this customer needs a hotel. The Smartpoint app was launched last year in the Indian market and has done pretty well. The app is helping in increasing options for airlines and travel agents to monetise profits by offering consumers more services from a single point like hotels, transport, travel and medical insurance, WiFi, etc.

New upselling opportunities

We are betting big on our Rich Content and Branding merchandising solution. The popular merchandising technology, which is integrated into the company's travel commerce platform, acts as a partner to the travel agencies. It provides the technology to allow them to operate effectively online. Specifically, Rich Content and Branding allows airlines to control how their products are visually presented and described to agents. Some of the many benefits of Rich Content and Branding to travel agencies include potential increase in ticket sales; the ability to book through their usual, preferred booking processes, rather than having to go to an airline's website for more information; and significant upselling opportunities on core fares, as well as ancillaries, or 'optional extras', such as bags, lounge passes or 'next fare up'.

Our company has also recorded double-digit growth in the beyond air side of the business. The revenues grew by 14 % in the fourth quarter of last year.

Rabih Saab
President and Managing Director-Africa, Middle East and South Asia, Travelport

cies that are going into online channels or new entrants which are exclusively online.

The beyond air strategy
Interestingly, our company has also recorded double-digit growth in the beyond air side of the business. While we have a strong history with airline products, representing more than 100 airlines, we have seen a spurt in beyond air business. The revenues in our beyond air grew by 14 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year. Our plan is to keep this growth on track. We see this segment as a growth driver. The company's beyond air portfolio currently includes distribution and merchandis-

ing solutions for hotels, car rentals, rail, cruise lines and tour operators, payment solutions, advertising and other platform services.

Smartpoint edge
The travel commerce platform is also focusing on Smartpoint, the smart desktop solution and our Rich Content and Branding Solutions. We have worked with Smartpoint in such a way that we have basically taken the desktop which the travel agencies have been using for the past 40 years and enhanced it. Travelport's Smartpoint gives users access to over 400 airlines content, including low cost

carriers, over 600,000 hotel properties and 35,000 car rental locations. With this massive data travel agents can provide their users with minute details from family fares, sets, bags and much more. We still keep the old functionality it had, but now we have launched more real time data, revamped the graphic interface, added more data and made it a point and click base. These new developments make usability easier and productive for agents. For example—as soon as the customer books flight which has an overnight stay, there is a product called Agent Alert, which automatically prompts

Enhanced Desktop

- The Smartpoint app was launched in India in 2014
- The app gives users access to over 400 airlines content, over 600,000 hotel properties and 35,000 car rental locations
- The company is also focusing on Rich Content and Branding Solutions



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Virtually perfect future for hotels

Cutting-edge technology not only gives a head start in a competitive environment, it also helps improve operations and manage energy needs efficiently. In our cover story, we explore technology trends for 2015.

 **KANCHAN NATH**

Experts tell us which tech-trends will change the game in the competitive hotel market this year; what is the relevance of guest intelligence data/big data analytics for today's hoteliers; and among the hotel laptop website, mobile websites, OTA and travel agents, who influences bookings and profitability the most.

RJ Friedlander, CEO, ReviewPro, says the proliferation of big data runs the risk of overwhelming hoteliers, but managed correctly, it can unlock the door to highly personalised experiences for guests and better operations for hoteliers - both online and on-site. One very clear application of Big Data analytics for hoteliers is the mining of guest feedback data, both from the social web and from direct survey responses. Savvy hoteliers are accessing meaningful insight into traveller behaviour and likes/dislikes to make decisions that improve operational and service excellence, decrease costs, improve guest satisfaction and increase revenue.

Mobile
Recently, mobile device usage including smartphones, tablets and everything in between has seen explosive growth among travellers. Today, travellers are using mobile devices to research trips, make reservations and share their travel experiences. According to eMarketer, by the end of 2015, mobile will represent an estimated 70 per cent of the total search audience in the US. By 2018, mobile will account for an estimated 37 per cent of all US digital travel sales, with similar

trends happening in countries around the globe.

However, Millennials are "mobile-first" travel consumers, making mobile even more



RJ Friedlander
CEO
ReviewPro

Hoteliers are accessing meaningful insight into traveller behaviour that improve operations and service

important for hotels in 2015. Mobile-first travellers rely heavily on their mobile device while travelling - not only for booking, but also to research and find solutions for any issues they might encounter.

Guest Intelligence is the in-depth analysis of online reviews and guest satisfaction survey data - which includes both during - and post-stay surveys, to provide detailed



Nikhil Sama
Co-founder & CEO
SnapLion

Data enables hotels to identify people by their spending habits. Differentiated services can then be provided to each segment

insight into what guests like and dislike about their stay, and determine how a hotel can improve the guest experience.

By collecting and analysing guest feedback, hoteliers no longer have to guess which actions will improve a future guest's stay. They can pinpoint exactly which areas/departments of the property are performing well and which need improvement.

With increased guest satisfaction the property will receive fewer negative reviews - and in many cases,

an increase in positive reviews. As the number of positive reviews increases, the property's online reputation will also improve - a factor that can have a



Avijit Arya
Chief Mogul
Internet Moguls

Try to ride the wave before you see it coming like swinging the bat anticipating the bowler's hand movement

significant impact on the property's overall revenue.

Nikhil Sama, Co-founder & CEO, SnapLion, says, data enables hotels to identify and segment people by their spending habits/frequency. Differentiated and relevant services can then be provided to each segment.

Mobile, the game changer

Hotels with custom built mobile Apps will be able to provide a superior, more convenient experience to their customers including booking of rooms, ordering room service easily, making reservations at in house restaurants/night-clubs, promotions and more. By providing this superior

service, hotels will be able to place their brand squarely in the centre of their customer's life - on their mobile phone. They will cord off a set of loyal hotel customers and create a strong sense of loyalty where visitors are not even looking at alternate options available on the Internet - because their favorite brand is available, right here, on their mobile phone.

Identifying guest segments

Top customers stay with brands, who recognise them as top customers, and offer superior, and differentiated, service to them. Data is at the centre of it all, because it enables hotels to identify and segment people by their spending habits/frequency. Differentiated and relevant services can then be provided to each segment.

Channels of profit

All of these channels are great for getting a volume of customers who are looking for the lowest priced hotels. Unfortunately, this segment does not drive profitability. Profits are driven by loyal customers who choose the hotel without repeated price comparison with competitors. This segment can only be attracted by creating a custom branded CRM solution preferably via a mobile App.

Ride the wave

Avijit Arya, Chief Mogul, Internet Moguls, says that mobile is already dominating more than 67 per cent of our

attention span and booking options are now best displayed on mobile for conversions. Simple live chat and Facebook chats are closing more bookings for hotels since we started this last year. I don't believe in trends because trends are history, this digital industry that I'm a part of is evolving much faster than any such trend gets



time to become a statistic. So, instead of focusing on trends try to ride the wave before you see it coming like sometimes you swing the bat anticipating the bowler's hand movement.

Be data intelligent

Data has been there forever but now the data points are in thousands. The intelligence is not in the data; it's in knowing which data to process when, how and what decisions to make out of the same.

Online reputation matters

- According to a 2012 Cornell University study (using ReviewPro's data), a one-point increase in a property's online reputation can lead to a possible:
- ▶ 0.89% increase in price (ADR).
 - ▶ 0.54% increase in occupancy.
 - ▶ 1.42% increase in RevPAR.

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Hassle-free holidays a click away

Betting big on the Holidays segment, MakeMyTrip has launched a slew of initiatives such as setting up special Customer Lounge in Thailand, INR pricing for Europe packages and bundling holiday products with first-in-market charter flight tie-ups, among other offerings.

 MEGHA PAUL

As MakeMyTrip continues to focus on expanding its Holidays business, it will utilise the core strength of technology to make travel-purchase process convenient and seamless, thereby creating customer delight. Talking about tapping the Holidays business in a big way, **Ranjeet Oak**, Chief Business Officer - Holidays, MakeMyTrip, says, “We want to be the consultant that customers turn to for all their travel-related needs. We have taken a number of steps to ensure a delightful and com-



Ranjeet Oak
Chief Business Officer – Holidays
MakeMyTrip

We want to be the consultant that customers turn to for all their travel-related needs. We have taken a number of steps to ensure a delightful and comfortable holiday experience for our customers

fortable holiday experience for our customers. Arrivals to Thailand are usually early morning but hotel check-ins happen post-noon. To ensure that travellers have a comfortable post-flight experience, we have set up a special Customer Lounge in Thailand which is Wi-Fi enabled. We offer breakfast and a facility to freshen up. Our customers really appreciate this gesture as it helps them prepare for a day of sight-seeing without feeling rushed or tired.”

Regarding other new initiatives to make the holiday experiences better, Oak adds, “We have also launched package innovations such as INR pricing for our Europe packages so the customer need not worry about how currency fluctuation will impact the final cost of their holiday. In the last few years, we have enabled Indian travellers to visit destinations such as Ladakh and Andamans that were traditionally perceived as ‘expensive & inaccessible’. We did this by creating bundled holiday products with first-in-market charter flight tie-ups, bringing down the overall cost of travel to these

previously unaffordable destinations. We are also the only travel company to offer Charter flights to Bhutan from Mumbai and Ahmedabad.”

The company will continue its journey of innovating with packages, enhancing service and bringing new destinations closer to Indian travellers. Elaborating on offerings for travel agents, he informs, “We welcome the large B2B travel agent community to partner our efforts. Working with MakeMyTrip is as easy as booking a package with us — our first-in-industry online booking module provides access to all holiday packages listed on our website. We have the largest number of online holiday

offerings — and now, thanks to technology, it is just a click away for affiliates who want to partner with us in our journey to success. Affiliates can leverage our strong online presence and make holiday bookings online for their customers. The entire pricing and availability portfolio is available online for making reservations.”

The online module offers live and real-time inventory, pricing and booking options with no lag between an enquiry and booking request to the actual booking confirmation to the customer. The aim is to let the partner agents become a part of the fast-growing e-commerce industry without having to make huge investments, he adds.



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Making way for travel curators

Travel agents of future must serve the role of an expert curator or editor of recommendations and reviews. The travel agencies who know their travellers better by collecting and using personalisation data will be at a competitive advantage, feels Rakesh Bansal, CEO, Amadeus India.



MEGHA PAUL

Amadeus is enabling the travel industry with latest technology solutions to connect and reach out to various stakeholders, thus enabling a more connected future of travel.

Talking about new initiatives in the company, **Rakesh Bansal**, CEO, Amadeus India, points out, "Amadeus already offers multi-mode options and is expanding in this domain as well. Amadeus continues to invest in new products and solutions that allow travel companies to give travellers faster and more accurate answers so they can create their own unique travel experiences." Amadeus believes that in future, "personalised bundles" of products and services will be available to travellers. These will be distributed via a series of new sales channels, which it has divided into "inspiration" channels such as smart-phones, tablets and virtual

reality headset, or "information" channels like the smart watch, augmented reality glasses and service robots, Bansal adds.

According to Bansal, the industry is seeing a shift in

build a more rewarding and connected journey for tomorrow's traveller. Mobile and social media channels will hold the keys to gathering data required for personalisation and contextu-

travel industry to offer customised products. The travel agencies and providers, who know their travellers better, by collecting and using this personalisation data, will be at a competitive advantage. Personalisation would also help in improving conversions and profits. Thus, customer data will become the most important resource available to companies and those that collect and use it most effectively will be at the greatest advantage."

Technologies such as augmented reality, gamification mechanisms and smart mobile devices have been transforming the travel experience, he feels. Predicting new patterns and consumer behavior that will drive new initiatives, he comments, "Check-in at airports will become exception rather than the norm as manual check-in security will be replaced by faster and more efficient systems that track flows of peo-

ple. In future, all data on travel-related payments will be integrated, acting as a memory of expenditure and activity for individuals, groups and travel businesses. Travel agents of future will serve the role of an expert curator or editor of recommendations and reviews. Travel technologies of future will help reduce stress as intelligent luggage tags and tickets will give greater reassurance whilst m-Health (mobile-Health) applications will allow travellers to manage and monitor their health."

Continued emphasis on work-life balance may mean employers encourage people to take time off on either side of a business trip. Travel agents of future must serve the role of an expert curator or editor of recommendations and reviews. Hotels will add value through technologies that make working away as easy and painless as possible – and help turn the busi-

ness traveller into the business tourist. Virtual business meetings, enabled by increasingly sophisticated ICT, will supplement rather than supplant face-to-face contact, he adds.

Elaborating on the USP of the company and its aggressive plans for the year, he says, "Amadeus is committed to shaping the future of the travel industry, and has long been committed to understanding its customers' needs more specifically. We believe that by understanding the future, values, priorities and resulting needs of travellers and prompting discussion and debate at the same time, we are all better placed to shape it. At the same time, Amadeus has a long heritage in producing thought leadership and research papers, which throw light on different areas of our industry. We are a very customer driven company."



Rakesh Bansal
CEO, Amadeus India

power back into the hands of the traveller. "Airlines today need to have a clear understanding of what motivates travellers and how their purchasing behaviors have evolved, if they truly want to

alisation and for connecting with customers."

Talking about how personalisation will drive the game plan, Bansal says, "Personalisation allows the



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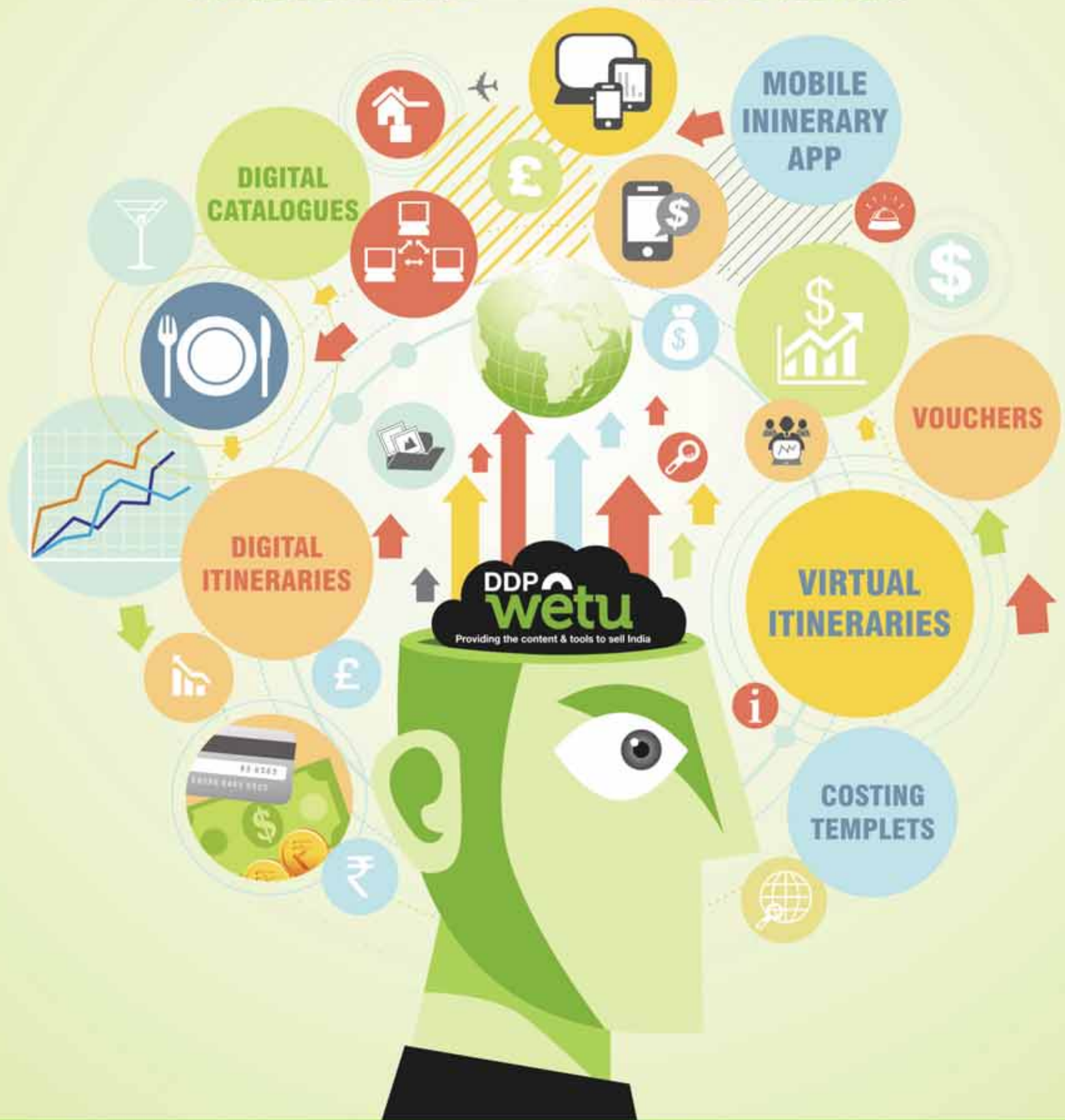


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Get ‘App’ed with OYO Rooms

On the back of the newly launched App, the company would increase its footprint to at least 50 cities with a total inventory of 10,000 rooms by the end of 2015.

 MEGHA PAUL

In a bid to boost business through the mobile platform, OYO Rooms, a network of technology-enabled budget hotels in India, has introduced a mobile App platform for their hotel booking as well as booking stay experiences. The applications are available both on Google Play Store and Apple App store. The OYO Rooms mobile App is offering users an industry-first three-tap room booking experience.

According to **Ritesh Agarwal**, Founder & CEO, OYO Rooms, the company wanted to address all the pain

smartphone App to completely redefine guest experience at an OYO, allowing customers to not only book rooms in less than 30 seconds, but also order room service directly from the App.” Going forward, the company would continue to make the whole customer experience, starting from booking to check out, “hassle-free”.

Besides booking rooms, the App will also enable cus-

tomers to search for the nearest available OYO Room from over 4,000 rooms in more than 15 cities across the country. A user can search a specific location in a city and explore available rooms on a map. The App will also provide details of all the amenities available with the pictures.

Talking about the evolution of OYO Rooms, Agarwal says from one hotel property

with nine rooms a year ago till date, the journey has been exciting to become India’s largest network of technology-enabled budget hotels with almost 350 hotels in 15 cities in the country, selling a total inventory of almost 4,000 rooms. By the end of 2015, Agarwal says the company would increase its footprint to at least 50 cities with a total inventory of 10,000 rooms.



Ritesh Agarwal, Founder & CEO, OYO Rooms



OYO to add 2,000 rooms in Bengaluru in 12 months


■ OYO Rooms will offer 2,000 high-quality rooms in 150 hotels across Bengaluru by the end of 12 months. OYO currently offers 300 rooms in 29 hotels, spread across Bangalore’s major business and tourist-friendly locations, including Brigade Road, Koramangala, Whitefield, Indiranagar and MG Road. The company has recently raised 150 crore (\$25 million) in venture capital funding and plans to use this money to undertake a massive expansion in Bengaluru and other cities.

Ritesh Agarwal, CEO, OYO Rooms says, “Our Bengaluru expansion is an important part of our journey of building the world’s largest network of branded hotels.

“Our team is working very hard to create a niche in the branded budget hotel segment offering convenience that is technology based, exactly what the youth today understands and expects.”




points related to the booking and standardisation of products in the budget space of the hotel market. Introducing the new App, he says, “OYO Rooms was the first hotel brand to bring the comfort and experience of an expensive hotel at a much lower price, by using technology to pioneer a branded network of budget hotels. Now, we are using a





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Vivek Sanghi, Director, ecare Technology Labs, says they want to help the travel trade to understand the nitty-gritty, offer consultation, provide education and handhold them to be able to make use of technology.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

QHow has the response been to the Pay as you Go model for SME Travel Businesses?

The response is overwhelming, especially because we are being seen as a partner, rather than a technology company offering portal development services. Most importantly, cost points are attractive while keeping the service quality intact. Each and every new functionality customers think of, they share with us. Based on its significance and classification, we prioritise the development and deliver on periodical basis. I would say that now it is basically a customer's driven development which gives them a comfort level and instant solution to their problems in the same order of priority. Our offering of two week-no obligation trial, to test the application in production with live ticket issuance and hotel bookings, before deciding to move ahead, is allowing cus-



Vivek Sanghi
Director
ecare Technology Labs

tomers to evaluate and match their requirements with our offering.

QHow does technology help travel business to become more efficient?

Every travel business has a different customer type and modus operandi. It is important for both the travel business and the technology provider to understand how technology can help and contribute in making the life simple for each travel business. A common rule does not work for all and those who have timely evaluated the

needs and found a matching solution have set an example of successful technology implementation yielding increased revenue, wider reach, improved efficiency, better conversions and in-turn added profits.

One of the facts we stress upon is that with such automation, agency can focus on areas which needs more attention and intelligence. The clerical work can be handled by technology based on the rules set and allow dynamic rules for increasing the profit while selling at the same price.

QIn the context of mobile empowerment, what is the future of technology in travel?

We are currently witnessing a growing mobile ecosystem. It will become a necessity for each travel agency business to be connected with their customers over mobile. Connectivity is easily available, smart phones are widely used and users are next generation who want everything on a tap.

Most of the travel businesses will agree that if they can provide a simple tool to help customers receive post sales support, it can be a good begin-

(easy to configure) i.e. if a partner, like ours, can help consolidate the information, help travel agencies make better and faster decision

Our offering of two week-no obligation trial, to test the application in production with live ticket issuance and hotel bookings, before deciding to move ahead, is allowing customers to evaluate and match their requirements with our offering

ning for both the agency and customer. As a first measure, we have enabled mobile friendliness in the IBE.

QHow can the travel industry embrace technology for their businesses?

Our opinion here is to make it more meaningful in terms of the "what they can get/expect" and make it affordable (balance the costs) and increase accessibility

based on their knowledge and experience, the results will be in line with expectations. This can happen only if the expectations are set right i.e. "what does the customer need" rather than "we have this". At this junction, when the opportunities are opening up, we have to help them understand the nitty-gritty, offer consultation, provide education and handhold them to be able to make use of technology.

QWhat are your plans for 2015?

Our agenda remains the same, "Empower the SME Travel Business" with robust and scalable solution which they can afford and which can help them grow their business. In addition to constant features, services and suppliers additions to the SaaS offering, the major developments planned are Corporate Travel Module, Travel Planning Modules and mobile Apps for iOS and Android platform in the current year. These additional sales channels will not only help travel agencies to sell more but more travel agencies can adopt to our solution going forward.

Going Forward

Major developments planned are Corporate Travel Module, Travel Planning Modules and mobile Apps for iOS and Android platform in the current year

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Spreading wings overseas

Rezlive.com is ready to expand into the markets of Africa and Europe, while maintaining growth in ME and Asia by connecting with every single travel agent. Jaal Shah, Founder, RezLive.com and Group MD of Travel Designer Group, tells more.

TT BUREAU

You expect double-digit growth this year. How do you plan to achieve this?

We have been doing excellent as far as growth is concerned taking all markets into consideration and are moving as per the plans set for every quarter. The Middle East and the Asian region (especially India) delivered an outstanding performance due to demand for this market for inbound and outbound travel. Our aim is to continue to consolidate our expansion into international markets, especially in Africa and Europe, while maintaining growth in our home markets of Middle East and Asia. We have also increased our reach to deeper pockets of the market with a bigger global sales team, in order to connect with every single travel agent and make sure we cater to their travel needs. We will also continue to give our valued partners extraordinary support service and diversified inventory.

How was ATM Dubai for you this year?

RezLive.com was present at the ATM sixth year in a

worked in a fresh environment and were able to gain better insights about some of the markets where we intend to take our growth forward. Also as expected, travel part-

expansion into international markets, specially Africa and Europe, in order to get one step closer to the local travel trade. Furthermore, we have also revamped



“We have revamped Designer Indya and Designer Packages as a one-stop solution for the inbound and outbound travel needs of our travel partners.”

Jaal Shah
Founder, RezLive.com and Group MD of Travel Designer Group

ners across the globe turned up in great numbers to look at the various possibilities in which they can associate with us and at the same time witness our award-winning innovations.

What new can the Agents expect from you this year?

This year we will be looking at revamping RezLive.com. We have already launched a new version of Rezlive.com which

Designer Indya and Designer Packages as a one-stop solution for the inbound and outbound travel needs of our travel partners.

How is the new office in Dubai performing?

RezLive.com has strengthened its proposition in the Middle East with a new and bigger office in Dubai (JLT) and with a large team of multilingual professionals. While we were satisfied with our former space,

Designer Indya

Designer Indya promotes luxury inbound Indian holidays to the international markets. It caters to the needs of travel partners all across the globe and also empowers RezLive.com with 1600+ Indian hotel allocations and extends the facility to book Indian hotels online. Its detailed itineraries and package module allows international travel partners to send their booking requests online and customise their packages and inclusions through 'book your own tour'. With innovation of technology, Designer Indya has huge online presence, attracting large traffic of B2B as well as retail consumers, looking for customized Indian holiday experience. It recently launched a Designer Indya brochure during ATM through the hands of Manas Ranjan Pattanaik, Director – India Tourism (Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India) and IRV Rao, Assistant Director – India Tourism, to showcase the different meticulously designed itineraries for the travel trade within India and abroad. A launch event was also held in Oman to present the brochure in front of the local travel trade.



Manas Ranjan Pattanaik, Director – India Tourism (Ministry of Tourism Govt. of India) with Jaal Shah, Group MD, RezLive.com, and IRV Rao, Assistant Director – India Tourism, Dubai

row in order to increase its footprint in the MENA Region and connect with local clients and suppliers. Over the four days of the event, we were able to leverage real business opportunities and engaged in valuable business conversations, met new contacts, net-

has been well-appreciated by travel agents across the globe, and making the inventory even bigger by contracting with other leading hotel chains, so that we put the whole world at the fingertips of our travel partners. We are also looking at

there were several factors that motivated us to move, such as size (we have doubled our staff), and location. The days we spent at Palladium Tower were eventful and we look at this move as the start of the brightest chapter in our history.



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Nurturing partnerships

The corporate, leisure, and luxury verticals of online portal www.sastiticket.com are seeing good traction and doing extremely well, says Arjun Seth, MD, Pearl Group.



Betting big on technology, **Arjun Seth**, Managing Director, Pearl Group of Companies says, "Technology is at the heart of everything we do today. Both from a client servicing ability and your back office systems and processes, technology is the single biggest enabler helping companies transition into the digital era of work flow and

become redundant in an evolving landscape."

Talking about the USP of their portal www.sastiticket.com,



iticket.com, he adds, "We are a family owned, employee driven organisation. We believe we employ the best minds in the

agents, corporate customers and principal suppliers."

Regarding how business in the company has grown in the last two years, he informs, "Our online portal www.sastiticket.com is growing every month. Being amongst the last recognised branded travel companies to roll out an online B2B platform and then compete for market share wasn't easy but I am quite satisfied on our cautious yet positive approach to business. Our corporate, leisure and luxury vertical are seeing good traction as well." Big data is the biggest trend in travel, Seth feels. "How companies can use data points to customise solutions for their customers would be setting the differentiators going forward. While a mobile only strategy would work for the B2C companies, in the corporate and B2B segments I don't see mobile being used as a transacting medium in India," he points out.

How companies can use data points to customise solutions for their customers would be setting the differentiators going forward.

Arjun Seth
Managing Director, Pearl Group of Companies

processes. Travel is such a complex and dynamic industry wherein without good technology companies will not be able to keep up to customer requirements and

business and continue to be on the lookout for people with diverse skills and backgrounds that help us grow brand Pearl. For 25 years we have nurtured relationships with our partner

Delivering software for growth

Gaurav Chiripal, CEO and Director, QuadLabs Technologies brings forward the dedication of his company in providing the best solutions to the travel industry.



QuadLabs is a travel technology specialist with an aim of delivering world-class products to the travel industry. The products and services are powered by their world-class XChange platform. The flagship XChange ERP system powers market leaders across the globe and has emerged as the system of choice for growing enterprises. The products help the customers update their business processes, optimise revenue streams and enhance their customer service experience.

Gaurav Chiripal, CEO and Director, QuadLabs Technologies, says, "Technology has been the backbone of the travel industry for many decades. The entire reservation and fulfillment processes for airlines have been on the GDS and reservation systems for long. We are seeing growth on the use of technology on the land products for the last few years. The most important aspect is the automation in distribution technology at the consolidator and aggregator level. It is imperative to have a completely automated distribution platform which can reduce human inter-



Gaurav Chiripal
CEO and Director
QuadLabs Technologies

vention and help these companies to scale up without a major cost."

As far as the new trends in the travel industry are concerned, Chiripal has to say that they today will be the game changers for the companies for the next few years. Trends like mobile and handheld interfaces, social media adaption and content distribution and emerging marketplaces for travel agents are some of the few. Chiripal adds, "We are building multiple next generation tools for the industry to adopt for their growth."

Four ways technology is reinventing the travel industry

1. Automated distribution of content through multiple selling channels - Consolidation of content centrally for electronic distribution
2. Being with the customer all the time through mobile apps
3. Business intelligence tools helping projection of sales and better revenue optimisation
4. Collaboration and sharing of data internally - Use of a comprehensive Mid office platform

TripAdvisor launches android wear App

TripAdvisor has announced the launch of its App for Android Wear smartwatches. The free App, which is currently available on Google Play, helps travellers find nearby things to do with access to TripAdvisor traveller reviews

smartwatch app in May.

The TripAdvisor Android Wear App features recommendations for nearby restaurants, attractions and hotels, displays a list of top-rated points of interest based on the person's loca-



and ratings of hotels, restaurants and attractions. The launch of the new TripAdvisor Android Wear App follows the company's launch of its Apple Watch App in April and Pebble

tion (using GPS) along with ratings and review titles to help them pick a great spot. Point of interest details shows addresses, price range, and hours of operation and distances of points of interest from the user. "Saves" for easy access feature allows travellers to save their favourite restaurants, attractions and hotels and view them later on another Android device or TripAdvisor.com. Direct links to the phone allows travellers to easily access more information on their Android device about points of interest viewed on their smartwatch. The TripAdvisor App is now available on Google Play worldwide



Latin America on the radar

Being the first portal in India to introduce dynamic packaging for outbound, inbound and domestic packages, Travel Boutique Online (TBO) Group has now opened an office in Brazil which will allow monitoring growth in the Latin American market.



One of the largest B2B travel portals in India, TBO Group currently has over 14,000 travel agents as its customers and has presence in more than 300 cities in India and Middle East. TBO offers a wide range of travel services to its partners, which in turn

company's new initiatives, Ankush Nijhawan, Managing Director, Nijhawan Group of Companies, says, "TBO Group is the first portal in India to introduce dynamic packaging for outbound, inbound as well as domestic packages. We have now opened an office in Brazil which will now help us grow in the Latin American

keep exploring opportunities globally. Nijhawan Group had recently conducted a roadshow. "We always get overwhelming response for our roadshows. We will be doing roadshows in Tier II cities this year and we recently conducted roadshows in Raipur, Indore and Dehradun. These Tier II and III cities are where there is a lot of disposable income and people wish to travel," he adds.



Ankush Nijhawan
Managing Director, Nijhawan Group of Companies & IATA Winner

At TBO, we believe in being trendsetters when it comes to technology. We have 155 software engineers in the house who are devoted to build cutting-edge technology

enables them to serve the end customers more efficiently with the right pricing and inventory.

TBO continues to grow with innovating travel products and widening its travel agent network. Speaking about the

markets. TBO is the only portal which allows auto re-issuance for GDS airlines."

He adds that the portal will continue to focus more and more on its hotel verticals, strengthen its air business and

Tech mantra

Underlining the importance of technology for the travel industry in these times, Nijhawan says that it is the only route or mantra for success today in this fast-growing dynamic travel industry. "Technology enables scale which is very important in a business model like ours. I would say that all companies need to keep innovating and thinking out of the box. At TBO, we believe in being trendsetters when it comes to technology. We have 155 software

engineers in the house who are devoted to build cutting-edge technology," Nijhawan says.

Sharing his opinion on the luxury travel market in India, he says that it is growing and shall be an important segment of the business soon. "With the economic sentiments on a high, this segment shall surely grow in 2016," he adds. The TBO Group is active in 18 countries and services travel agents in 52 countries.

Revolutionary tech for air travel

Technology that can consolidate airfares from different GDSs, pseudo points and airlines all in one place to enable search, comparison and booking the best airfare deals is the need of the hour, says Preetham N, COO, Mystifly (IITA winner).

TT BUREAU

Airfare consolidation technology crucial

While automation through technology has contributed immensely to the travel industry, there is still a high degree of manual pricing dependency that ensures airfares are sourced at the lowest price possible. Manually sourcing

procurement processes, and consolidate airfares from different sources at one point besides providing multi-functional options. In the current market scenario, most airfare consolidation services providers either cover limited geographies or have access to only a few GDS. Hence, travel organisations need to search different GDSs, airlines individ-

global spread locally becomes a nightmare for travel companies. This has given rise to the need of a travel technology that can consolidate airfares from different GDSs, pseudo points and airlines all in one place to enable search, comparison and booking the best airfare deals from across the globe.

Growing business

Starting with our air consolidator platform MyFareBox, today Mystifly has come a long way. MyFareBox itself has been upgraded to version 5G, with advanced user-friendly features & benefits, transforming the ticketing fulfillment process from 2G to 5G, in addition there is a white label solution variant MyFareBox Xclusive, an XML webservices integration solution – MyFareBox OnePoint, and very recently we have introduced 247 TravelDesk, a self-booking and



The award for Best Global Consolidation Services was given to Mystifly Consulting (I) and received by Preetham N, Chief Operating Officer

munications into a single platform.

New trends in air travel

Today travel businesses have moved with the times, even the smallest travel agent next door today wishes to have an online portal, to be able to provide content to their customers to choose and book from. With cloud computing, mobile applications and other technology advancements travel businesses have hopped on to App based, web based travel business model. Enabling them succeed and grow with technology support at their back-end is the goal of Mystifly.

Initiatives this year

This year our prime focus would be on changing the way businesses have been handling their travel needs, air travel in particular and empower them to better manage and control their costs, time and travel procurements.

MyFareBox itself has been upgraded to version 5G, with advanced user-friendly features & benefits, transforming the ticketing fulfillment process from 2G to 5G

Preetham N, COO, Mystifly

ing airfare deals from different providers including GDSs can become a costly and time consuming affair for travel managers and hence error prone as well. Travel companies therefore need a revolutionary technology that can help them save time, reduce cost, simplify

usually and compare them manually to find lowest airfares. In addition, they face currency hurdles and exchange costs while managing international travels.

As business of the customer grows, managing the

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Find hotels with one click

Zo Rooms' mobile App geo-detects a location and books into the nearest Zo Rooms available at a single touch.



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Zo Rooms is a low-budget hotel chain that enables users to book affordable rooms through a mobile App which geo-detects a location and books into the nearest Zo Rooms available at a single touch.



ing rapidly. We started in leisure travel space and quickly moved to the business travel space, too. In four months of launch of Zo Rooms, we are present in 13 cities with over 200 properties. By December, we will be present in 40 cities with 1,500 properties," he adds.

The reason behind Zo Rooms' accelerated growth is its technology offering. A majority of unbranded hotels are not sophisticated enough to manage their online listing, bookings, and customer reviews.

"There is enough resistance to invest in installing inventory and property management software. Also, a lot of them don't have sufficient clarity on the essential requirements of today's tech-savvy budget traveller," he opines.

Business travellers, looking for budget hotels struggle to get assurance on basic amenities, hygiene, and safety. We are committed to solve this problem through our brand Zo Rooms

Abhishek Shivhare,
Head, Strategic Partnerships, Zo Rooms

promise in budget accommodation space. Business travellers, looking for budget hotels struggle to get assurance on basic amenities, hygiene, and safety. We are committed to solve this problem through our brand Zo Rooms. We specialise in creating an experience and that is our USP. Let's take Zostel, our flagship brand as an example. Apart from pro-

the experience that we are facilitating for business travellers by ensuring a thick presence across most cities in India. We are able to achieve this through our mobile App, website and service assurance."

The company is looking at an aggressive expansion plan. "We have been expand-

Expansion Plans

➔ Zo Rooms is present in 13 cities with over 200 properties

➔ By December, it will be present in 40 cities with 1,500 properties

The cloud and mobile story

Potential guests are accessing cloud and mobile solutions for information on-the-go, says Binu Mathews, CEO, IDS Next.



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QHow important is technology to the hospitality domain?

It is impossible for the hospitality industry to function without technology. The hotel property management system manages guests' stay right from the time he books their hotel room online or at the hotel's Front Desk, to when the guest checks out. Technology gets more important to the hospitality industry as tech-savvy guests research hotels online, locate last-minute



Binu Mathews
CEO
IDS Next

guest experience and building loyalty is a huge challenge for the hospitality industry. Here, hospitality businesses leverage tech-

We see that cloud and mobile are the way forward, for both travel and hospitality industry. Potential guests are accessing cloud and mobile solutions for information on-the-go

hotel room booking deals, post travel plans on social media, engage the hotel they will stay at on Facebook or Twitter, post pictures of their stay on Facebook, etc. Since today's guests are extremely networked and informed, ensuring a wow

nology to maintain guest history and personalise their interaction with guests at the hotel, and even after they have left.

QHow has business in your company grown in the last two years?

The mid-market segment is currently showing the highest growth in India. This segment requires less investment compared to luxury hotels. Hotels can be quickly built and launched, and deliver value to price conscious Indian travellers. The mid-market hospitality segment is where IDS Next has the largest set of customers. As a private company, we are unable to divulge numbers, but we can definitely say that the hospitality industry in India has a strong growth trajectory and the horizon looks positive.

QNew trends that you see in the travel industry currently?

We see that cloud and mobile are the way forward, for both the travel and the hospitality industry. Potential guests are accessing cloud and mobile solutions for information on-the-go. The hospitality industry must keep up and stay updated on when their guests check in and check out, their expectations and requests and anticipate the guest's needs or respond to them immediately. We see a greater use of cloud solution and smart mobile apps in the hospitality industry, all designed to enhance guests experience. ➔

Convergence of trends & knowledge

Being in a B2B platform, NuCore Software Solutions is proud to have a purely technology based staff members and looks forward to provide the best to the travel industry. Mohan Das, Head - Products and Solutions, NuCore Software Solutions, discusses the importance of technology and the new initiatives for this year.



TT BUREAU

QHow important is technology for the travel industry?

Technology bridges the demand with the supply more rapidly in travel industry. Information is now available to the travellers that are relevant and structured, combined with the intelligence and service behind it. The industry is centered on the communication and processing of information and is hopefully bypassing the intermediaries with technology advancements, giving much more accessible experience for the travellers. Equally technology helps the travel industry stakeholders such as travel agencies to get proper control, insight, transparency and business insights which help them to have a clear direction for



Mohan Das
Head - Products and Solutions
NuCore Software Solutions

growth and save them from revenue leakages. Adoption of right technology and solutions to keep up with the expectation of new generation travellers or customers is important.

QWhat are the new initiatives that you have taken this year?

Travel BI - to help our customers to unveil the powerful source of business intelligence information from their own transnational data from the operations and finance for last many years. In short, to transform data into decisions to understand your best customers, demanding customers, profitable destinations, profitable airlines etc.

Mid Office and GDS scripting tools - We have already introduced a number of scripting solutions integrated with GDS systems for supporting the Mid-Office and operational activities which helps them to increase their revenues and at the same time protecting from the existing revenue leakages due to

lack of timely information with manual efforts.

IATA NDC Compliance - NuCore has taken its

going to revolutionise the way the travel contents and shopping of travel products happen between airlines and travel agents.

Technology helps the travel industry stakeholders such as travel agencies to get proper control, insight, transparency and business insights which help them to have a clear direction for growth and save them from revenue leakages

initiative to make its TRAACS -The Travel Agent Mid and Back office Solutions, an IATA NDC (New Distribution Capability) compliant solution, which is IATA's new initiative and is

QWhat kind of competition do you face in this tech dominated world?

There is tech domination and being in a B2B segment, adoption of the technology for

fancy sake is not required. Hiring or getting right talents having technology expertise will be a challenge, as far as NuCore is concerned. All its management and founder team are from pure technology background and we are highly passionate in bringing the latest technology.

QAnything else that you would like to add.

We are not just a software solution provider for travel agencies and travel companies, but we want to establish ourselves as a perfect enabler for travel agents to leverage their results by proper convergence of latest technology trends, best business knowledge and exact regulations in the industry. ➔

Venturing into inbound with GioIndia

GI Hospitalities plans to launch fixed departures for both domestic and international packages and is also venturing into a new domain of inbound tourism under its flagship brand of 'GioIndia' especially focusing on experience-based tourism.

TT BUREAU

Promoted by one of the fast-growing business groups in South India that expects to cross `1,000 crore in the current financial year, GI Hospitalities is focused on providing comprehensive and customised accommodation to customers across large and SME companies, individuals, groups and incentives tours.

It has been creating a vast inventory of hotels, service apartments and unique ground travel products and services and dreams of creating an accommodation hyper mart which will involve creating a platform that can be used by the travel agents to book hotels online.

On the new developments, **AV Varada Raju**, Head Leisure, GI Hospitalities, says, "Our emphasis has always been on the quality service with honest pricing. It's been some time since we had started with

simple products, but now have graduated to deal with complex itineraries for places like South Africa, Alaska, China, Brazil, Europe etc. With things moving in the right direction, we intend to come out with our fixed departures for both domestic and international packages and are venturing into a new domain of inbound tourism under our flagship brand of 'GioIndia' especially focusing on experience-based tourism."

Jatin Gulati, Vice President- Marketing & Sales, Hermes i tickets, says this year has been specifically good for them with over 300 per cent growth as compared to last year. "We did very well with domestic products like Himachal, North East, Kashmir and Andamans. Internationally, we did extremely well with Dubai, Thailand, Singapore Malaysia and Bali. Much has been possible due to good competitive pricing mechanism and to ensure top service



AV Varada Raju
Head Leisure
GI Hospitalities

We intend to come out with our fixed departures for both domestic and international packages

with quick redressal for all issues," he adds.



Jatin Gulati
Vice President- Marketing & Sales
Hermes i tickets

Internationally, we did extremely well with Dubai, Thailand, Singapore Malaysia and Bali

Its biggest strength, Gulati claims, is their sales net-

work that caters to nearly 50,000 traditional and non-traditional agents across India. "Much is possible due to personal relationships and PR. Besides, we keep updating our agents with weekly mailers, SMS blasts, WhatsApp promos and are also active in social media like Facebook and Twitter where we have a large following," he says.

Metro cities have always brought good returns for GI Hospitalities but the company is getting very good volume from other B Class cities like Raipur, Guwahati, Indore, Bhubaneswar, Coimbatore, etc.

GI Hospitalities' profile of being in B2B and B2C and servicing over four billion domestic customers vide its agent and corporate network, is quite lucrative to any hotelier or supplier. Further, its policy of working on instant cash with 'zero credit' is quite accepted by the hotels. "Our mantra of

reliable quality service at most affordable pricing has worked well for us. Apart from that, customer delight in terms of 24x7 customer support, tour issues redressal, instant refunds and compensations and importantly our emphasis on maintaining a personal relationship have all helped us to gain confidence with our travel agent base," Gulati says.

Underlining how technology will change the way the industry functions, he says that technology goes hand in hand with growth in any industry and travel is no exception. "Today, the traveller does in-depth research before booking a hotel or a holiday in terms of reviews, pricing, local information, food, etc. and once he is content, expects ease of booking and definitely seamless services. All this is possibly only through technology and one that is easily accessible like a mobile or a tab. Technology is the future," Gulati adds.

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Technology is very important to tap the main trends that are affecting the supply and demand in the tourism sector, feels **Meenu Sachdeva**, Co-



Meenu Sachdeva
Co-founder and Managing Director
TI Infotech & India Travel Award winner

founder and Managing Director, TI Infotech. "Today's travellers are much more tech-savvy as changing technology in the global tourism is evolving faster.

Hence, it has become important for the Indian tourism industry to adapt and elevate its practices and skills to

meet the global standards and keep a tap on its true potential," she says. Giving details about the latest offerings from the company that will help travel partners tap the most of emerging business opportunities, Sachdeva reveals, "We have enhanced one of our product — Travel Cloud SuiteTM (Online Travel Booking Engine) by adding a new module — Corporate Self Booking Tool. It is a robust, user-friendly web based solution designed to run a smooth liaison between corporate clients and travel houses. We are also looking at launching few new products by the end of this year."

Regarding how the recently concluded show of ATM in Dubai was for the company, she adds, "It was a great show at ATM Dubai 2015. We showcased a strong presence at the event and exhibited our travel technology products — Travel Cloud SuiteTM (Online Travel Booking Engine) and Travel AssistTM (Destination Management Solution)." 

Cashing in on new portal

Blue Star Air Travel Services' new portal highlights some additional services, thereby claiming to be the only one to offer them on a B2B model.



HAZEL JAIN

Blue Star Air Travel Services offers a bouquet of products to travel agents, which includes air tickets, foreign exchange, visas, travel insurance and bus bookings on its new site bookonbluestar.com.

Madhav Oza, Director and Co-founder, says, "Our new portal highlights the additional services that we offer, which no other portal is offering on a B2B model. We will soon be adding the option of 'Seat Request'. We have also started aggressive marketing. We have also developed a new branch under our tours team for MICE."

Started in 1987, the company has a lot of agent members also allows agents to book and pay for food and seat preferences of their customers after LCCs started unbundling their services. Speaking about the company's performance in 2014, Oza says, "Our performance last year was very good in terms of profit as well as vol-

umes. We have a robust sales team who meet the travel trade on a daily basis.



Madhav Oza
Director and Co-founder
Blue Star Air Travel Services

We have an excellent marketing team who are promoting our products and our brand through the electronic platform."

He adds that the North India market, specially Punjab is showing phenomenal growth followed by Uttar Pradesh. Underlining its USP, he says that its services with a face 24x7 to its clients, its quality assurance and the company policy of never to poach the clients of its agents has

enabled Blue Star to grow over the years.

With technology looking like the only harbinger of growth in these times, Oza says that the travel industry adopted technology more than two decades ago and has

prospered due to it. "Over the last 10 years, clients in India have accepted technolo-

hospitality part where personal services are required. We welcome technology as it is helping us to increase our business and also helps in giving excellent services," he says.

The company has another unique feature — a deal sheet archive. While all B2B online travel companies have deal sheets, they don't offer archives of deals done before.

We will soon be adding the option of 'Seat Request'. We have also started aggressive marketing. We have also developed a new branch under our tours team for MICE

gy and are more comfortable buying travel requirements on their mobile or computers. Since travel is a very wide field, it needs a human touch. What I see is that technology will take care of major aspects (monotonous jobs) like ticketing, hotel rooms, etc and agents can take care of the

Blue Star offers this for the convenience of its agent partners since they like to refer to the past deals. Oza is not a big fan of faceless online portals. He has therefore tried to give his customers a face to interact with. "We have teams dedicated to a group of agents," he says. 

Guest Column

Empowering hotels

With tech-savvy consumers on the rise, hoteliers need intelligent technology tools to stay on top of customer preferences to engage them better.

Integrated and seamless distribution systems are critical requirements for hoteliers; and they must have their operations and systems adopt this model. Connected systems and processes allow for actionable intelligence to flow across departments empowering the staff to make right decisions quickly to leverage any and all market opportunities.

Hotels have a repository of information from different parts of their business, such as bookings, customer preferences, business sources, customer acquisition cost, folio data and much more. This data needs to be mined intelligently to see how it can influence strategic decisions.

Data such as business segment or booking trends, for example, can be leveraged across different departments. For the revenue manager insights into this information will help them know if last year during the same period the business segment provided a good source of business or

not. Based on this they can plan on distributing to the appropriate channels. Also, booking trends can be further analysed to see what prices and room types sold more. The pricing team needs this information to see how the rates yielded in the past and based on that they can strategise the pricing for the future period. The booking trends can also provide information on which promotions worked best; this is relevant information for the marketing team to design appropriate promotions and packages. The reputation management function should also look at the reviews received from this segment and provide intelligence on what services appealed and did not. This information is important for the revenue manager to analyse and accordingly increase or decrease rates.

Information needs to flow across all departments and the interactions between each department must be measured to understand how data can be leveraged to

improve operations. Such data intelligence will not just help in selling the right room to the right customer but also help in building additional revenue streams by leveraging all cross-sell and upsell opportunities as well.

Manually mining the data is a time consuming effort and prone to errors. Next gen business intelligence tools can address this need. This will help hoteliers arrive at a single truth after analysing data across all functions and their interdependencies.



Mike Kistner
Chief Executive Officer
RezNext Global Solutions

Foray into the ME market

Now ready with its mobile App, Zillious Solutions has recently opened an office in Dubai that marks its full-fledged foray into the Middle East market.



TT BUREAU

Based in New Delhi, Zillious is a technology solutions provider and business process consulting firm for the travel industry. Speaking about the new developments is **B Rajan**, Director Sales, Zillious Solutions. He says, "We are ready with our mobile App for Android and Apple iPhones. We will also tap the overseas market and have recently opened an office in Dubai. Now, Zillious products will be available to all our customers in the Middle East market going forward."

He outlines the company's marketing strategy and adds, "We are a pure technology company and we believe in focusing on the same. Our cost-efficient approach coupled with early adoption of leading-edge yet effective technologies help us deliver quick-to-market solutions that drive up the bottom-line of our customers. Our collaborative style of working encourages



B Rajan
Director Sales
Zillious Solutions

Our focus has been the travel agencies across India who handle corporate customers

active involvement of client at every stage of the product life cycle through its inception, design and development to implementation." One of its main markets is the travel management companies for which it has launched a new version of Travolution v2.4. The

new version allows these companies to service their customers through back-office staff, implants and self booking as well.

"Zillious Solutions continues to work with travel agencies and we customise our product according to corporate requirements. As of now we do not conduct training workshops for the industry but we are open to conducting/participating in seminars in order to emphasize the need and highlight the benefits of moving on to the e-commerce platform. Our focus has been the travel agencies across India who handle corporate customers," Rajan adds.

The company is currently promoting its products through advertisements. "But now the focus is on meeting people at various trade shows and events. Of course, business through word of mouth and references has been our greatest promotional platform," Rajan quips. 



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