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Demonetisation drive sends shivers

With a view to curb Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) and eliminate black money, the government has decided to cancel the legal tender character of high denomination notes of 500 and 1000. TRAVTALK finds out from industry stakeholders how this unexpected drive will impact the travel trade in the coming months.



Guldeep Singh Sahni
President
OTOAI

“The travel market has come to a standstill after the scrapping of 500 and 1000 currency bills. Most of our dealings usually happen in cash as not many people use credit cards. However, since the announcement was made, we are not accepting cash. People can buy the ticket from airport, but not from travel agents. When a travel agent starts booking for a tour, there is some advance payment requirement. We can't take that from the client as of now, and I think this would continue till things normalise with the new currency flowing in the market.”

“I think it is a great move to cut both black money and fraud money. However, the smoothness of implementation is critical for the general populace to see merit in it. The world of travel internationally is virtually cashless. In fact, cash payments have been frowned upon for a long time in hotels, restaurants and ticketing. It is because of the alternate economy that India deals so much in cash.”



Partha Chatterjee
President
Skai International Club
of Mumbai



Jagat Mehta
President, Enterprising
Travel Agents Association
(ETAA)

“This is really a revolutionary and bold move, which will change the face of Indian economy. Initially, we as travel agents or tour operators will feel a setback in sales and business but in the long run this move will prove good for everybody. We are facing other serious challenges such as OTAs taking over our business and compared to that, demonetisation of big notes is small and just a short-term inconvenience for business. We as a travel fraternity must support the government by not accepting old big notes from our clients.”

“The decision of the government has badly hit tourists as thousands of tourists who are in India could not pay in restaurants, do shopping, or pay for local purchases. Apart from the stay, which is pre-paid, they can't do anything else with the foreign exchange they had already taken. The government's step to curtail black money is much appreciated, but I think it should have been better managed and the steps taken by the government shouldn't have affected the normal people so much. We also have our hospitals and since the concession of accepting the larger denominations is only in government hospitals, private hospitals like us had to treat people for free.”



E.M. Najeeb
Chairman
IATO Southern Region

“The move has put an end to the buying power of people in India, which is ultimately affecting tourism as well. Indians do not use plastic money a lot, and they usually travel with cash for spending in restaurants, shopping, etc. Domestic tourism will get a major hit as people in smaller cities only work on cash. Transportation will also get impacted, as unlike radio cabs, taxis and auto rickshaws do not accept cards. Foreign tourists too are facing a lot of problems. Apart from hotel bookings, they'd need cash for everything else, which is scarce. This problem is going to persist for about two months. Since Nov-Dec is crucial period for both domestic and inbound, there is going to be a huge setback in numbers.”



P.P. Khanna
President
ADTOI

“We faced a lot of problems the next day after the announcement was made, as paying the monument fee, parking and toll charges, was creating a lot of problems. However, I am hoping that things should fall in place when the new currency starts circulating. The biggest challenge right now is paying to any vendor in smaller denominations, which is not available in large numbers.”



Lally Matthews
Hon. Secretary
IATO



Rajan Sehgal
President
TAAI Northern Chapter

take demand drafts and cash. We are in talks with them and hoping for a positive outcome.”

“In the very short term, there could be minor setbacks due to demonetisation. However, you can't hold back people who want a holiday or have to travel for work. So this will soon be a matter of the past. We can in fact see substantial increase in travel spends going forward. In the long term, these drastic measures will actually be a big positive with companies and individuals having higher resources on hand, and increased travel spends. The government should give some tax relief to individuals on travel spends in India in the upcoming Budget, which could give that added boost to the travel sector and in distribution of income.”



Rajat Bagaria
Joint Secretary, Managing
Committee Member, TAFI

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to demonetise high-valued currency notes is luminous and laudable. The taxpaying and honest citizens have nothing to fear and trust it should curtail the counterfeit currencies circulating in today market. But unless the withdrawals are regulated and monitored precisely, the very purpose of unearthing black money gets lost. All industry stakeholders should blindly support such courageous actions.”



Biji Eapan
President
IAAI

“Passengers want to dispose the cash with them by paying the agent. It is official funds but they want to use it as soon as possible rather than exchange at banks. As a result, the interim demand is shooting up. However, passengers are also booking tickets for future dates. The travel agents are anyway reporting all transactions to IT so it's clear that it is not the black money but for more convenience that the passenger is buying tickets now rather than surrender them to the bank.”



Jaji Bhatia
National Treasurer and
Chairman
(Tourism Council), TAAI



Debjit Dutta
Chairman
IATO Eastern Region

back with the same thing in mind.”

“In the short term, travellers already on a trip will encounter some difficulties especially if they have travelled to smaller destinations which do not have electronic payment facilities. Smaller resorts and facilities will now have to get some form of electronic payment facilities enabled. A small hit will be taken by the industry segment that caters to the huge cash-paying customers in the short term. But I believe that all this will settle down in the long term. Most importantly this is a national imperative and all in the travel industry I am sure will support it.”



C.B. Ramkumar
Board Director, Global
Sustainable Tourism
Council (GSTC),
Former President & Core
Committee member,
Karnataka Travel Forum

SpiceJet bags WTM-TRAVTALK award



(L-R): Kate Macbeth of WTM with Ajay Singh, CMD, SpiceJet, and SanJeet, Publisher and Director, TRAVTALK India

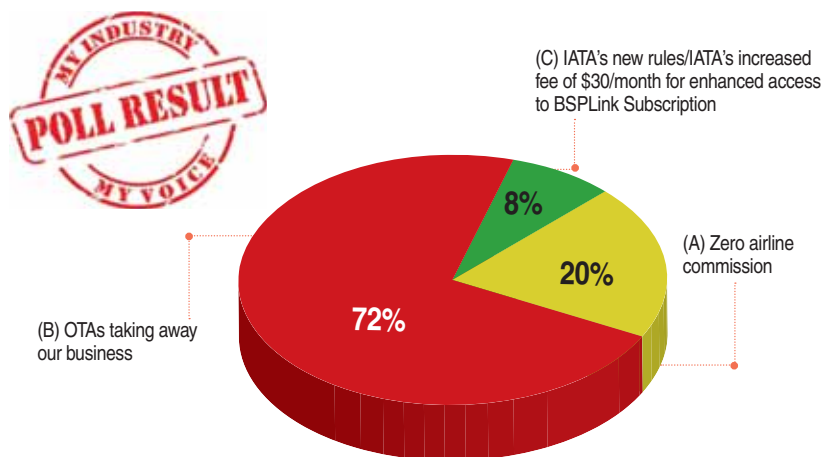
SpiceJet Airlines has won the prestigious WTM London 2016 World Travel Leaders Award in recognition of its turnaround from a loss-making business into a profitable enterprise. SpiceJet's Chairman and Managing Director **Ajay Singh** received the coveted award on November 7 at the WTM World Travel Leaders Award ceremony from **Kate Macbeth**, WTM Portfolio Head of Marketing & Communication, Reed Travel Exhibitions, and **SanJeet**, Publisher and Director, TravTalk India.

After the win, Singh said, "We are delighted and honoured to have received this award and we will continue to do more. SpiceJet came back from a very difficult situation and we are delighted that the airline is doing so well today. We operate more than 300 flights per day and we are expanding our capacity." Since Singh took control of SpiceJet Airlines in January 2015, his vision and innovative leadership has turned around a loss-making listed company into a profitable one. Every quarter of the financial year from April 2015 to March 2016 has been profitable – unlike the previous four years in the red.

The Awards give WTM London's Official Media Partners – which represent key travel industry media around the world – an excellent platform to congratulate and recognise those companies and individuals that have made significant and ground-breaking contributions to travel and tourism in their region or sector. Three nominations from each of WTM London's media partners were judged in September by a panel of three, consisting of an independent body, a representative of WTM London and the relevant media partner.

The judges at the WTM World Travel Leaders Award acknowledged the remarkable recovery and said, "SpiceJet has turned the company around by focusing on content not just an image. Their innovative onboard services include introducing yoga at 35,000 feet and flash dances at the airport and even onboard."

OTAs are serious challenge



The travel and trade industry can be easily termed as one of the most dynamic one. With so many policy changes with respect to taxes, guides and tourism products, TRAVTALK reached out to the industry to understand the next big hurdle they are looking to overcome. About 72 per cent feel that OTAs are chipping away at their businesses, 20 per cent voiced concern on zero airline commission and 8 per cent expressed unhappiness with the rise in IATA's fees to use BSPLinkage. All these concerns can be addressed through proper communication channels and efficient policy decisions that'll make the industry a level-playing field for all.

India shining @WTM 2016

Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Culture, along with **Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary-Tourism, led the Indian contingent at WTM London 2016, where the country was Official Premier Partner.



WTM London, the leading global event for the travel industry, was a three-day B2B exhibition for the worldwide travel and tourism industry held at ExCeL – London. The Ministry of Tourism delegation headed by Dr. Sharma inaugurated the Incredible India Pavilion, which represented the theme of India-The Land of Eternal Heritage. At the inaugural of the pavilion, classical dance performances followed by yoga demonstrations. The Minister also launched a web-



site for a new Incredible India Global Tourism Mart in New Delhi next February.

growth of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India in the recent years. In 2015, India received 8.03 million foreign tourists as compared to 7.68 million in 2014 with a growth

Dr. Sharma, in his address, said that the Indian tourism outlook is very promising with an upswing in the

Contd. on page 17 ►



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IATO pins hope on DRV Convention

The annual Deutscher ReiseVerband (DRV) Convention might be held in India next year and IATO is hopeful that the visit of the biggest travel association of Germany would certainly give a fillip to inbound tourism.

NISHA VERMA

Lally Matthews, Hon. Secretary, IATO, said, "The DRV Convention is almost finalised to happen in India. MOT has also agreed for that and we are just waiting for the final approval letter. If this event happens in India, there will be 300 German tour operators visiting India, which will be very good for tourism."



Lally Matthews
Hon. Secretary
IATO

The DRV Convention is almost finalised to happen in India. MOT has also agreed for that and we are just waiting for the final approval letter

happen in 2017, we still have time." He said that they are also working with the MOT for the Incredible India Global Travel Mart (IIGTM) which is scheduled for Feb 1-4, 2017. "We are still waiting to hear on what responsibilities the government wants IATO to perform for the IIGTM," he added.

IATO also held its Annual General Meeting recently. Matthews revealed, "We had our AGM on October 26, at The Park, New Delhi. We passed the accounts and presented the annual report for the year. The president updated us on GST, and we are hoping for a lower slab for the tourism industry. We are also ready with our report after the successful convention, which will be printed and circulated to all the members along with the recommendations we

have made to the Tamil Nadu government."

Speaking on the sub-committees of IATO, he said, "Most of the sub-committees are really active. We even have a sub-committee on education and training and very soon we are planning a full day session on training. Our grievance committee is doing a good job. Also, we are revamping our website instead of going for a new one as of now, since the website enquiries are dependent on the MOT website, which is not very active currently. As EC members we are working hard and even trying to look into the Marketing Development Assistance (MDA) claims, which are still pending in some cases, and hopefully the government should get the payments released in some time."

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Clearing the air

The festival fervour in North India left the region covered in heavy smog this month. While social media, television and newspapers heavily criticised the citizens and the government for the level of pollution in the capital and the neighbouring states, it added to the woes of many tour operators. November and December being the peak period for inbound travel, some of the tour operators saw a dip in business owing to reports circulating in international media. While some clients enquired about the condition, others cancelled their bookings outright. Much to everyone's delight, the situation seems to be improving, but tour operators are still trying to convince people to travel to the country, and that too at the time when the year is almost coming to a close. Tourism bears the brunt of callous behavior of a country's citizens and people need to act responsible so that the economy doesn't suffer in the long term.

Demonetisation: The colour of money

The Central Government's bold surgical strike on black money on November 9, more or less paralysed the country and within minutes, mayhem was widespread. The public made a beeline for the ATMs and the following day saw a chaotic time for the banks. Travel agents too, especially the small ones, have taken a major hit. However, the biggest brunt was borne by tourists, especially international ones, who had either recently exchanged currency or had landed the next day and had no way of exchanging the redundant cash without a valid bank account.

But what must be highlighted is the fact that for a move that may have been decided earlier, provisions should have been in place to hinder the inconvenience caused within seconds of implementation. Doesn't an industry that contributes 6.3 per cent to GDP and is expected to rise by 7.5 p.a. by 2026, deserve more? While temporary, the impact it has had on the industry is distressing and would probably leave countless with upsetting memories of the experience.

TRAVTALK brings to you the news and events that made headlines 25 years ago and are relevant even today. From the Nov & Dec issues of 1991:

Tourism Ministers Conference

A conference of the tourism ministers from all the states was scheduled to be held on November 15, 1991. Calcutta was chosen as the venue. Some of the matters to be discussed in the conference included:

- Identification of special tourism areas
- Declaration of tourism as an industry by all states
- Review of luxury taxes
- Reduction of passenger and other taxes for tourist coaches
- Earmarking sites for hotels

INCENTIVES

A full list of incentives available to approved hotels

- **Tax Exemptions-** Of the income attributable to foreign exchange earnings of the hotels, 50 per cent was exempted from income tax straightaway and the balance of 50 per cent was also exempted if reinvested in the industry.
- **Depreciation-** The hotel buildings were made eligible for depreciation at the rate of 20 per cent.
- **Interest Subsidy-** For the approved projects, an interest subsidy was provided for the loans granted by IFCI, TFCI and state financial institution.
- **Foreign Exchange Incentive Quota-** Approved hotels were made eligible for foreign exchange incentive quota, which was 10 per cent of their direct foreign exchange earnings.
- **Concessional Customs Duty-** Customs duty on specified items had been reduced to the level as was applicable to project imports, provided they were for setting up or substantial expansion of the hotel.

India 12th largest wellness market

India is one of the most cost-effective markets for Medical Tourism. The industry employs more than 5 million people and grew by 18 per cent in the year 2015.

Top Twenty Wellness Tourism Markets, 2015 - ranked by revenue

	Number of trips (millions)	Direct Employment (millions)	Expenditures (US\$ bn)	Rank in 2015 (2013 rank)
United States	161.2	1.87	\$202.2	1 (1)
Germany	58.5	1.11	\$60.2	2 (2)
France	30.6	0.32	\$30.2	3 (3)
China	48.2	2.37	\$29.5	4 (9)
Japan	37.8	0.18	\$19.8	5 (4)
Austria	14.6	0.16	\$15.4	6 (5)
Canada	25.3	0.25	\$13.5	7 (6)
United Kingdom	20.6	0.18	\$13.0	8 (10)
Italy	6.6	0.15	\$12.7	9 (7)
Mexico	15.3	0.48	\$12.6	10 (11)
Switzerland	9.2	0.10	\$12.2	11 (8)
India	38.6	5.32	\$11.8	12 (12)
Thailand	9.7	0.50	\$9.4	13 (13)
Australia	8.5	0.10	\$8.2	14 (16)
Spain	13.6	0.08	\$7.7	15 (14)
S. Korea	18.0	0.13	\$6.8	16 (15)
Indonesia	5.6	0.52	\$5.3	17 (17)
Turkey	9.3	0.06	\$4.8	18 (19)
Russia	13.5	0.15	\$3.5	19 (18)
Brazil	8.6	0.12	\$3.3	20 (24)

Top Nations for Revenues: Ranked by Wellness Tourism Trip Growth

	Trips 2013	Trips 2015	% Growth
Australia	4.6 mn	8.5 mn	58%
China	30.1 mn	48.2 mn	60%
Brazil	5.9 mn	8.6 mn	46%
Indonesia	4 mn	5.6 mn	40%
Russia	10.3 mn	13.5 mn	31%
Mexico	12 mn	15.3 mn	27.5%
Austria	12.1 mn	14.6 mn	21%
Spain	11.3 mn	13.6 mn	20%
France	25.8 mn	30.6 mn	18.6%
India	32.7 mn	38.6 mn	18%
Thailand	8.3 mn	9.7 mn	17%
Germany	50.2 mn	58.5 mn	16.5%
South Korea	15.6 mn	18 mn	15%
Canada	23.1 mn	25.3 mn	9.5%
UK	18.9 mn	20.6 mn	9%
United States	148.6 mn	161.2 mn	8.5%
Turkey	8.7 mn	9.3 mn	7%
Japan	36 mn	37.8 mn	5%

Source: Global Wellness Institute data presented at WTM London 2016

Canada to revamp agents' programme

Destination Canada is focusing on Tier-II and III cities and training the travel trade, as it gears for double-digit growth in arrivals from India to Canada.



TT BUREAU

Rupert Peters, Regional Managing Director, Destination Canada, said that India ranks seventh in terms of inbound traffic to Canada. "For us, Europe, especially the UK, France and Germany are key markets apart from the United States, which is more like a domestic market for Canada. After Europe, Australia is also very big for us, and India is our seventh largest inbound source market. However, it is one of our primary markets, as other than a large VFR and student traffic, we are seeing the biggest increase in the independent holiday travel market.

which are the most recent figures. The direct flight to Mumbai would help us even more; I can confidently predict that we will get double digit growth next year if the new service comes along. The easier it is for people to travel to a destination, the easier is our job promoting it."

Apart from both online and offline promotions through taxi branding, radio

and mall promotions on the anvil, Destination Canada is also tying up with lifestyle brands like Aldo to reach the direct consumer. "We are targeting the pure leisure segment, as we have a lot of people thinking of coming to Canada for a holiday and not just meet their friends and relatives. We are also focusing on Tier-II and Tier-III cities and doing a lot of work there with the travel trade," he said.

Elaborating on that, Peters said, "We think that our travel trade partners are our ambassador in this market. Our objective is to make them more knowledgeable about Canada, so that they can speak about the destination to their client. In the next couple of years, our main objective is education and get our travel trade partners educated to the point that we are confident that they have the right knowledge to sell

Canada effectively. We had Experience Canada workshops recently in Delhi and Mumbai. We also have the Canada Specialist Programme, which we will be revamping very soon and its new website should be launched by the end of the year. A part of our training also includes Fam trips, which we do for our tour operator partners. We have Rendez-vous Canada, which is our flagship event for the travel trade and

is scheduled in May next year in Calgary. We are planning to take around 23-25 tour operators from India for the same."

Canada Diaries

- ➔ A revamped Canada Specialist Program will be launched soon along with its new website
- ➔ Rendez-vous Canada is scheduled for May 2017 in Calgary



Rupert Peters
Regional Managing Director
Destination Canada

We are already looking at exceeding 200,00 visitors this year from India, and we are currently 10 per cent up. We were 18 per cent up in the month of August, which are the most recent figures

The emerging middle class and the upper class are now willing to come to Canada as it's more accessible. The Indian travellers stay for around two weeks, while US visitors stay for only 3-4 days. Thus, it's a very important market for us."

With the new direct connectivity on Air Canada from Delhi-Vancouver and the upcoming connection between Mumbai and Toronto next year, Peters is hopeful that there would be rise in inbound numbers to Canada from India. "Vancouver would primarily open up British Columbia and Western Canada and the fantastic provinces and territories. We are already looking at exceeding 200,00 visitors this year into Canada from India, and we are currently 10 per cent up. We were 18 per cent up in the month of August,



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Industry sore over visa fee hike

As several countries hike their visa fees even while the global industry reiterates the importance of visa openness, experts deliberate the impact it will have on tourism.



AHANA GURUNG & SAMAPTI DAS



Guldeep Singh Sahni
President
OTOAI

“In India, people mainly travel in groups (with family or friends), so if there are about 10-12 people in a group and the visa fee is hiked, it directly impacts the budget of the tours. The only ones who benefit are the countries who have gratis visa or visa on arrival. In addition, the visa processing fee is another important factor because in India, a lot of the people are late risers and plan last minute. If the visa processing is efficient and quick, it is something that has an impact on outbound travel.”



Pradip Lulla
Vice President
TAFI

“An increase in visa fee will naturally affect outbound numbers. However, in case of Malaysia, it is a nominal increase in visa fee and I don't think it will deter Indians from travelling there. On the other hand, while the UK has lowered its visa fee, it should further decrease it considerably since it is already very high. It will encourage more Indians to travel to the UK.”

“Increasing the visa fee definitely affects the travellers' budget, be it for big or small groups. For a group of about 6-8 people, the difference is especially noticeable and the overall budget goes up. When the cost goes up, it's always a challenge for us to sell that particular destination which is why we as travel agents prioritise visa facilitation and promote the destinations accordingly.”



Shравan Bhalla
CEO
High Flyer

“The visa fee affects inbound traffic to that country to a large extent which is why more and more countries are becoming visa-friendly and even waiving off visa charges. However, there is a marked push in countries that are increasing the fee by 100 per cent or 300 per cent; it is bad news for us as selling that destination becomes tougher.”



Kapil Berera
Treasurer
OTOAI

“It is a common fact India is a price conscious market; it's not that people don't have money but they tend to play smart. Increasing the visa fees will not only affect business for the country, but more tourists will most likely prefer visiting a competitor or the neighbouring countries.”



Riaz Munshi
Managing Director
N Chirag Travels



Rajiv Sabharwal
Chief Executive
Gaurav Travels

“Yes, increasing visa fees has an impact to a certain extent but it is not the deciding factor for many. Most travellers decide on a destination that they and their family want to explore. Visa issues are a slight deterrent but there are bigger factors that influence their decision.”

QuadLabs & IATA launch new AgentExperience site

■ The AgentExperience platform is built on the base Konnect.Travel platform provided by QuadLabs and supports the IATA/IATAN ID Card program. With an IATA/IATAN ID Card travel agents are recognised around the world for being a travel professional and important distributor of travel products. In return travel suppliers provide benefits and incentive programs to ID card holders. The AgentExperience site showcases the various benefits, offers and promotions provided by global travel suppliers for the business or leisure travel of the registered IATA/IATAN ID card holders. The new AgentExperience provides travel suppliers enhanced functionality in promoting benefits and incentives programs, as well offers suppliers and ID Card Holders the opportunity to complete the booking process on AgentExperience. The new AgentExperience is offered in Canada first and will soon be available for more than 120,000 ID Card Holders worldwide. Major suppliers around the world have participated in this travel solution to distribute their content and real time inventories. It provides functionalities for travel agencies to manage their bookings, enquiries and will also facilitate the payments between travel agencies and suppliers.



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- DreamWorks Character plush toy



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- Accommodation at King Superior Room for two
- Po's Kung Fu Feast, Character Breakfast with the DreamWorks All-Stars (1st night)
- Breakfast at Yum Cha (2nd night)
- MOP600 Shopping and Dining Dollars
- DreamWorks Character plush toy



Three Night Package:

- Accommodation at King Superior Room for two
- Po's Kung Fu Feast, Character Breakfast with the DreamWorks All-Stars (1st night)
- Breakfast at Yum Cha (2nd & 3rd night)
- MOP900 Shopping and Dining Dollars
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- DreamWorks Character plush toy



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Oman Air expands fleet

Oman Air recently announced its operations to Kolkata from January 2017. The airline is continuously attempting to expand its routes in India, exhausting all frequencies and seat capacities and is focusing on the premium traffic in order to diversify its revenue streams.



Ihab A. Sorial, Senior Vice President-International Sales, Oman Air, says, "The Indian market has done extremely well for us and is one of the largest contributors in terms of passenger numbers. Looking at growth prospects from this destination, India plans to become the third largest contributor to global travel by 2020 and the largest contributor by 2030 which opens many opportunities for us to grow along with this tide. We would love to expand our operations into India but that totally depends on the bilateral and aero-political situation." Sorial informs that as of now Oman Air's fleet stands at 45 aircrafts. By 2018, the company will expand the fleet to 57 aircrafts and by 2020 will make it 70 aircrafts. "This way we will grow and are expanding in a very sustainable manner," says Sorial.

Commenting on the Kolkata operations of the airline, **Sunil V.A.**, Regional Vice President-ISC, Oman Air, says, "We hope to start operating from 2017. All our papers are ready and we are just waiting for the bilateral to happen. This can take place by the end of this year, or early next year." Oman Air is currently operating from 11 destinations in India. "A lot of Bengalis stay in Oman. This flight will be a boon for them. Also, the outbound traffic from Kolkata would get another carrier which can take them to Europe, African and other Arab nations," he adds.

Over capacity or rather a surge in capacity in general is being witnessed by the aviation industry, points out Sorial. He says, "The current challenge in the aviation industry is that unlike other sectors, airlines have the least margins and the travel fraternity has to understand the challenges from each sector to work cooperatively. Almost 80 per cent of our bookings are brought in through travel agents and they are our long arm of operations. In terms of the India market, we are facing challenges regarding seat capacity as we have exhausted all our frequencies and the seats available and further expansion is dependent on the bilateral."

Elucidating the volatile nature of the airline industry, Sorial explains that even if Air Turbine Fuel (ATF) is low, it does not directly translate into profitable operations of an airline as

"India plans to become the third largest contributor to global travel by 2020 and the largest contributor by 2030 which opens many opportunities for us to grow along with this tide. We would love to expand our operations into India but that totally depends on the bilateral and aero-political situation."



Ihab A. Sorial
Senior Vice President-International Sales, Oman Air

this industry is affected from many other aspects like safety and security concerns to name one. He feels that though fuel plays a major role, it is a fluctuating entity and if one has to grow in a sustainable manner then revenue sources have to be diversified. "Our focus is on the premium traffic. The premium passenger spends 2.8 times more than an economy passenger and thus is a high

yielder. We continue to invest in the business class product in order to improve it and the service being offered."

More the Merrier

As of now Oman Air's fleet stands at 45 aircraft. By 2018, the company will expand the fleet to 57 aircraft and by 2020 will make it 70 aircraft

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More access, higher fee?

Apart from the annual fee of \$238 for retaining IATA accreditation, from Jan 2017, an IATA-accredited agent will be forced to pay an extra \$360 to IATA for using the basic functions of the BSP linkage. In other words, a total of ` 48,139 p.a. per approved office/branch location for servicing the same airlines that have been denying commission to agents since Nov 2008!

<p>Participants ▶</p>	 <p>◀ Albert Tjoeng Assistant Director, Corporate Communications, IATA</p>	 <p>◀ Biji Eapen President, IATA Agents Association of India (IAAI)</p>	 <p>◀ Jay Bhatia Director & CEO, Tulsidas Khimji Holidays</p>
<p>After-effects</p>	<p>IATA agents are free to choose whether to use the basic or enhanced version of BSP link depending on their business requirements and benefits.</p>	<p>This will force agents, who are currently fighting for their very survival, to violate the Indian National Law and other government regulatory directives that prohibit them from collecting additional charges over and above the ticketed amount. Ultimately, irrespective of the trade associations they belong to, most small to medium agencies would be forced to shut down.</p>	<p>Additional burden of \$360 annually will have to be borne as 'out of pocket' expenses. IATA too it seems has started to unbundle its services by adding new variants. We cannot charge our clients for giving them a statement of account for the payments they make to us!</p>
<p>Your take on this</p>	<p>It is a global policy and this is an implementation to standardise the policy to include India. We are currently in discussions with the agents association on this matter.</p>	<p>The IAAI National Committee will request IATA that all present functions and facilities accessed through BSPLink as per provisions of BSP Regulatory Manuals, including the Refund Accounting, must be retained under the 'Basic User Account'. IATA should forthwith desist from shifting the 'ear-marked' basic functions to the chargeable 'Enhanced User Account' as it will affect the very survival of the average agent in India.</p>	<p>As an agent, I am not willing to pay this increased fee! By adding this cost, IATA is discouraging its current members from continuing their accreditation. Most accredited agencies in India are small or mid-size and hence some services shall be used only once or twice a year for certain statements/reports but we shall be bound to pay for the entire year.</p>
<p>As a rule</p>	<p>For those who subscribe to the enhanced version of BSPLink, there will be a charge whereas agents who subscribe to the Basic version will continue to enjoy BSPLink at no charge.</p>	<p>IATA rules mandate that a country under Resolution 818G has to table all matters related to financial/commercial aspects, charges or fees over and above IATA annual accreditation fee be deliberated and approved by the concerned APJC of that country. As IAAI has not been allowed a representation in APJC-India whereby one-third of the agents in India are not yet being represented in APJC-India, any decision taken by APJC-India can only be termed as biased, illegal and arbitrary.</p>	<p>Reporting is part of the IATA annual fees, which too has been revised recently. Generating agent-specific reports could be charged but overall for the entire accredited members there should be One Fee only.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">As told to Hazel Jain</p>

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PATA connects Indian trade with Europe

PATA India Chapter, in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism, conducted its business development roadshow in six European cities from October 17-27, 2016. India was represented by 14 sellers including airlines, state tourism boards, Ayurveda resorts and Destination Management Companies, which interacted with over 150 local travel partners and buyers in over 2000 B2B speed meeting sessions.





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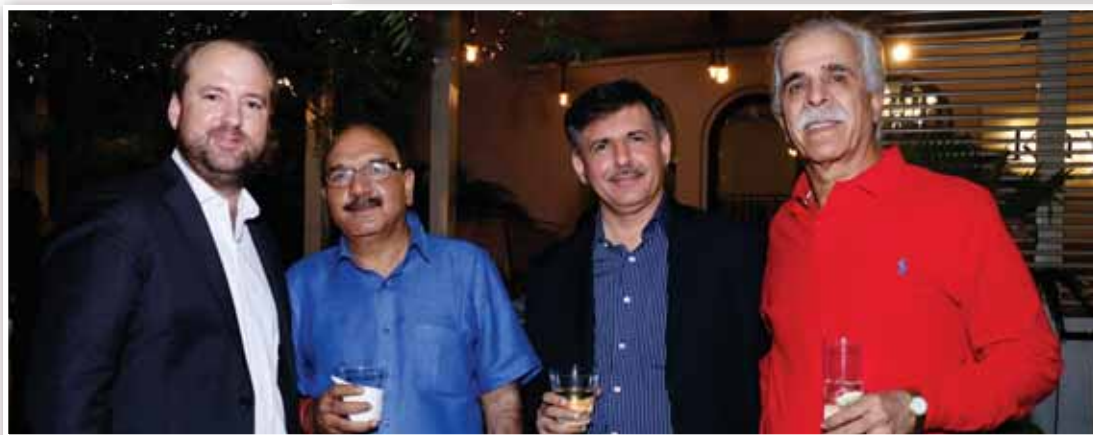
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Virgin Atlantic's agent dinner

Virgin Atlantic hosted a cocktail and dinner party in New Delhi for its key trade partners to thank them for all the support. As many as 50 agents from the travel trade attended the party.



GMR to develop & operate Greenfield airport at Mopa

■ GMR Airports Limited (GAL), a subsidiary of GMR Infrastructure Limited, signed the Concession Agreement with Goa Government for the development and operation of north Goa's Greenfield International Airport at Mopa.

The agreement is signed by **R.V. Sheshan**, CEO, GMR Goa International Airport Limited (GGIAL) and **R.K. Srivastava**, Chief Secretary, Government of Goa in the presence of **Laxmikant Yashwant Parsekar**, Goa Chief Minister, **Srinivas Bommidala**, Chairman-Airports, GMR Group and other dignitaries. As

per the concession agreement, GMR will design, build, finance and operate the international airport for 40 years with extension option for another 20 years. The construction period for the first phase of the project is three years from the date of financial closure and is expected to be operational by mid of 2020.

Srinivas Bommidala, Chairman-Airports, GMR Group, said, "We are excited about the project and the opportunity to partner with the Government of Goa. GMR Group has already delivered landmark airport assets for the country."

RARE brings Soullitude's 2 properties under its ambit

■ Spreading its wings to Uttarakhand, RARE Destination & Experiences has added Soullitude's two properties to its portfolio — Soullitude by the Riverside, Chanfi and Soullitude in the Himalayas, Gagar.

Soullitude by the Riverside, Chanfi is a small seven suite boutique getaway set amidst an organic farm and carefully planted vegetation of flowering and fruiting trees. The property is just under an

hour's drive from the railroad in Kathgodam. Soullitude in the Himalayas, Gagar, on the other hand is over an hour from the Riverside including the walk up to the ancient bridge in Chanfi Village.

The 10 rooms and suites of Soullitude in the Himalayas are distributed in two similar looking blocks with sloping roofs, decks and brief terraces, that seem quiet in sync with the hills around, scooped into steps for farming.

jüSTa eyes mid-scale market

Design Hotel Chennai by jüSTa is the latest offering from the brand which now plans to open properties in Mumbai, Pune & Ahmedabad on management contracts.

TT BUREAU

According to **Rohit Katyal**, Head of Sales and Marketing-Delhi NCR, jüSTa Hotels and Resorts, Design Hotel Chennai is one of their most unique properties so far. Katyal says, "The USP of the hotel is its location; located inside the Phoenix Market City Mall in Velachery, its proximity to the IT corridor, airport as well as the city centre serves both business and leisure travellers. It embodies the amalgamation of art designs from across the world and the rich traditional South Indian art forms. At the hotel, we believe that through design, we can reach out to the people, inspire them and touch their souls in order to make the experiences of our guests magical and wonderful." He further elaborates that being inside the mall, it provides access to over 200 Indian and international retail outlets, 30 dining outlets, recreational and gaming zones, 11 screen multiplex with two



Rohit Katyal
Head of Sales & Marketing - Delhi NCR, jüSTa Hotels and Resorts

iMax screens, rooftop swimming pool and jogging track along with banquet facilities.


Katyal points out that the company is optimistic about the recent developments and is in final stages for 2-3 new projects in South India, towards the mountains as well as in Rajasthan. "We are aggressively exploring options to open mid-scale properties in Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad

and couple of other cities on management contract model. Our objective in the near future is to strengthen the brand and reach out to other geographies within the country and internationally with our diversified services in the sector."

Travel agents form an important arm of operations for the company, feels Katyal. "Due to our rich background in the industry, we have very strong relationships with the established travel agents within the country as well as overseas. In the last 5-6 years we have been expanding in the leisure segment with units in unique and popular destinations so that the travel agents have more options; for their support to us, their guests are accorded priority status and enjoy special privileges at our hotels. We also identify upcoming players in the market who demonstrate potential and help them grow with our support as a chain," adds Katyal. 📌

Encouraging regional participation

The 63rd TAAI Convention addressed various bottlenecks hindering the tourism and hospitality industry, discussed strategies and the way forward to thrive in the changing times.

 ANKITA SAXENA FROM ABU DHABI



Sunil Kumar
President
TAAI

“This three day convention will be historic not only for India but also for Abu Dhabi. TAAI will continue to work on its image; continue to pursue the agendas that have been identified at the TAAI Convention and will put in lots of efforts to make sure our regions and chapters bring in a lot more value to our members. I think we need to emphasise on conducting events regionally as well. We are not just about ticketing services and outbound travel. For us, an important factor is to promote India. It is not enough to say Incredible India. There has to be incredible performance to take India to incredible heights.”



Anil Kumar
Member-Managing Committee and Chairman-Membership Development Council, TAAI

“Given the short notice at which the event was executed, the turnout has been overwhelming. I feel that we need to give more time to our members to plan their presence at the conventions to show more active participation. We will work on increasing our membership and I will take up the issue of membership enrolment in TAAI online along with online payments and scrutinise the documents post that. We will follow strict guidelines to make sure we get genuine members.”

“The convention has been a total success. We have had over 670 delegates including trade invitees and media personnel. The main events conducted at Emirates Palace, an iconic symbol in Abu Dhabi, have been appreciated and the feedback from the buyers and exhibitors has been overwhelming. We wanted to give greater value to the delegates for being members of TAAI and will also work towards increasing the benchmark for events like these even higher.”



Marzban Antia
Vice President
TAAI



Bhagwan Ramnani
Member-Managing Committee, TAAI

“The convention has been a great success with brilliant business sessions that highlighted the trends and way forward for various verticals of the industry. The exhibition too was applauded by many travel agents and we have received many requests from non-members who would like to become members of TAAI post this convention. Abu Dhabi has been a great choice as a venue and we have received great support from the Abu Dhabi Tourism authorities and soon the awareness about the destination will spread, leading to more Indians travelling to Abu Dhabi for various tourism products. We will look at regional expansion of the association and try to get our members more active in their respective regions and chapters.”

“We have had very rich content in our business sessions during the convention. One of the achievements of the industry has been the ability to conduct conventions abroad which not only promotes outbound travel from India but gives an opportunity to enter into bilateral trade with various countries in order to promote inbound tourism for India as well. Our programs were covered live by TRAVTALK and have also been uploaded on our Facebook page which received a lot of appreciation. We are at the moment in the consolidation phase in terms of IATA Regulations and will soon work on increasing our membership base for greater participation at national and regional levels.”



Jai Bhatia
Honorary Treasurer and Tourism Council Chairman, TAAI



Jyoti Mayal
Member-Managing Committee, TAAI

“The level at which we have taken the convention to this year in itself is an achievement for TAAI. The deliberations at the convention have been meaningful, the networking sessions have been fruitful and a lot of business transactions have taken place. The achievement for the agents has been that airlines have begun to partner with us again and each state is taking initiative to promote itself to bring in more tourists individually and not depend on the country marketing, which is a positive move.”

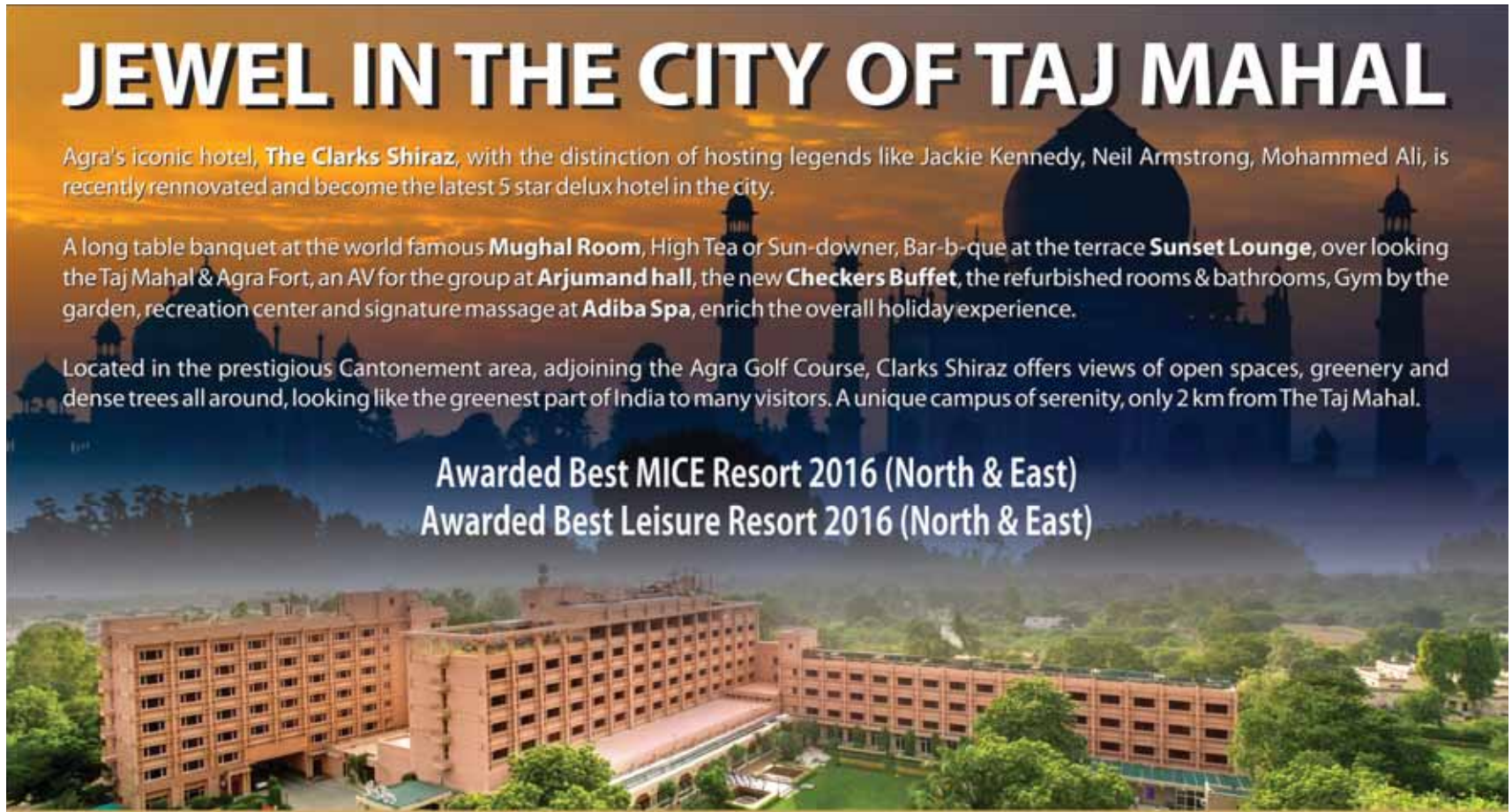
JEWEL IN THE CITY OF TAJ MAHAL

Agra's iconic hotel, **The Clarks Shiraz**, with the distinction of hosting legends like Jackie Kennedy, Neil Armstrong, Mohammed Ali, is recently renovated and become the latest 5 star delux hotel in the city.

A long table banquet at the world famous **Mughal Room**, High Tea or Sun-downer, Bar-b-que at the terrace **Sunset Lounge**, over looking the Taj Mahal & Agra Fort, an AV for the group at **Arjumand hall**, the new **Checkers Buffet**, the refurbished rooms & bathrooms, Gym by the garden, recreation center and signature massage at **Adiba Spa**, enrich the overall holiday experience.

Located in the prestigious Cantonement area, adjoining the Agra Golf Course, Clarks Shiraz offers views of open spaces, greenery and dense trees all around, looking like the greenest part of India to many visitors. A unique campus of serenity, only 2 km from The Taj Mahal.

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Tamarind Global celebrates 10th anniversary



Tamarind Global's in-house team put up a splendid 10th anniversary celebration in Mumbai recently. Among the guests prominent personalities and top hoteliers, prominent GMs and senior hospitality industry officials. The company now has four distinct verticals: Tours, Weddings, Events and Corporate Services.



Mahan Air connects Delhi to Mashhad

■ Mahan Airlines operated its inaugural direct flight from Mashhad to Delhi on November 4, 2016. Mehdi Shiri, Station Manager, Mahan Air, India, informed that to cater demand of Indian passengers

for direct flight to Mashhad, this flight has been launched. The aircraft and crew was given warm welcome at IGI Airport, Delhi. H.S. Duggal, Managing Director, Minar Travels India, GSA for Mahan

Air in India was upbeat and mentions, "With the lifting of sanctions in Iran, Mahan has extensive plans to connect more Indian cities with Iranian cities to facilitate business and tourism traffic to grow."

Bullish on 23% leisure growth

Steven Dixon, Regional Manager, South & South East Asia, New Zealand Tourism, claimed that they have seen double digit growth this year and are hoping for the same next year as well.

 NISHA VERMA

Riding high on the growth from the Indian market, Dixon said, "At the moment, we are operating in the final year of our four-year strategy, and are looking at our next strategy. We have around 50,000 arrivals from India, and that's growing at 12 per cent on last year. What is particularly exciting for us is the holiday arrivals into New Zealand, which is growing at 23 per cent. From what I see, what we are doing is working very well and as we look forward to the next four years, we continue to focus on India as being one of our key source markets.



Steven Dixon
Regional Manager, South & South East Asia, New Zealand Tourism

site — www.newzealand.com," revealed Dixon.

He revealed that they also operate in India through their trade partnership program. "We work very closely with the travel agents across many cities. We organise joint venture campaigns with the agents and work very closely with the airlines in this market. Another way that we work in this market is business events. We work with companies that send incentive groups to New

Zealand. We work very closely with immigration New Zealand, and we have industry partnership wherein we have identified four travel agents who have a preferred visa processing time for groups travelling to New Zealand. We will continue with these initiatives over the next year. We have the New Zealand specialist programme, which specially trains and qualifies travel agents," he said.

Citing India among New Zealand's top 10 source markets, Dixon said, "Our focus is not just about volume, but on value. For us, the Indian market is a valuable market because they like to experience different parts of New Zealand and are not limited to visiting a couple of cities. Also people from India, especially from the North, travel to New Zealand during our shoulder season, which is October, November and April to May. In fact, Indian visitors spend on an average 13.5 days in the country." 



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FCM's new self-booking tool

Buoyed by the acquisition of Travel Tour Group by FCM Travel Solutions, the travel management company becomes one of the top three players in India, across all core travel segments.

AHANA GURUNG

FCM boasts a repertoire of six exciting brands, which includes FCM Incoming (launched for Inbound travellers) and Corporate Traveller (focusing on emerging businesses and small and medium enterprises), that have been customised for different kinds of businesses.

Commenting on the acquisition, **Rakshit Desai**, Managing Director says, "FCM has already been operating in India as the second largest corporate travel player and this strategic de-



Rakshit Desai
Managing Director
FCM

We expect the inbound market to grow in the region by 8 to 9 per cent this year

cision makes us the number two player in leisure travel segment, after Thomas Cook. Our partnership will further strengthen FCM's network in Southern India, bridging distribution gaps in these markets."

The company is launching a self-booking tool (Flight shop App) for leisure travellers in the coming months, informs Desai. "We also plan on introducing franchisee model in retail," he adds.

Post-acquisition, the group will continue to focus on three key focus areas outlined as a customer-centric company. "These three areas – building greater value for our customers, providing exceptional customer service and consistently improving product portfolio to address diverse travel needs – have always been crucial for our growth and we will continue to work towards it," says Desai. While the fall in pound sterling rate by as much as 19 per

cent have made travel from the UK more expensive and a global economy which is still not out of recession, are accounted as the top challenges for inbound tourism to India, Desai opines that the market will persist to grow. "We expect the inbound market to grow in the region by 8 to 9 per cent this year given the government impetus supporting

inbound travel. The e-Tourist Visa facility, which has been extended to 150 countries as on date, has been one of the most positive initiatives in this aspect. This development has helped garner last moment ad hoc bookings from various source markets, including Russia, France and some other European countries."

Responsible tourism at the fore

▶ Contd. from page 3

rate of 4.5 per cent. In 2015, the tourist arrivals in India from the UK alone was 867,601 with a 3.4 per cent growth over the previous year (2014). The Minister said that India has set a target to achieve one per cent of international tourist arrivals through a multi-pronged approach, including proactive marketing strategies in partnership with the tourism stakeholders.

The Tourism Secretary delivered a presentation about various strategies being ob-

tained by MOT to promote tourism in source markets and with particular reference to European market. He also briefed the gathering on the government's focus areas such as infrastructure development, promotion of niche areas, such as medical, golf, cruise, MICE etc. While informing about the ease of travel to India, he emphasised on the importance of the eTV.

Also joining the press conference was Harry Potter movie actor and the star of Real Marigold Hotel TV series, filmed in India, Miriam Margolyes.

Zutshi also spoke at a session on Responsible Tourism and laid out how responsible tourism is being embedded in his country's official tourism policies. The Indian delegation comprised Chief Ministers, State Tourism Ministers, dignitaries from the State Governments & UTs, industry partners and MOT officials. Around 42 co-exhibitors/ partners including State/UT Tourism departments, tour operators, hoteliers, resort owners, Air India, IRCTC, ITDC, and other stakeholders were present.



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180 airlines on Travelport Merchandising

Over 180 airlines are now live with and have implemented Travelport Rich Content and Branding, the innovative solution that allows airlines to merchandise their full offering to Travelport-connected travel agencies around the world. This means agents can search and access full information, including visuals, on the airline's branded fares and ancillaries, empowering them to sell more effectively to their customers and increase revenues.

Online travel agencies can also make this information available direct to their customers via Travelport's Universal API and offer airlines' branded fares

and ancillaries direct to its customers.

Building on this success, Travelport has also recently added the capability for airlines to target customers with branded, tailored offers and promotions and upload their content in 18 languages. These latest enhancements add yet another level of personalisation and flexibility to the booking process for both agents and travellers and bring the booking experience for air travel even closer, and sometimes even superior, to that of the airline's own website.

As further evidence of the value airlines are seeing in Travelport's Travel Com-



Sandeep Dwivedi
Chief Commercial Officer, ITQ

merce Platform, IndiGo recently agreed to distribute all of its fares and ancillary products to Travelport-connected customers worldwide. This is the first time that IndiGo has struck a deal with a global GDS. The

agreement echoes similar deals in 2014 that saw AirAsia distribute all of its fares and ancillary services through Travelport for the first time.

Sandeep Dwivedi, Chief Commercial Officer, ITQ, said, "With our exclusive solutions we are enabling airlines to harness the power of distributing their ancillary services through three main components of Travelport Merchandising Platform i.e. Aggregated Shopping, Rich Content & Branding and Ancillary services which provides distinctive diversification of products, helping travel agents to combine and offer solutions that seem tailor made for their customers."

Toronto & Adelaide on China Southern

By connecting Guangzhou to Adelaide and Toronto respectively, China Southern Airlines is offering increased connectivity to Indians on its network across the world.



Chen Yongguang, General Manager, China Southern Airlines, said, "Starting December 7, 2016, we will start two new con-

nections — Guangzhou-Adelaide and Guangzhou-Toronto. China Southern Airlines flies double daily between Delhi-Guangzhou and with these new connections we hope we can connect Delhi to Australia and Canada. A lot of Indian people stay in Canada and Australia, and I hope China Southern can help Indian people to fly to these destinations."

Yongguang stressed that he is very positive about the Indian market and they get



Chen Yongguang
General Manager
China Southern Airlines

a huge support from India. "Around 80 per cent of people in our flights are Indians, resident or non-resident. Thus, I feel that Indian people support our airline." He further added that they get equal support from travel agents in the country. "We offer a very good fare in the market, and hence all the agents help us a lot. Our tickets are sold exclusively only by travel agents in the Indian market, and they have helped us a lot."

However, with many airlines flying directly to Canada and Australia, there is a lot of competition in the Indian market for China Southern Airlines. "I think we have an edge over others because of the price we offer, and Indian customer would always go for a better fare. Secondly, we offer a great connection, which is very important. The direct flights to these destinations are very long. We offer the transit from Guangzhou and do not waste much time there. Also, we have excellent service on board as well as on ground," added Yongguang.

Desi Connection

80 per cent fliers on China Southern are Indians, both Indians and Non-Resident Indians

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31-Jan	Tuesday	Bangalore	10:00hrs - 14:00hrs	ITC Gardenia
01-Feb	Wednesday	Delhi	10:00hrs - 16:00hrs	Le Meridien
03-Feb	Friday	Mumbai	10:00hrs - 16:00hrs	St. Regis

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SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

Celebrating Canada

An evening of cocktails, dinner and live music awaited the travel agents and tour operators in Mumbai to celebrate the launch of Air Canada's Delhi-Vancouver non-stop flight.



PATA NTFF 2016 from Nov 23-25

PATA New Tourism Frontiers Forum (NTFF) is being organised at Royal Tulip Sea Pearl Beach Resort in Bangladesh from November 23-25, which will bring together key industry players from the tourism and hospitality industry.



TT BUREAU

The NTFF 2016 will gather the top minds in destination travel for inspiring and insightful discussions on some of the major issues in marketing and managing tourism growth to lesser-known destinations. "We expect over 200 delegates though it may be higher as last year in Legazpi, Philippines had over 500 delegates, many of whom registered in the last week leading up to the event," says **Paul Pruangkarn**, Manager- Communications, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA).



Paul Pruangkarn
Manager- Communications
Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)

Rashed Khan Menon, Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh along with other noted speakers are expected at the Forum. The other speakers include **Xu Jing**, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, UNWTO; **Dr. Shaker Ahmed**, Chairman of Tourism and Hospitality Department Dhaka University, Bangladesh; **Peter Richards**, Consultant on Cultural Tourism Development and Market Access, International Trade Center (ITC) of the United Nations; **Shahid Hamid FIH**, Executive Director, Dhaka Regency Hotel and Resort and Chairman, PATA Bangladesh Chapter; **Sarah Mathews**, Head of Destination Marketing-APAC, TripAdvisor; **Akhtaruz Zaman Khan Kabir**, CEO, Bangladesh Tourism Board and **Peter Semone**, Chairman, PATA Foundation among others.

The Forum is being hosted by Bangladesh Tourism Board under the supervision of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The two-day programme will consist of a one-day conference, networking events and a day of on-ground activities known as the Technical Tour and Tourism Marketing Treasure

Hunt. "Based on the theme – Designing a sustainable tourism brand – an integrative approach to building a responsible coastal destination', as Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh is home to the world's longest unbroken beach, the event will focus on how best to market and manage tourism growth in Cox's Bazar and other emerging coastal

destinations in a sustainable manner whilst delivering real and tangible economic benefits to their local citizens," adds Pruangkarn.

NTFF 2016 will tackle the topics of fair trade, living heritage communities, coastal and marine tourism, heritage trails and domestic/regional tourism markets – including a session

on brand building and marketing for emerging destinations, he informed.

AGENDA

The programme will consist of a one-day conference, networking events and on-ground activities known as the Technical Tour and Tourism Marketing Treasure Hunt

ACE of M.I.C.E. 2017 from Feb 22-24

The 4th edition of the three day long ACE of M.I.C.E. Exhibition 2017 will be held at Istanbul Congress Center (ICC) from February 22-24 which will bring together international event planners, convention bureaus and congress organisers from across the globe. This year a Speaker's Corner will be set up on the exhibition area which will host 15,000 visitors in three days. "Many experts will be hosted from all around the world. Social media, neuromarketing, hybrid meetings, green meetings, mobile event solutions, event technolo-

gies and more sessions will be discussed," informed **Selin Kamil**, International Sales Executive, ACE of M.I.C.E. Exhibition. Sessions like MICE's Genies will see universities' tourism and marketing communication students and sector experts gather at one platform. The session will host various academicians, event professionals and students, he informed. At the exhibition, professionals will get an opportunity to experience new technologies, discuss interesting topics and share knowledge along with networking activities.

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JA Resorts & Hotels set to charm India



In their first tryst with the Indian market, JA Resorts & Hotels embraced the trade with their 'heartfelt hospitality' and casual luxury. They recently held a panel discussion on October 19 at St. Regis, Mumbai to invite the trade to experience 'real getaways' in Dubai, the Maldives & Seychelles.

Tier I, II cities in focus

SAMHI Hotels is all set to open new properties under mid-scale and economy sector across Tier I and II cities, reveals **Vinay Gupta**, Vice President, Asset Management, SAMHI.



TT BUREAU

Launched with a focus on fast-growing mid-scale and economy segment, SAMHI today has a total of 25 hotels in 11 cities under brands like Sheraton, Hyatt Regency, Fairfield by Marriott, Hyatt Place, Courtyard by Marriott and Formule-1 (Accor) and Four Points by Sher-

aton. The investment firm, which also has financial joint ventures with Marriott and Accor, is now set to open new properties across the country. Gupta, says, "We have a strong line-up of hotels joining our portfolio across the country. These are mostly going to be in the mid-scale and economy segment, under the brands of Formule1 and Fair-

field by Marriot primarily. We will be opening in both Tier I & II cities namely in Chennai, Nashik, in the coming months followed by Kolkata, Coimbatore, Bengaluru & Mumbai in 2017."

While their focus is on Tier I cities, Gupta believes that even Tier II cities have huge potential. "In recent past, some of the Tier II cities are offering more conducive development



Vinay Gupta
Vice President
Asset Management, SAMHI

We will be opening in both Tier I & II cities namely in Chennai, Nashik, in the coming months followed by Kolkata, Coimbatore, Bengaluru & Mumbai in 2017

opportunity and promise of significant future growth backed by progressive government, facilitating growth of new businesses," he adds.

On working with different global brands, Gupta says, "At SAMHI, we have maintained that we seek best brand fit for our assets, depending on property, size, location and financial feasibility, we carefully select the brand for our assets. We are not averse to any brand and do consider each on its merit." He adds, "Most of our assets, being either newly developed or acquired, are yet to stabilise and are at different stages of the ramp-up period. Bengaluru as a market has been very encouraging. Other markets are also slowly picking pace. We have been investing capital in the hotels that we acquired, for example Sheraton Hyderabad and Four Points Vizag and Caspia Ahmedabad (soon to be re-branded to upper upscale international brand) to get them ready for the up-cycle."

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*T&C apply. *At Travel Wedding Show, July 2016.

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EVENT TALK

NOVEMBER 2016

TTR Romanian Tourism Fair II	Bucharest, Romania	17-20
Switzerland Tourism trade show	Bengaluru	18
Best of Australia workshop	Ludhiana	18
PHD Aero Expo	New Delhi	18-19
Best of Australia workshop	Lucknow	20
Switzerland Tourism trade show	Hyderabad	21
Global Eco Asia-Pacific Tourism Conference 2016	Australia	21-23
Switzerland Tourism trade show	Kolkata	22
Switzerland Tourism trade show	New Delhi	23
Spanish Experience (MICE)	New Delhi	25
PATA New Tourism Frontiers Forum 2016	Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh	23-25
India International Travel Mart (IITM)	Pune	25-27
Germany Tourism roadshow	Mumbai	28
Germany Tourism roadshow	Chennai	29
Germany Tourism roadshow	Kolkata	30

DECEMBER 2016

Travel Turkey Izmir Tourism Fair & Conference	Izmir, Turkey	1-4
Chengdu International Tourism Expo (CITE)	Chengdu, China	2-4
India International Travel Mart (IITM)	Hyderabad	2-4
ITLM	Cannes	5-8
Brussels Travel Expo	Brussels	7-8
Travel Business Show	Delhi NCR	17
Travel Experiential Show	Delhi NCR	18

JANUARY 2017

TTF	Chennai	6-8
IITM	Kochi	12-14
TTF	Bengaluru	13-15
FITUR	Madrid	18-22
Global Panorama Showcase	Nagpur	19-21

FEBRUARY 2017

Incredible India Global Tourism Mart	New Delhi	1-4
SATTE	New Delhi	15-17
World Tourism Forum Global Meeting	Istanbul	16-18
Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings Expo (AIME)	Melbourne, Australia	21-22
OTM	Mumbai	21-23
Travel Technology Europe	Olympia, London	22-23
ACE of M.I.C.E.	Istanbul	22-24
TTF	New Delhi	27-Mar 1
Phocuswright India	New Delhi	28-Mar 2

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

ASSOCIATION TALK

Trade has mixed feelings for MTDC

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) says it has re-initiated discussions with travel trade associations to seek support for its 'Visit Maharashtra Year 2017'. The associations on the other hand have mixed sentiments.



The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has said that it has started talking to travel as well as hospitality associations to garner support and explore ways in which they work together, specially since it has declared 2017 as the 'Visit Maharashtra Year'.

Sharing details about this is **Valsa Nair Singh**, Principal Secretary, Tourism



Valsa Nair Singh
Principal Secretary, Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Government of Maharashtra

and Cultural Affairs, Government of Maharashtra, who said, "We have met with two associations and other stakeholders. It was basically for our Mumbai Darshan bus tours that we launched in August 2016 but we also discussed how to take the 'Visit Maharashtra' initiative forward."

The two associations were Hotel & Restaurant Association of India and the Travel Agents Association

of India (TAAI). "This meeting, although long, was on general lines. MTDC wants to do a clear branding for the state. We want a target on priority as more than 80 per cent of tourists who come here are from other parts of India. We will be discussing new packages and promoting MTDC resorts as well as private properties. We have also started dialogues with airlines and many of them want to come forward to offer us support," Singh said.



Sampat Damani
Chairman, Western India Chapter, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)

"For any policy to be successful it has to be formulated hand-in-hand with the experts – people who are an integral part of the trade, who help the industry grow and have a direct role in success or failure of the policy. I speak not only as part of TAAI but also as an agent. While I applaud the Central and Maharashtra Government's intent behind its tourism initiatives, I urge the ministry to have regular dialogue with us, share their plans and policies and take our inputs at the formulation stage itself. Even MTDC, which has so many tourism products in their portfolio, should involve us as an association and agents for training, instead of interacting only with selective agents."



N.S. Rathor
Chairman, Western Region, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO)

"The current team at MTDC has been extremely pro-active with the travel agents. It is the best team that MTDC has had so far, they want to work. MTDC as such does not do any training with us separately, but as a matter of fact, none of the states do. What they do, however, is participate in our conventions and showcase their products to all our members. They have also, in the past, invited our members to participate with them at international shows. MTDC has also sanctioned the city-specific guide training course and Mumbai will be the pilot for this followed by other cities like Pune, Aurangabad, Nashik, wherever we require guides."



Abbas Moiz
Chairman, Western India Chapter, Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI)

"Our members interact and work with MTDC in their individual capacity. But at the association level, TAFI WI has not had any engagement with MTDC since the 'Visit Golden Maharashtra' event in 2010. We want MTDC to conduct trainings for our members, and B2B web IDs for members to make online bookings for MTDC properties and activities. We would also want recognition of TAFI Western India Region as MTDC's Preferred Partner in Maharashtra. Our members also request MTDC to conduct joint promotions with TAFI members as well as showcase MTDC properties and products at the TAFI Western India meetings."

TAFI WI plans mini-convention in 2017

TAFI's Western India Chapter has announced a mini-convention early next year for members from three of its chapters.



The Western India Chapter of the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) recently held its chapter meeting in Mumbai where **Abbas Moiz**, Chapter Chairman, Western India Chapter, TAFI, revealed that the team is planning to conduct a mini-convention for the Western Region members. "We are trying to see if we can get a nice hotel or some theme park in the Navi Mumbai area or even in Gujarat region. So we will probably look at the Mumbai, Pune and Gujarat Chapters for this. It will be in February or March 2017."



Abbas Moiz
Chapter Chairman, Western India Chapter, TAFI

The Chapter meeting touched upon a few relevant issues. One of them was the matter of commission aggregator ONYX charging the agents a fee as high as 12 per cent.

Moiz said, "They have made all IATA agents their members without even them registering. When a hotel sends them a commission, ONYX deducts 12 per cent and then forwards the commission to the agent. This is a ridiculous amount and a lot of agents are losing a lot of money because of this. We have been corresponding with ONYX to find out how an agent can de-register. One of our members suggested using an alternative called TACS (Travel Agency Commission Settlement). We will be sharing more details about its benefits with our members."

Global Destination made a presentation on Brazil and

Argentina as holiday destinations, followed by a talk from Latam Airlines on connectivity. Staff from Consulates of Argentina and Brazil also briefed members on visa procedures to their respective countries. "We felt that South America is probably an untouched part of the world for the Indian tourist. So we decided to share some information on what the region has to offer with our members. We will be focusing on one new destination every two months. We have also discussed with the Argentinean Consulate if they can organise a familiarisation trip for our members, which may happen in the future," Moiz adds.



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Executive - Sales - 01

JALANDHAR - Outbound

Executive - 01

Senior Executive - Sales - 01

CHANDIGARH - Domestic

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Mercure Hotel

Lavasa

Julia Tham has been appointed as the General Manager of Mercure Hotel, Lavasa. Tham hails from Slovakia in Central Europe. She studied Economics and Management with specialisation in the hotel industry at MatejBel University and further earned a MBA in Economics and Management of Enterprise from the University of Poiter. Tham has been working with AccorHotels, India since 2011, starting her journey the company at Ibis Pune as Associate Director of Sales. With over 13 years of experience and her management background comes of great use as she works in a multi-disciplinary environment and pushes herself to newer areas.



Hyatt Regency

Pune

Hyatt Regency Pune has appointed **Pankaj Wadhwa** as Director of Sales & Marketing. Wadhwa brings with him a rich experience of over 16 years in the hospitality industry. Prior to joining the Hyatt Regency Pune, Wadhwa was Director Sales & Marketing at Novotel Mumbai, Juhu Beach for a year. Having spent a large portion of his career with the Hyatt Group of Hotels, he has also been associated with multiple Hyatt properties across Delhi and Mumbai including, Hyatt Regency Mumbai, InterContinental The Grand Mumbai and Grand Delhi to name a few.



Hyatt Regency

Gurgaon

Suman Julka has been appointed as the Director of Sales & Marketing at Hyatt Regency Gurgaon. Julka has been in the hospitality industry for over 17 years. Prior to this, she was part of pre-opening at Hyatt Regency Gurgaon as Director of Sales. Julka started her career as a pre-opening member of Grand Hyatt Delhi in 1999. She later moved on to Hyatt Regency Kathmandu and Hyatt Regency Delhi as Catering Sales Manager. Her last assignment was again as pre-opening member with Westin, when she opened The Westin Gurgaon.



Lavasa International Convention Centre

Lavasa

Surajit Chatterjee joins Lavasa International Convention Centre as its Operations Manager. With a Diploma in Hotel Management and Catering Technology, he brings with him 20 years of extensive experience in F&B segment both for pre and post openings of hotels. Chatterjee has been associated with pre- and post-opening operations of Westin Mumbai, Novotel Ahmedabad and Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences. In his new capacity, he will oversee the entire Operations of the Lavasa International Convention Centre.



Wyndham Hotel Group

Gurgaon

Ruchika Kakar joins Wyndham Hotel Group as its Regional Marketing Manager, Eurasia. Kakar brings more than 15 years' experience in branding and marketing communication.



Prior to joining Wyndham, she served as Marketing Services Manager with Fortune Hotels and played a key role in the company's journey to become a full service business hotel chain in India. In her role as Regional Marketing Manager, Kakar will oversee development of integrated marketing strategy for the Wyndham Hotel Group's loyalty program as well as brands.

Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan

Pune

Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan has appointed **Anjali Naik** as the Director of Sales. An industry veteran with more than 14 years of experience, Naik has been associated with some of the best hotel brands in the country. In her new role, Naik will be responsible to develop and execute sales strategies through preparation of a strategic sales plan, implementation and by monitoring progress. Naik will also play a key role to drive total hotel revenue and take responsibility for the achievement of budgeted revenue streams.



Park Plaza

Zirakpur

Park Plaza - Zirakpur has appointed **Manshul Bhatt** as the Head of Sales. Bhatt, with 14 years of experience, started his career with Amarvilas Agra in F&B service, then entered sales with Oberoi Mumbai and went on to work with Zuri Hotels, Ramada Hotels and Hilton. He holds an MBA in Marketing and Finance and a Bachelor's in Tourism and Diploma in Hotel Management.



Jaisalkot

Jaisalmer

Amjad Ali has taken over as a Sales Manager of Jaisalkot Jaisalmer. He brings along an experience of 11 years in the hospitality industry. He has served at various positions at ITC Fortune Hotels, Taj Hotels, IHG, Reznext Global Solutions in the span of 11 years. Prior to joining Jaisalkot, Jaisalmer he was at Reznext Global Solutions. Ali is a commerce graduate.



Gunisha Gupta has been appointed as the Assistant Front Office Manager at Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan. With an experience close to four years, Gupta has been associated with some of the best hotel brands in the world. In her new role, Gupta will be responsible for the overall management of day-to-day operations, ensuring the quality, standards and keep the Front Office team focused on the critical components of operations.



TALKing People

22 year-old **Ritesh Agarwal**, Founder and CEO, OYO, has not witnessed the Northern Lights and can't wait to tick it off his bucketlist. "I really want to travel and see the Northern Lights. I haven't managed it yet but I am sure when I get there it will be a truly mind-blowing yet humbling experience," he says. For rejuvenating holidays, he prefers Kerala as "it's just the perfect relaxing break!" Cycling and yoga are his fitness mantra.



Taieb TJ Joulak, General Manager, W Goa, is an out-and-out morning person. "When I was young I heard the expression that the world is owned by the people who wake up early. Every day, I run from my house to the hotel and then I do about an hour in the gymnasium. It's the passion to work that drives me," he says. Not many people know that he speaks six languages, has done 15 years of kickboxing, and was a member of the international athletics team of Tunisia.



Raja Natesan, CEO, Uniglobe Travel South Asia, loves to be amidst nature for which Vancouver is his favourite destination. "Vancouver has everything — picturesque gardens, the sea, the Rockies and the best glacier lakes. But the people there are the friendliest Westerners I have met till date," he reveals. When he is not busy strategising and delivering sessions at business schools, he reads books and practices Tai Chi to relax and rejuvenate.



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Canada ups spend on trade

After seeing a growth of 10 per cent in the first eight months of 2016 over the same period last year, Destination Canada has increased its spend on the travel trade and consumer. **Jon Mamela**, Chief Marketing Officer, Destination Canada, reveals more.



HAZEL JAIN FROM CANADA

QWhat plans does Canada have for 2017?

Next year is Canada's 150th anniversary and it's a great opportunity for us to showcase the destination to the world and invite them to celebrate with us all year-round from coast to coast. Ottawa, our capital, has planned a great all-year-round event and we will be doing the same in many other parts of the country as well. Not just on July 1, which is our birthday, but even after that. For this, we plan to work very closely with our travel trade partners in India and our key accounts. While our team in India will do a lot of direct consumer marketing, our plan is heavily focused on the travel trade in terms of education and co-operative key account marketing to promote the Destination Canada in India, and to sell the destination and itineraries. Year 2017 is going to be a great draw card and talking point for us and it will be a great reason for Indians to come and see Canada all year round.

QHow did India fare in 2016?

We have had great success in the Indian market to date — almost a growth of 10 per cent until August 2016 as against 2015 in terms of arrivals from India with 154,000 visitors from India. Summer is the peak season to travel to Canada from India and we still have a few more strong months to come. We would anticipate further growth with the addition of direct air access by Air Canada. Moving with the momentum we

would anticipate further healthy double-digit growth in 2017.

QWhich cities fared well this year?

New Delhi and Mumbai are our key focus cities as are Kolkata, Bengaluru and Chennai. We have also been tapping the Tier II and III cities since the last two years. Our target audience is affluent Indians in the 35-plus age bracket who are keen to see natural beauty as well as experience dynamic cities, multi-generational families as

QHow important is the young working professional segment?

We are collaborating with Air Canada on pricing and specials for the market so that we can encourage a younger traveller also to visit Canada, and have the opportunity to come back with their family later or do another trip to see Canada since it is difficult to see all of Canada in a single trip — it's a big country as is India.

However, most of our marketing is towards an older clientele.



“We have benefitted from some incremental funding to Destination Canada for 2017. This increase will predominantly go towards travel trade and consumer engagement, and extending our engagement in Tier II and III cities and other centres of key source markets in India.”

Jon Mamela
Chief Marketing Officer, Destination Canada

QDo you plan to increase your spend on the India market?

Yes, we have benefitted from some incremental funding to Destination Canada for 2017 and India will receive a part of that. This increase will predominantly go towards increased travel trade and consumer engagement, and extending our engagement in Tier II and III cities and other centres of key source markets in India. You will also see us working in some new cities and with some new additional key accounts with whom we may have started relationships but with this new money we will be able to foster and do some renewed co-operative marketing. What is important is training the agents so they can get a real understanding of the country. It's a vast country and breaking it into sections to show what we have to offer would be key.

Our Canadian Specialist Program is helping us educate the trade and training on the ground. We have invested a great deal in ensuring that this program works online in a way that's fun and interactive and engaging but also informs the agent on how to sell Canada better. ↴

Birthday bash in Ottawa

As the capital, Ottawa is the place to be for Canada's 150th birthday in 2017!

Signature Events

- **December 31, 2016:** The lighting of an Ottawa 2017 cauldron at Ottawa City Hall kicks off a family-friendly New Year's Eve celebration, leading to a national celebration on Parliament Hill with fireworks at 8:17 pm (20:17 hours) and at midnight.
- **Throughout 2017:** Ignite 150 is a series of 17 epic stunts and gatherings throughout the capital including: a yoga session on a barge floating down a local waterway accompanied by a live orchestra, a movie on a downtown terrace rooftop and more!
- **July 14-22, 2017:** Sky Lounge, a gourmet experience 50m in the air
- **Throughout 2017:** Agri 150 is a series of more than 20 unique one-day outdoor events taking place over the course of the year in rural Ottawa.
- **March 3-4, 2017:** The Red Bull Crashed Ice world championships feature athletes on skates hurtling down a massive ice track filled with high vertical drops and hairpin turns, all set above the Rideau Canal locks! www.redbullcrashedice.com/e

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3rd

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

North India is defined by its glorious diversity and the mélange of cultures it has to offer – from the Himalayas bordering one side of the country, to the opulence of the erstwhile Maharajas of Rajasthan, the region has forever held its own unique allure. Of course, who can miss out the Taj Mahal and the relics of the Mughals that draws throngs of tourists even centuries later! While the Golden Triangle has been most sought after, travellers are now venturing to less-known places in the region and uncovering more elements of its beauty.

As a tribute, India Travel Awards recognises the achievers of the travel and tourism industry, who have worked steadfastly towards enhancing the environment to allow the growth of tourism in the region. These stalwarts need to be acknowledged, appreciated and encouraged in every region of the country – North, South, East and West.

Our top-most honour, the Gold Maya, is awarded to those stalwarts who have shaped the industry the way it is today and created innovative ways and products to take the industry a notch higher.

The awards ceremony is brought to life by a charismatic anchor and singer who makes everyone dance and sing to her beats. At the black-tie, Silver Service event, various performers enthral and amuse the audience. The 3rd edition of North India Travel Awards in Gurgaon was the beginning of a new journey of long-term associations for some and a renewal of the bond that we share with many others.

India Travel Awards will be next year for a whole new season of subsequent editions. Thus we take upon ourselves, in our own small way, to revive and enhance tourism in the northern part of the country.

SanJeet

India Travel Awards

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Maya pays tribute

Gurgaon saw the crème-de-la-crème of the travel and hospitality industry gather at Hyatt Regency Gurgaon on October 21, 2016, to honour the movers and shakers in the region.



(L-R): Mohamed Khater, Sarabjit Singh, Ajay Singh, Dr. Jyotsna Suri, Parvez Dewan, Om Prakash Singh, Dr. Tanushree Pandey, Guldeep Singh Sahni, Margaret Skiner and SanJeet



to the Northern stars

AHANA GURUNG

The India Travel Awards North were held on October 21, 2016, at Hyatt Regency Gurgaon where the stalwarts and those behind the success of the travel industry were recognised, region-wise. The exclusive event was attended by more than 200 members of the fraternity including **Om Prakash Singh**, the then Minister- Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, who graced the occasion as the Chief Guest along with Gladraags Mrs India **Dr. Tanushree Pandey**, **Dr. Jyotsna Suri**, CMD, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, and **Parvez Dewan**, Advisor to the Governor of J&K, along with a host of other distinguished guests.

Apart from acknowledging the contribution of the players, the evening also saw an insightful exchange of views on the scenario of tourism in the country. In his speech, Singh highlighted India's rich history and heritage and called for a united effort between all the stakeholders which would be the only effective way forward. He said, "India is one of the oldest countries and with a history that dates back almost 5000 years. We have everything – the sea, desert, mountains, islands – as well as a vibrant and diverse culture. But we need to make full use of these strengths. You can only grow with love, contribution and support from all stakeholders and this is precisely what is needed."

Dewan lauded the gathering for their endeavours and highlighted some of the key

aspects that need more focus for the industry to flourish even further. "I believe we should focus on the off-season when hill stations should be more vigorously promoted. The coastline should be used far more than it is now, especially since the west coast that has immense potential. The other two aspects are the Buddhist Circuit and the North-East Circuit that need more attention and development to be a gamechanger for the industry."

The Gold Maya was awarded to **Parvez Dewan**; **Sham Nijhawan**, Chairman, Nijhawan Group; **Keshav Suri**, Executive Director, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group; **Ajay Singh**, CMD, SpiceJet, and **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, President, OTOAI & Managing Director, Weldon Tours & Travels. They were presented with the titles Legend in Public Service, Gallery of Legends, Face of the Future, DDP Game Changer, and DDP Trailblazer respectively.

Sanjeet, Mentor, India Travel Awards, focused on the importance of conducting regional awards and said, "We all know that the travel and tourism industry has many awards all given on a national or a global level but none on a regional platform that recognise the true stars in India. The real heroes of our industry come from different regions and far corners of India. To keep the awards non-biased, an online nomination and voting system was adopted. This gave the industry an opportunity to create new categories, choose and even nominate themselves. We received 365 nominations in 74 different categories and finally, over 4,38,909 votes were received from all over the world, from 21 countries like Russia, Singapore, USA, and UK."

The sit-down dinner was accompanied by enthralling performances by professional dancers who encouraged guests to shake a leg or two.





Legend in Public Service | PARVEZ DEWAN

“I am honoured by this felicitation. During my time, we were stuck at six million visitors and now, eight million is nothing. However, to grow tourism even further, I believe we should focus on the off-season when hill stations should be more vigorously promoted. The coastline should be used far more than it is now, especially the west coast that has immense potential.

“The other two aspects are the Buddhist Circuit and the North East circuit that need more attention and development to be a gamechanger for the industry,” comments the advisor to Governor of Jammu & Kashmir. He has held many coveted posts like Chairman and Managing Director of ITDC, Secretary to the Govt. of India, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and most importantly Secretary Tourism, where he has many firsts to his credit. Dewan has authored over 26 books.

► Parvez Dewan, Advisor to the Governor of Jammu & Kashmir received the award for **Legend in Public Service**. He is felicitated by SanJeet, Director, DDP Group; Om Prakash Singh, the then Minister of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, and Dr. Tanushree Pandey, Gladrags Mrs. India



DDP Game Changer | AJAY SINGH

Ajay Singh, Chairman and Managing Director of SpiceJet, was previously an advisor to the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, and later joined the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Not only did he successfully launch SpiceJet as a budget airline, he returned to the organisation and gave it a new-found glory and renewed life under his leadership.

“From an airline that was almost closed for business, to one that has been recoding the highest passenger load factor in the country for 18 months, we’ve had seven profitable quarters in a row. I want to thank everyone, for this would not have been possible without the support of our travel trade friends. Everybody stepped up in times of need including the consumers and for that we are extremely grateful. We are incredibly honoured and blessed.”

► Ajay Singh, Chairman and Managing Director of SpiceJet, received the award for DDP Game Changer. He is felicitated by SanJeet, Director, DDP Group; Om Prakash Singh, the then Minister of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, and Dr. Tanushree Pandey, Gladrags Mrs. India





DDP Trailblazer | GULDEEP SINGH SAHNI

The Managing Director of Weldon Tours & Travels began his journey in the travel world with his own travel firm that was launched 24 years ago. His passion for outbound travel saw him create the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) that initially started with a handful of like-minded individuals which now has over 500 members and counting. Furthermore, he has achieved industry recognition and is a frequent speaker at various international industry forums owing to his experience and insights.

Sahni shares, "I extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who made OTOAI successful; it would not be effective without the industry's support. We have gone through a lot of changes but now we are addressing issues one at a time. Currently, the unofficial figures for outbound tourism stands at 22 million, and travel is one industry that drives employment and investment."

► Guldeep Singh Sahni, Managing Director, Weldon Tours & Travels, received the award for DDP Trailblazer. He is felicitated by SanJeet, Director, DDP Group; Om Prakash Singh, the then Minister of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh and Dr. Tanushree Pandey, Gladrags Mrs. India



Face of the Future | KESHAV SURI

The Executive Director of The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group created waves with his brainchild 'Kitty Su' which was awarded the 'Best Night Club' in Delhi for three consecutive years, the enterpriser also made Mexican food a rage with hotel's outdoor catering vertical - The Lalit Food Truck Company - with four foodtrucks and 10 more planned across the country.

He says, "There is of course a lot of pressure to continue the legacy and to move into the future, one has to own their past. When anybody asks me why I haven't studied hospitality, I tell them I don't need to - it's in my DNA. It was imbibed in me by my parents and that was really the best school I could ask for." He is currently spearheading new projects and his group, under his guidance, is making its international debut with their first ever hotel in London on November 19.

► Keshav Suri, Executive Director of The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, received the award for Face of the Future. He is felicitated by SanJeet, Director, DDP Group, Om Prakash Singh, the then Minister of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, and Dr. Tanushree Pandey, Gladrags Mrs. India





Gallery of Legends | SHAM NIJHAWAN

The chairman of Nijhawan Group ventured into the travel industry as British Airways's GSA in North India and now successfully runs Travel Boutique Online, India's largest online B2B player active in 55 countries, besides retail business of franchise, catering business and air charter business.

His persistent efforts and exemplary marketing technique saw him grow his territory of work from the northern region to the whole of India. "I'm on top of the world at being conferred this award. It's always nice to be recognised for your contributions to help build the industry and for all that you've done throughout your life," he says.

► Sham Nijhawan, Chairman, Nijhawan Group, being felicitated by SanJeet, Director, DDP Group; Om Prakash Singh, the then Minister of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, and Dr. Tanushree Pandey, Gladrags Mrs. India



Chief Guest | OM PRAKASH SINGH

“India is one of the oldest countries in the world with a history of almost 5,000 years. However, it pains me that younger countries are teaching us so much more. “You can only grow with love, contribution and support from all stakeholders. India is blessed with varied topography and a diverse culture but we need to work towards making full use of these assets. Tourism is one of the biggest employment generators, be it direct or indirect.

“If tourism has exponentially increased, it is because Uttar Pradesh has had a major contribution in this. Several years ago, connectivity between Delhi and Agra was not up to par but now, it is comparable to international standards as major development has taken place. I would request the organisers to conduct these awards in Varanasi or Lucknow in the coming years to allow us to showcase our heritage to the world.”

► Chief Guest **Om Prakash Singh**, the then Minister of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, being honoured with Pearl Trophy, 'Maya'. He is felicitated by **Devika Jeet**, Assistant Editor, DDP Group, **Gunjan Sabikhi**, Convenor, India Travel Awards, and **Dr. Tanushree Pandey**, Gladrags Mrs. India





Tourism Ambassador

SARABJIT SINGH

Sarabjit Singh, Managing Director of Travelite, hails from a family involved in travel business since 1943. Singh states, "The awards are a good effort by the group and an excellent job at that. It ultimately achieves its aim – to acknowledge the efforts put in by individuals in the industry. It is a privilege to receive the Tourism Ambassador award." Singh is the present Vice Chairman of FAITH, Hon. Secretary of India Tourist Transporters Association (ITTA), and has held senior positions in trade associations like IATO, ICPB and PATA, among many others.

► Sarabjit Singh, Managing Director, Travellite, received the award for Tourism Ambassador

Excellence in Aviation | KAPIL KAUL

Kapil Kaul, CEO, South Asia at Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA), and has given exemplary contribution to the evolution of the aviation industry in the region. Being an integral part of the setting up of CAPA's office in India, he has spearheaded the development of this leading aviation consulting, research and capital advisory practice in the region.

► Kapil Kaul, CEO & Director, CAPA South Asia, was awarded Excellence in Aviation



Excellence in Corporate Tourism Strategy | RITIKA MODI

Ritika Modi, the Regional Director of UNIGLOBE Travel (South Asia), comments, "The awards are fulfilling a gap in the travel industry and it's good to be recognised especially when it comes from a credible source. More importantly, it's also a session where all the players get to interact on a common platform. The fact that it is done region by region, given that every region has its own priorities, is a very good idea."

► Ritika Modi, Regional President, UNIGLOBE Travel (South Asia) was given the Excellence in Corporate Tourism Strategy award



Best Airline Professional | SURESH SREERAMACHANDRAN NAIR

He is the General Manager – India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, AirAsia, and has over 40 years of experience in the airlines industry. Nair, who has previously been associated with big players such as Cathay Pacific, Jet Airways and Virgin Atlantic, remarks, "I am extremely proud to be here today and honoured to receive this award for my contributions to the travel and tourism industry. I think the concept of the awards is a tremendous effort from the organisers and is a great initiative to recognise the initiatives of ambitious and hardworking travel professionals."

► Suresh Sreeramachandran Nair, General Manager - India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh & Nepal, AirAsia, was given the Best Airline Professional award





Best Luxury Travel Professional

VIKRAM MADHOK

The managing director of luxury travel group Abercrombie and Kent India has been in the industry for over three decades. Madhok shares, "I appreciate the honour that has been given to me. Be it in the hospitality industry or the travel industry, I have always given my absolute best and that is perhaps my forte." Madhok has been acquainted with Abercrombie & Kent India for 19 years and has steered it forward under his leadership.

► Vikram Madhok, Managing Director, Abercrombie & Kent India, was given the Best Luxury Travel Professional award

Excellence in Inbound Travel Services

HOMA MISTRY

Homa Mistry, CEO, Trail Blazer Tours India, expresses his gratitude at receiving the awards and says, "I am overjoyed to be receiving this award. First of all, getting an award is a recognition but getting a personal award is even better as one is appreciated for our contributions to the industry. I have been in this sector for over two decades and it has been a wonderful journey. I'm looking forward to a far better one with the country opening up and the prospects of tourism are growing by the day."

► Homa Mistry, Chief Executive Officer, Trail Blazer Tours India, was given the Excellence in Inbound Travel Services award



Excellence in Cruise Promotion

NISHITH SAXENA

Cruise Professionals was established in 2008 and represents three major cruise brands in India, Cunard, Princess Cruises, P&O Cruises, Australia, and P&O Cruises, UK. The group offers a range of attractive cruise holiday options through these cruise liners and is geared to suit every conceivable taste, price preference and target market, including contemporary, premium and ultra-luxury. Nishith Saxena, Founder & Director, shares, "I have been in the industry for 20 years and feel that the India Travel Awards is very unique as few actually recognise cruises as an industry."

► Nishith Saxena, Founder & Director, Cruise Professionals, was given the Excellence in Cruise Promotion award



Excellence in Industry Alliances

M.S. CHAWLA

A stalwart in the travel and tourism industry, M.S. Chawla has held many important positions in the travel & tourism trade associations. He has also been a part of many advisory committees of MOT. A qualified Chartered Accountant from England and Wales, he is the Founder Chairman of Interserve – the first National Consortium of Travel Agencies, as well as former President of ASTA – India Chapter, former Chairman of the International Chapters Presidents' Council of ASTA (First Indian to be elected to that position), former President of National Skål Committee of India, and many other associations.

► M. S. Chawla, Chairman, Siddharth Travels, was given the Excellence in Industry Alliances award





Excellence in Association Leadership | **SANJAY DATTA**

The President of Skål International Delhi and CMD, Airborne thanks his association members for all their support and says, "I thank the whole team and DDP for bestowing this honour on me. This has motivated me to do even better and achieve more for the industry in the coming years." Skål International Delhi is the second largest Skål club in the world and plans to add a Young Skållagues Club soon for young members.

► Sanjay Datta, President of Skål International Delhi, was given the Excellence in Association Leadership award

Most Promising Hospitality Professional | **BARUN GUPTA**

Barun Gupta, Account Director (Global Sales), Starwood Sales Organisations, says, "I'm on cloud nine on winning this award – it was an amazing and proud moment for me to receive this. What's better is closing the year with such a prestigious honour. It's really great to be recognised for something that is the most important aspect as a hospitality professional. I thank the whole DDP Group for this accolade!"

► Barun Gupta, Account Director (Global Sales), Starwood Sales Organisation was given the Most Promising Hospitality Professional award



Most Trending Personality | **SHALINI JAIN**

The Director of Click2travel focuses on experiential travel that requires intricate detailing while creating the itineraries for an exclusive experience. "We are primarily into leisure and honeymoon travel and also into experiential travel. The kind of detailing we get into and 24/7 personalised service is what makes us very different. I think the awards are a very good concept since it is a form of appreciation for your work, and the honour adds leverage to your name."

► Shalini Jain, Director-Operations, Click2Travel.in, was given the Most Trending Personality award



Best Global Distribution System (GDS) | **TRAVELPORT GALILEO**

After bagging three awards this year in the East, West and South, winning this title has completed Travelport's cycle of being the best GDS pan-India, comments Sandeep Dwivedi, CCO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient. He adds, "These achievements portray the trust travel fraternity has in us and we intend to keep this up by being the best through our endless innovations and groundbreaking solutions."

► The award was given to Travelport Galileo and received by ITQ's Chief Commercial Officer, Sandeep Dwivedi and Regional Head North, Anoop Tewari





Best Long Haul Airline

AIR CANADA

Air Canada is Canada's largest full-service airline and the largest provider of scheduled passenger services in the Canadian market, the Canada-US transborder market and in the international market to and from Canada. Together with its Air Canada Express regional partners and leisure carrier, Air Canada rouge, Air Canada serves over 38 million passengers annually and provides direct passenger service to more than 190 destinations on five continents. The airline recently launched the only direct flight from Vancouver-New Delhi, the second route between Canada & India.

► The award was given to Air Canada and received by its Director Sales, Europe & Asia, Air Canada, **Margaret Skinner**, and Country Head, **Arun Pandeya**

Best MICE Operator

GLOBAL CONNECT TRAVELS

Managing corporate clients and their respective travelling schedules is the USP of Global Connect Travels, which puts these aspects above their peers. With the experience and exposure of more than 50 years, the company offers itineraries that go perfectly with the elementary requirements of corporate clients. Covering both domestic and international destinations, Global Connect Travels offers personal attention to each and every travel query coming their way.

► The award was given to Global Connect Travels and received by its Directors, **Sumit Kaul** and **Sunil Kumar Pandit**



Best Travel Technology Provider

TI INFOTECH

The managing director of TI Infotech, **Meenu Sachdeva**, says that the company was established in the year 2005 with a total solution approach to provide technology solutions specific to travel, tourism and hospitality industry. She adds, "We couldn't be any more elated to be receiving this award! The company is promoted by a dynamic team of highly skilled and experienced professionals with an extensive experience in providing customised technology solutions across various business verticals. We offer a wide product range of technology products and services that facilitate our global clients with DMC solutions, CRM software, GDS integration, online travel booking engine, online travel solutions, and online reservation system."

► The award was given to TI Infotech and received by its Managing Director, **Meenu Sachdeva** and Marketing Manager, **Khushbu Sahay**



Best Debut Hotel

ROSEATE HOUSE NEW DELHI

Kush Kapoor, Area General Manager, Roseate Hotels and Resorts, comments, "We are extremely delighted to have received the 'Best City Resort' award for The Roseate New Delhi; the hotel is synonymous to an urban oasis. Receiving the 'Best Debut Hotel Award' for Roseate House New Delhi was even more thrilling and a proud moment for us, as the hotel was recently launched on September 9, 2016, in Aerocity. High in design and style, Roseate House New Delhi sets a whole new benchmark in urban chic, while The Roseate New Delhi is a haven of opulence and close to nature."

► The award was given to Roseate House New Delhi and received by its Area General Manager, **Kush Kapoor**



Northern lights shine on as India



Travel Awards come calling





Best Luxury Boutique Tour Operator

EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL JOURNEYS

Amit Kalsi, Founder & CEO, remarks, "I feel privileged to be an India Travel Award winner and I look forward to more success along the way. I am thankful to ITA since they recognise the niche players in the market and the evolving luxury travel designers which are handling unique experiences. If you want to be focused, you have to remain small, boutique, and more professional rather than a businessman. So, I'm glad they've been able to recognise this breed to travel providers."

► The award was given to **Experiential Travel Journeys** and received by its Founder and CEO, **Amit Kalsi**

Best Corporate Hotel

RAMADA GURGAON CENTRAL

Priya Anand, General Manager, says that the boutique hotel is a purely corporate hotel to the customers but they portray the property as home away from home. "Our ethos is warmth and that's what we try to incorporate in every corner." Adding on, **Sumit Ghosh**, Director – Sales & Marketing identifies accessibility to be a key feature of the hotel. "Be it for any branch, we are situated in all the key areas making it a sought-after choice among travellers. The recognition that India Travel Awards has brought is indeed praiseworthy and we are very honoured to be one of the recipients."

► The award was given to **Ramada Gurgaon Central** and received by its Director, **Mohit Mittal**, General Manager, **Priya Anand**, and Director Sales & Marketing, **Sumit Ghosh**



Best Upcoming Tourism Destination

RAS AL KHAIMAH

"It is a very prestigious award, and we are proud to have won the award in the Best Upcoming Tourism Destination category. We are focused on promoting Ras Al Khaimah as a preferred choice of tourist destination, and an award such as this further reinforces our motivation to work harder to increase India arrivals into the emirate," says **Haitham Matter**, Chief Executive Officer, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority.

► The award was given to **Ras Al Khaimah** and received by Senior Tourism Development Manager, **Mohamed Khater** and Account Director - India Office, **Navritu K. Rai**, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority



Best Wedding and MICE Hotel

RADISSON BLU AMRITSAR

Jitender Pal Sohal, General Manager, lauds ITA for appreciating the travel and hospitality industry's contribution to its growth. "Recognising the efforts of industry professionals is always a good initiative. It not only gives a sense of accomplishment, but also reinforces the quality of services and the standard followed by the organisation. Radisson Blu Amritsar is the most-preferred hotel for MICE, residential conferences and destination weddings as we have a lot of indoor and outdoor space."

► The award was given to **Radisson Blu Amritsar** and received by its General Manager, **Jitender Pal Sohal**, and Director of Sales, **Vishal Kumar**





Best Destination Management Company International | STHI HOLIDAYS INDIA

Receiving the award on behalf of the whole group, **Vineet Sarna**, CEO, The Leaf Holidays (STHI), says, "Our hard work and sincere efforts to follow a transparent way of doing business have been rewarded as the best international destination management company in North India. We are committed to our clients and ensure quality services to ensure they keep coming back to us every single time."

► The award was given to **STHI Holidays India** and received by its Director, **Gagan Kumar**, and CEO, **Vineet Sarna**

Best LCC International | TIGER AIR

Tiger Airways has been flying in the Indian skies for the past eight years and has recently launched operations from Lucknow as well. Speaking on the win, **Alka Jha**, Area Sales Manager-South Asia comments, "Such awards are really very motivating for us and boost our morale to do more exciting things. We have been flying in India for the past eight years and have received strong response from South India. Being a budget carrier, we have encouraged people to travel abroad at a very nominal cost and this has given us a motive to fly into more and more destinations in India."

► The award was given to **Tiger Air** and received by its Area Sales Manager - South Asia, **Alka Jha**



Best Enterprise Distribution Technology Partner | REZNEXT GLOBAL SOLUTIONS

Avinash Lodha, Chief Executive Officer, RezNext Global Solutions, said that the prestigious recognition has strengthened their position in the industry. "RezNext brought significant product differentiation in the market with its speed-driven technology, dynamic functionalities, real-time business analytics and purpose-built mobile application. It is our focus on revenue optimisation that has helped us win this recognition," he adds.

► The award was given to **RezNext Global Solutions** and received by its Chief Executive Officer, **Avinash Lodha**, and Senior Vice President, **Kevin D'costa**



Excellence in Hospitality | FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON AGRA

Situated just a stone's throw away from The Taj Mahal, the property offers excellent services at a location that not only gives easy access to the beautiful monument, but also many other attractions in the city. Well-furnished rooms, state-of-the-art amenities, a rooftop pool, and a well-equipped fitness centre, makes it any traveller's go to place in Agra.

► The award was given to **Four Points by Sheraton Agra** and received by its General Manager, **Paul Gomes** and Assistant Manager Sales, **Vipul Arora**





Best Destination Management Company

MOUNTAIN EDGE TOURS & HOLIDAYS

Shailesh Thakur, Manager – Sales & Marketing, is thrilled at being felicitated at the India Travel Awards. He says, “We are the main destination management company for the Andamans and have been doing fairly well. Business has improved as more people have been travelling to the islands and we have plans to introduce more services there. We are glad to be here!”

► The award was given to **Mountain Edge Tours & Holidays** and received by its Directors, **Sandhya Raj** and **Prakash Kumar Raj**

Best Leisure and Wedding Resort

RAMADA UDAIPUR RESORT & SPA

Dolly Taldar, the Resort Manager of the hotel explains why the resort is an ideal choice for families and weddings and says, “We are a purely luxurious resort property and have activities for all age groups such as kids play area, royal archery, table tennis and the likes. Hence, it has everything to engage families throughout their stay. The resort commands a very beautiful view of the lake and the famous Sajjan Garh fort so guests can soak in the view from the convenience of their balconies. We’ve also been very lucky to host several high-profile weddings and is a popular choice among guests.”

► The award was given to **Ramada Udaipur Resort & Spa** and received by its Managing Director, **Ratan Taldar**, and Resort Manager, **Dolly Taldar**



Best Visa Facilitation Company

UDAAN INDIA

Completing almost 25 years of existence, Udaan is today a widely recognised, reliable and respected brand in the Indian visa service industry. “It has always been our endeavour to provide the best experience to the travel fraternity and in the times to come we intend to uphold the same standards and continue to be the trendsetter,” comments Rajan Dua, Managing Director. “Our pan-India presence, dedicated and professional team, best of technology, regular updates, priority and onsite services etc., give us a leading edge over all other visa facilitators and make Udaan India a distinguished leader in the travel industry.”

► The award was given to **Udaan India** and received by its Director, **Seema Rajan Dua**, Vice President Operation Sales, **Pooja Sarin** and Head Corporate Client Servicing, **Jatin Sethi**



Best B2B Travel Event

TRAVEL SHOWS

Punam Singh, Associate – India, PLG Travel Shows, talks about the great response of the most recent edition and shares, “The last edition of Travel Wedding Show was held in July 2016 and brought together exhibitors and hosted buyers. Direct wedding planners, hotels, travel agents, and tourism offices of various destinations took part at the event and the onsite appreciation received has been heartening. Winning an award for travel shows is a great recognition and we are most grateful to DDPL and the voters for this.”

► The award was given to **Travel Shows** and received by its Associate - India PLG, Travel Shows, **Punam Singh**





Preferred Integrated Solutions Provider for Destination Weddings

DESTINATION WEDDING COMPANY (DIV. OF BLUE MOON TRAVELS)

Vijay Dadhich, Managing Director, The Destination Wedding Company, feels that as the tourism and hospitality spectrum is changing drastically and rapidly, it is important to stay ahead of the game. "It feels great to be recognised for our hard work. In today's time it is important to understand that a wedding designer or planner is different from those who organise destination weddings." Dadhich also informs that the company is leveraging technological solutions in this space in order to organise the events better.

► The award was given to Destination Wedding Company (Div. of Blue Moon Travels) and received by its Managing Director, Vijay Dadhich and CEO, Poonam Sood

Best Business Hotel HYATT REGENCY GURGAON

Roger Wright, General Manager, Hyatt Regency Gurgaon, shares, "The 445-room five-star deluxe hotel, Hyatt Regency Gurgaon is already among the highest performers of India's Hyatt hotels in terms of 'guest satisfaction'. These cultural commitments combined with a genuine commitment to the professional development of colleagues at all levels will ensure we further reinforce the integrity of Hyatt's worldwide commitment to creating long term relationships and maintaining its preferred brand status by genuinely caring for our guests and staff.

► The award was given to Hyatt Regency Gurgaon and received by its Marketing and Communication Manager, Simmi Sood and Director of Rooms, Vishal Sapra



Fastest Growing OTA HOTELEPERTZ.COM

The group has been in business for close to a decade and boasts an inventory of more than 3,50,000 hotels in 190 countries. Raman Keher, Director, HotelExpertz.com, shares, "We are proud to be a part of the awards once again. Our focus is on technology and have been providing many products for hotel booking, sightseeing, transport, visa services etc. We also want our travel partners to achieve good profits which is one of our key focus areas. We are planning to adopt new technology and get more international suppliers from different markets all around the world."

► The award was given to HotelExpertz.com and received by its Directors, Raman Kehar and Rajan Kehar



Best Domestic Airline SPICEJET

Ajay Singh, CMD of the group says, "From an airline that was almost closed for business, to one that has been recording the highest passenger load factor in the country for 18 months, we've had seven profitable quarters in a row. I want to thank everyone for this would not have been possible without the support of our travel trade friends. Everybody stepped up in times of need including the consumers and for that we are extremely grateful. We are incredibly honoured and blessed."

► The award was given to SpiceJet and received by its Sr. VP & Head of Inflight Services & Customer Experience, Kamal Hingorani





Best Global Consolidation Services | MYSTIFLY CONSULTING INDIA

Mystify has a base of over 2500 customers spread across 60+ countries. **Joseph Riju Boswell**, Sr. Vice President-Sales, Mystify, says, "Our business rides on two strong wheels — content that is globally comprehensive and cutting-edge technology. That helps us pioneer in not just our content, but all those solutions that can help our customers amplify their business offerings, and optimise the air travel procurement process. Our strong supplier network, our core technologies and the loyalty of our customers have made this success possible for us."

► The award was given to **Mystify Consulting India** and received by its Founder, Managing Director & CEO **Rajeev Kumar G**

Best Leisure City Hotel | RADISSON BLU AGRA TAJ EAST GATE

The Radisson Blu in Agra is conveniently located on Taj East Gate Road, which leads directly to the Taj Mahal. You can walk to the UNESCO World Heritage Site from the hotel and take in its gardens, fountains and Mughal architecture. Be sure to explore the nearby walled city of Agra Fort, and plan a day trip to must-see places like the red sandstone buildings of Fatehpur Sikri and the temples of Mathura. The property offers 142 rooms and suites with amenities like free high-speed, wireless Internet access.

► The award was given to **Radisson Blu Agra Taj East Gate** and received by its General Manager, **Rajat Tuli**



Best Technology Solution Provider | CRS TECHNOLOGIES

CRS Technologies was initiated to open the doors of an international database of operators both on the travel and hospitality front. Its Managing Director, **Neelkanth P.** says, "It streamlines operations to deliver an easier and richer experience both for the firm and for clients. Technology is the future and it is here to stay. We have pioneered mechanisms and technologies, which help the travel industry and hospitality sector to improve their performance, optimise their resources and maximise profits."

► The award was given to **CRS Technologies** and received by its Managing Director, **Neelkanth P.** and Sales Manager, **George G Tony**



Best Wedding Hotel | KK ROYAL HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTRE

KK Royal Hotel & Convention Centre Jaipur offers unique combination of ethnic traditional charm and modern facilities to make your stay in Jaipur the most comfortable. Located amidst seven acres of aesthetically landscaped grounds amidst Aravalli Hills, this Jaipur hotel is just steps away from the famous heritage of Jaipur 'The Amber Fort', world famous monuments, Wildlife Park, elephant village, mountain treks and shopping arcades are all just minutes away. It also offers excellent meeting and banquet facilities that cater to your important business, social events and meetings in Jaipur.

► The award was given to **KK Royal Hotel & Convention Centre** and received by its Director, **Hemant Mittal**





Best Global Wholesaler TRAVSTARZ HOLIDAY & DESTINATIONS

“Travstarz has steadily grown over the last few years and has today become a well-established brand name across the country as a wholesaler and consolidator for both hotels and airlines,” says **Pankaj Nagpal**, Managing Director, Travstarz Global Group. “We are thankful to our hotel partners for reposing their strong faith in us and supporting us for all these years and extend special thanks to various tourism boards as well for their trust in us as a dependable and most preferred wholesale partner for their countries.”

► The award was given to **Travstarz Holiday & Destinations** and received by its General Manager - Sales & Marketing, **Tarun Bhardwaj**

Best Customised Tour Operator YOURTRAVELSECRETARY

Yourtravelsecretary was set up two years ago, as a professionally managed service company aiming at providing quality travel solutions. On bagging the award, **Gunjan Hans**, Business Development Manager, comments, “We understand the client’s preference and customise our services according to their needs, presenting a personalised itinerary for them to enjoy. This distinction reaffirms our efforts to offer nothing but the best and will continue to do so. It remains our constant endeavour to see our guests happy and content with unforgettable memories.”

► The award was given to **yourtravelsecretary** and received by its Business Development Managers, **Pallavi Pandey**, **Gunjan Hans** and Marketing Manager, **Muzahid Khan**



Best Luxury Convention Hotel THE LEELA AMBIENCE CONVENTION HOTEL, DELHI

Boasting the largest convention hotel in the capital, The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel offers everything needed for a modern-day conference. Plush rooms, fine dining, recreational facilities and a huge convention space spread over 70,000 sq ft, make it the best venue for any such event happening in the city.

► The award was given to **The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi** and received by its Director Sales & Marketing, **Leslie Morrison**, and Head PR and Marketing Communications, **Devashree Mahajan**, General Manager, **Jaideep Anand**, and Front Office Manager, **Rajesh Ghosh**



Best New Travel Portal BIGBREAKS.COM

Launched in early 2016, Bigbreaks.com prides itself in providing the most competitive airfares, great deals on hotels in India and abroad, and holiday packages to destinations as far and diverse as New Zealand in the East, and Peru in the West. **Kapil Goswamy**, Managing Director, says their USP lies in customer service, and the ability to customise holidays to the last detail. “While all the giants of the online world are tech companies selling travel, we are a traditional brick and mortar travel company that has adopted technology to provide our customers choice, comfort and convenience.”

► The award was given to **Bigbreaks.com** and received by its Founder & Managing Director, **Kapil Goswamy**, and Vice President, **Ranjit Bansal**









Best Corporate Booking Tool

ZILLIOUS SOLUTIONS

Priyank Pande, Senior Technical Associate, who received the award on behalf of the organisation, enthuses, "It is a very proud moment for the whole organisation. The environment that we work in is very encouraging and constantly fosters growth. The fact that we evolve in accordance to the changing times is what defines us as an award-winning brand. 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."

► The award was given to **Zillious Solutions** and received by its Technical Associate, **Abhinav Kapoor**, Senior Technical Associates, **Priyank Pande**, **Shikha Khanna**, and Technical Associate, **Neha Yadav**

Pioneering the Concept of Budget Hotels in India

CLARKS INN GROUP OF HOTELS

In just over a decade, Clarks Inn boasts a portfolio of 75 hotel properties, including 40 hotels that are currently under operation, across 17 Indian states. **Sandeep Roy**, General Manager – Business Development, says that the award is a testimony and massive industry mandate to Clarks Inn for its pioneering hospitality services, exemplary business model and impressive growth in the region.

► The award was given to **Clarks Inn Group of Hotels** and received by its Director - Sales & Marketing, **Nitin Srivastava** and AVP - Operations, **Rahul Banerjee**



Excellence in Customer Partnership

STARWOOD HOTELS AND RESORTS

Dhananjay S. Saliankar, Regional Director of Sales and Marketing and Starwood Sales & Organisation South Asia, is grateful to his team's dedication and hard work that have kept the Starwood banner flying high. He comments, "India Travel Awards is a great recognition for the whole team. They are the ones who directly interact with guests and we've been on the top when it comes to imbibing relationships with our customers. It is a very well-deserved win for Starwood."

► The award was given to **Starwood Hotels and Resorts** and received by its Regional Director of Sales and Marketing and Starwood Sales & Organisation South Asia, **Dhananjay S. Saliankar**



Best Medical Value Tourism

SAFEMEDTRIP.COM

Pradeep Thukral, Founder & CEO, dedicates the win to the relentless efforts of the team and also to the large number of our customers (foreign patients) for their trust in their services. "We shall strive even harder and remain committed to serving our customers with service excellence, professionalism and integrity," he adds.

► The award was given to **SafeMedTrip.com** and received by its Director, **Pradeep Thukral**





Best Heritage Hotel

THE GRAND IMPERIAL

The 111-year-old property's Sales Manager **Vibhu Sharma** reveals that the key to staying relevant is by adopting technology and embracing new ways while holding on to our roots and heritage. "We have done exactly that – the property is what we fondly preserve just the way we provide top notch hospitality to all our guests alike. We strive to continue to commit to our religion of hospitality and we hope to be thanking everyone year on year as we create a legacy of being the best, again."

► The award was given to **The Grand Imperial** and received by its Manager Sales, **Vibhu Sharma**

Best Destination Weddings & Events Travel Planner

LEISURE & TRAVEL WORLD

Akashdeep Chanana, Director, Leisure & Travel World, said, "We are one of the very few travel management companies that are into weddings and MICE. There are quite a few for MICE but not for weddings. Our main focus is on destination weddings so we will be launching a new department who will solely work on this. We are looking in Europe for the next two to three years so we're hopeful for a good season."

► The award was given to **Leisure & Travel World** and received by its Director, **Akashdeep Chanana**



Best Rail Tour Operator

WORLDWIDE RAIL JOURNEYS

"The award is recognition of our hard work and is an achievement for the entire work force which puts in their heart and soul in making rail journeys so essential to travel experience. The testimony from our clients explains our credibility and our professionalism in business," says **Manish Saini**, Director, Worldwide Rail Journeys. Saini further informs that the company is focusing on charter service and is also planning to launch India on Wheels which will showcase the entirety of India's best tourism offerings on a rail journey. "By next year we may also introduced Specific Religious Tours which will showcase various religious destinations on a rail journey," adds Saini.

► The award was given to **Worldwide Rail Journeys** and received by its Director, **Manish S. Saini**



Best City Resort

THE ROSEATE, NEW DELHI

Kush Kapoor, Area General Manager, Roseate Hotels and Resorts, comments, "We are extremely delighted to have received the 'Best City Resort' award for The Roseate New Delhi; the hotel is synonymous to an urban oasis. Receiving the 'Best Debut Hotel Award' for Roseate House New Delhi was even more thrilling and a proud moment for us, as the hotel was recently launched on September 9, 2016, in Aerocity. High in design and style, Roseate House New Delhi sets a whole new benchmark in urban chic, while The Roseate New Delhi is a haven of opulence and close to nature."

► The award was given to **The Roseate, New Delhi** and received by its Director Sales & Marketing, **Vivek Chaddha**





Wonder Of The World Destination | UTTAR PRADESH TOURISM

Om Prakash Singh, the then Minister of Tourism, Govt. of Uttar Pradesh, comments, "First of all, I'd like to congratulate the whole team on successfully organising such a wonderful show. India is one of the oldest countries and has a rich history and culture. By holding such shows based on regions, more people are being recognised and encouraged to do better this way. Our state has no dearth of important places to visit like Mathura, the Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, Kashi, and so many more."

► The award was given to Uttar Pradesh Tourism

Best All Seasons Destination | PUNJAB HERITAGE AND TOURISM PROMOTION BOARD

The Punjab government has made new strategies to promote Punjab across the world informs Navjot Pal Singh Randhawa, Director Tourism, Cultural Affairs, Punjab Tourism. He says, "The Punjab Government has made huge investments in developing infrastructure, marketing and publicity of tourist sites, monuments, developing tourism products, historical and religious buildings and hotel industry." The Board is aggressively working towards promoting Punjab as a tourist and MICE destination.

► The award was given to Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board and received by its Deputy Manager Marketing, Anmol Nidhi



Best Mid-Segment Hotel | PARK INN BY RADISSON BLU AMRITSAR AIRPORT

Vishal Kumar, Director of Sales & Marketing, Radisson Blu Hotel Amritsar & Park Inn Amritsar, says the group is ecstatic to be bagging two different awards. "It's a proud moment for us and its double the excitement! Park Inn Amritsar is doing pretty well in terms of occupancy and the destination itself has been growing year by year. We are doing our very best to do even better next year."

► The award was given to Park Inn by Radisson Blu Amritsar Airport and received by its General Manager, Jitendar Pal Sohal, and Director of Sales, Vishal Kumar

Best Destination Management Company Domestic | KK HOLIDAYS N VACATIONS

The company provides ground services in Rajasthan and offers local handling of guests for major companies in India. Mahender Singh, Director, says, "We emerged as one-stop travel solution for Rajasthan. Our competitive and customised packages have led us to the forefront. We have been in the tourism segment for the past 10 years and have been getting good business from domestic travellers. Our focus is also to promote the rural areas of Rajasthan."

► The award was given to KK Holidays N Vacations and received by its Director, Mahender Singh and General Manager, K.S. Rathore



Best Leisure Hotel | FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON AGRA

Four Points by Sheraton, Agra allows guests to enjoy a refreshing swim on the rooftop pool, relish a nice meal at the varied offerings at the restaurants or just relax in the well-equipped rooms at the property. Situated close to the Taj Mahal, the property is a delight for those who are in the city to get the best of the magnificent monument as well as other attractions around it.

► The award was given to Four Points by Sheraton Agra and received by its General Manager, Paul Gomes and Assistant Manager Sales, Vipul Arora



Fastest Growing Travel Company

HOLIDAYS BY SAHIBJI

Gursahib Singh Sethi, the CEO of Sahibji Group of Companies, has been in this business for the last 25 years where the past seven to eight years have seen exponential growth, thanks to their Director who joined the company for business development. “The roadmap for Sahibji was initiated by my father and today, we have doubled up at a very fast pace and hope for many more awards in the years to come. We’re blessed to have a great Sahibji team and this award is for all their hard work.”

► The award was given to **Holidays by Sahibji** and received by its Director Business Development, **Manheer Singh Sethi**, and Chief Executive Office, **Gursahib Singh Sethi**

Partner State

PUNJAB HERITAGE AND TOURISM PROMOTION BOARD

Navjot Pal Singh Randhawa, Chief Executive Officer, Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board feels that going by the unique, systematic and responsible marketing approach, Punjab Tourism has come a long way since PHTPB started its operation in full swing. He says, “As far as marketing goes, our focus so far has been towards travel trade which is successfully ongoing through participation in travel forums, conventions and exhibitions across the country. There is simultaneous streamlining and addition of new tourism products. Punjab Tourism is promoting its major tourism circuits by participating in the domestic and international trade fairs, Fams and by other promotion activities.”

► The award was given to **Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board** and received by its Deputy Manager Marketing, **Anmol Nidhi**



Partner State

UTTAR PRADESH TOURISM

Uttar Pradesh, known world over for its striking Taj Mahal continues to draw a large number of tourists both domestic and foreign is endowed with a varied spectrum of tourism offerings. The state is home to some very important Hindu pilgrim centres of India. Some important destinations related to the life of Lord Buddha are also located in U.P. The state has a plethora of unique wildlife especially in the Terai region of Dudhwa National Park, the only protected area (other than Kaziranga National Park, Assam) where one can spot one-horned rhinoceros along with the tiger. The department of tourism in the state recently introduced the Uttar Pradesh Heritage Arc which connects three most important tourism hubs of the state i.e. Agra, Lucknow and Varanasi.

► The award was given to **Uttar Pradesh Tourism**

Hospitality Partner

HYATT REGENCY GURGAON

Roger Wright, General Manager, Hyatt Regency Gurgaon, shares, “The 445-room five-star deluxe hotel, Hyatt Regency Gurgaon is already among the highest performers of India’s Hyatt hotels in terms of ‘guest satisfaction’. These cultural commitments combined with a genuine commitment to the professional development of colleagues at all levels will ensure we further reinforce the integrity of Hyatt’s worldwide commitment to creating long term relationships and maintaining its preferred brand status by genuinely caring for our guests and staff.

► The award was given to **Hyatt Regency Gurgaon** and received by its Marketing and Communication Manager, **Simmi Sood**







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