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As many as 42 exhibitors, including state and union territory tourism departments, tour operators, hoteliers, resort owners, Air India, IRCTC, ITDC, and other stakeholders were present at the India Stand at WTM London.

 PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA FROM LONDON

Ask anyone who had visited the WTM London 2016 event about the standout feature of the event and chances are that a majority will say it was the Kerala Tourism stand. It is little wonder then that the snake boat replicas of the Kerala Tourism pavilion helped them bag the Best Stand Feature.

But the snake boats were not the only bright spot; India was literally shining at the event. Being the Premier Partner at the event, it had for its theme – India-The Land of Eternal Heritage. The Indian delegation was represented by **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Tourism and Culture along with **Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India; **Ashok Chandra Panda**, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Tourism & Culture,

Govt of Odisha, **Dr. Venu V**, Principal Secretary, Kerala Tourism and various other



“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 tourism stakeholders.”

Dr. Mahesh Sharma
Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Tourism and Culture

senior tourism officials from various states.

Talking about the promising scenario for Indian tourism, Dr. Sharma said

that the upswing in Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India (from 7.68 million in 2014 to 8.03 million in 2015 showing a growth rate of 4.5

per cent) is an image booster for Indian tourism. About the host country, he said that tourist arrivals in India from the UK alone was 8,67,601 in 2015, registering a growth

of 3.4 per cent growth over the previous year.

With India having invested more than \$400 million in developing tourism infrastructure around the country in the last 18 months, Dr. Sharma said the government was expanding its e-Tourist Visa scheme and is also working towards safety and cleanliness.

He added, “India has set a target to achieve 1 per

cent of international tourist arrivals through a multi-pronged approach, including proactive marketing strategies in partnership with tourism stakeholders. The Electronic Tourist Visa (eTV) initiative has been a great step in this direction and has further boosted tourist arrivals.”

While apprising about various strategies adopted by the ministry, Zutshi talked

about the government's focus on infrastructure development, promotion of niche areas, such as medical, golf, cruise and MICE.

With responsible tourism as one of the themes for a session, Zutshi informed how responsible tourism is being included in India's tourism policy, adding that India is also looking at adopting the principle of polluter pays for the industry. “We have to study the carrying capacity of destinations. India is prioritising tourism by investing in the public infrastructure in order to facilitate specific tourism investments from the private sector.”

Talking about threats to tourism, he said, “Countries need to be more responsible when issuing travel advisories as perception of safety in destinations is a key factor.”



“India is prioritising tourism by investing in the public infrastructure in order to facilitate specific tourism investments from the private sector.”

Vinod Zutshi
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India

Book IndiGo on Travelport

IndiGo Airlines went live on Travelport's Travel Commerce Platform in India helping agents to access the airline's content in a seamless manner.

 NISHA VERMA

Celebrating the launch of IndiGo's fares and ancillaries to all travel agencies on Travelport's integrated platform, **Aditya Ghosh**, President & Whole Time Director, IndiGo, and **Gordon Wilson**, President and CEO, Travelport, discussed the opportunities that they can offer to travel agents and consumers alike.

“With IndiGo going live on the Travelport platform, it means

that travel agencies in India can have access to IndiGo with the same fares, content and ancillaries on Travelport as they can on IndiGo's website or IndiGo's API. What is progressive about this move is that we are taking it international and making IndiGo available to all travel agencies online or offline using the Travelport system in 180 countries, from where they can generate sales,” says Wilson.

However, IndiGo did take its time to come on board as Ghosh explains, “LCCs tradi-

tionally were not on the GDS, but Travelport was the first GDS to be able to bring on board Ryanair and easyJet. I believe Southwest Airlines is also on another GDS platform, which makes three of the largest LCCs in the world in the last couple of years to have figured on a GDS. This gave us the confidence to sign up with a GDS and Travelport itself has undergone a change and evolution, which works in our favour.”

Speaking on how travel agents are going to benefit

from this, especially when the prices on IndiGo's website and the GDS are same, Ghosh says, “Travel agents are a very important part of our business and more than two third of our business comes from travel agencies, both online and offline. This will help travel agents access IndiGo content around the world at more than 68,000 customer touch points, and in a much more seamless manner they will be able to see the inventory on the same screen. They don't have to toggle through different screens.



Aditya Ghosh
President & Whole Time Director
IndiGo

This will help agents access IndiGo content around the world at more than 68,000 customer touch points



Gordon Wilson
President and CEO
Travelport

We are making IndiGo available to all travel agencies online or offline using the Travelport system in 180 countries

Contd. on page 23 ▶





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Gearing up for webinar marathon

Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) has its kitty full with visa trainings, webinars, roadshows, a Turkey Education Tour, lobbying for GST rebate and focusing on regional chapters.



NISHA VERMA

OTOAI President **Guldeep Singh Sahni** reveals, "We are making our regional chapters active. We want our chapter members to be active in association work, and thus apart from having regular members meet, we will be adding more things like trainings, etc." The association will have a meeting in Ahmedabad in December. "We are going to now penetrate regions within the regions. At the Ahmedabad members meet, all the Gujarat members are going to discuss agendas which they will be sending to the main office bearers in Delhi."



Guldeep Singh Sahni
President
OTOAI

80-100 members attending the workshop," Sahni says. The association is also organising several webinars for different destinations. "We had a webinar with Scotland Tourism and we are going to have another one with them in the second week of December. In the first week of December, we will have a webinar with a cruise supplier, and we will be doing

more such webinars in the future as well," he adds. He said that January 2017 will also see them partnering for roadshows with destinations like Britain and Scotland as well.

The Turkey Education Tour, which was postponed in September, is now happening in March next year. "It is going to be a purely educational tour, and we are designing it right now. First, we want to educate the members about what is happening in Turkey, and second stage of the tour will be educating our members about the product. It will be a six-day tour and will be sponsored by Turkish-Indian Travel Council," he reveals.

Sahni said that they are planning to do a celebratory event for OTOAI very soon. "We are going to celebrate the existence of OTOAI, or celebrate a festival in any city within India.

It will be an informal event, and we are thinking of doing such an event once in a year."

While all these initiatives are there, Sahni says that the most important issue is of GST. "We have already written to the government. We are meeting senior people from the Finance Ministry to highlight our concern. The biggest problem is that when the tour operator is booking an international package, he is being charged 18 per cent tax, but the same doesn't apply when someone goes and books the same services online. This will in turn take a toll on our business. We offer services which are produced and consumed outside the country, and ideally, they shouldn't be taxed in India. The government can tax our profits, which is not an issue. The tour operators' businesses can't be categorised into export or import."

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Technology for maximum gain

In the age of digitalisation, effective analysis of data has proved to be the key in delivering personalisation of services in the airline industry. This ensures an increase in conversion rates, improve repurchase rate and customer satisfaction.

Policy backfire?

Aimed at curbing the presence of touts around monuments, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has introduced a new policy that authorises only ASI certified guides to work in centrally protected monuments and sites managed by the group. The licensing of guides will be done by ASI; while the licences certified by the Ministry of Tourism are considered valid, guides will still have to undergo the necessary examinations by ASI until Sept 7, 2017, after which fresh licences will be issued for the next five years.

The new policy has caused a furore among the industry mainly due to the changes in the eligibility criteria that mandates a bachelor's degree in history. Several guides who have been working for decades might find themselves unqualified and, eventually, jobless under the new directive. Aside from that, there will be only one category for them – ASI monument guide, as opposed to the previous regional, state or monument category. The policy seems to have been formed in a haste without taking feedback into consideration from the sector. It is currently being challenged by several tourism bodies who have taken the matter to the Supreme Court.

The concept of Fourth Industrial Revolution as first suggested by Professor Klaus Schwab, WEF Founder, elaborates a revolution which is a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres.

Within the next few years, artificial intelligence and machine learning, advanced robotics and autonomous transport, advanced materials, biotechnology and genomics are going to collate providing real time everything – from industry reports, to business analysis, consumer behaviours to industry patterns. Each entity with its behavioural prototype formed by pulling together their digital, biological, etc. activity will bring together in a new phase of digitalisation.

Most of these advancements right now are at various stages of evolution. In the travel and tourism domain, it is still in a very nascent stage. Presently, we use various online tools to promote our businesses to reach out to more and more customers, but how far are we

really succeeding? Are we being able to create real consumer base and loyalty? Are the dissatisfied customer's cases getting analysed? Are we keeping a tab on the data required for launching successful campaigns like frequent flyers programs? Are we actually evaluating the vast data of consumers available with us?

It is time to bring together data attained from booking/travel data, social media searches/clicks, web behaviour, airline loyalty quotient, frequent flying pattern etc., and focus on customers accordingly

In order to reap the benefits of the Revolution, we need to understand what we have in hand today. Hence, understanding technology is very important. Effective data analysis is the first and foremost step towards reaping the benefits of digitalisation.

An apt example can be taken of the airline industry today. The potential of personalisation here is still unharnessed by the biggest players. Although digitalisation has remarkably enhanced the quality and quantity of data available today, its power goes unrealised through low level of application to attain business goals. The apt use of data in the airline industry can increase conversion rates, help launch more effective marketing campaigns, increase revenue per trip, improve repurchase rate and boost satisfaction, advocacy and loyalty of their brands. In order to get maximum benefits, efficient analysis of data is mandatory.

It is time to bring together data attained from various sources like booking/travel data, social media searches/clicks, web behaviour, airline loyalty quotient, frequent flying pattern etc., and focus on customers accordingly. Understanding the behaviour of the customer, his likes/dislikes, needs, and experience ends the first step towards using digitalisation next comes

the implementation which can be done through providing tailored messages to airline customers, free upgradation of class, extra facilities, check in details, boarding and check in information and gate number. Launching loyalty programs and its benefits comes next. An important portion of loyalty goes to customers with grievances. Addressing such cases and offering amends is another approach to building consumer loyalty.

(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)



Anil Parashar
 CEO & President, InterGlobe
 Technology Quotient

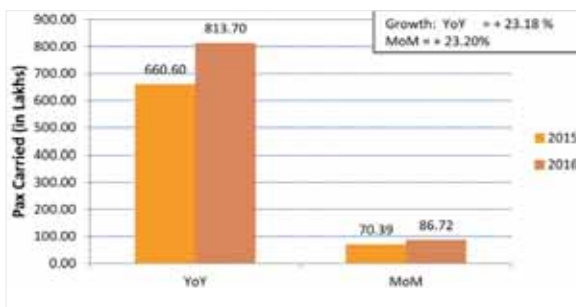
Money matters

Prime Minister Narendra Modi may have struck the demonetisation chord in early November but the aftermath is still being felt everywhere. With barely a month left for the old `1000 and `500 notes to be banned, everyone is busy falling in line, albeit at the banks. The rupee closed at a 39-month low against the US dollar and analysts expect that the home currency may hit a level between `70-72 per dollar in the near term. This is the grim economic scenario, add to this the trouble that foreign tourists are facing once they land in India. And then there are small-time travel agents who always believed in keeping some liquid cash.

At a time when the Indian economy was doing so well and was poised to achieve greater heights this has served as a speed breaker. However, many argue that this will be a major development for the long run. It remains to be seen how long will it be till we start reaping the benefits.

SpiceJet leads PLF in Oct @91.9%

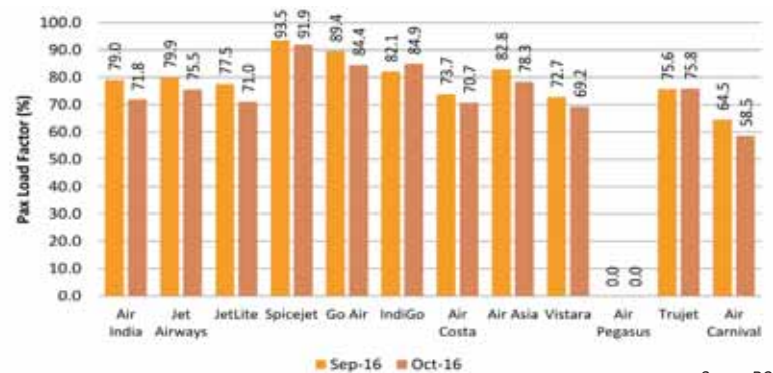
Domestic airlines in India have been booming this year, registering a growth of 23.18 per cent in passenger load factor, with SpiceJet topping the list.



Passengers carried by domestic airlines during Jan-Oct 2016 were 813.70 lakhs as against 660.60 lakhs during the corresponding period of previous year thereby registering a growth of 23.18 per cent.

The passenger load factor (PLF) in October this year almost remained constant compared to previous month primarily due to the end of tourist season, while the overall cancellation rate of scheduled domestic airlines for the month of Oct 2016 has been 0.72 per cent.

SpiceJet recorded the highest PLF of 91.9 per cent amongst all other domestic airlines.



Source: DGCA

Make Indian inbound incredible

An airline, a government representative, a hotelier and an international tourism body get together at Thomas Cook's India Travel Summit to share their perspective on what they think can help increase inbound for Indian tourism.

Participants ▶	 <p>◀ Suman Billa Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India</p>	 <p>◀ Ragini Chopra VP, Corporate Communications, Jet Airways</p>	 <p>◀ David Scowsill President & CEO W TTC</p>	 <p>◀ Renu Basu Global VP-Sales, Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces</p>
The good	India is the only country to offer e-Tourist Visas from 0 to 150 countries within just one year.	It's great that we are looking at developing smaller cities and airports because Mumbai and Delhi are choked.	India's tourism sector has extraordinary potential and is forecast to grow by 7.5% p.a. over the next decade.	Foreigners are well aware of India and what it has to offer. It is really about reinforcing that awareness.
The bad	For a country of India's size and potential, we are hugely underperforming. We need to get cleanliness and security right. We need to capture the \$80-100 per night market.	We are sidled. We need to be more co-ordinated. Why should only tourism offices sell the destination? Why should marketing of an airline become only the airline's responsibility? It's rare to see public-private partnerships in India.	International arrivals were around 8 million visitors per year, which is substantially lower than other countries. China receives 57 million visitors annually and Thailand 30 million.	Indian media tends to blow up the negative things. So our brand message is not reaching the existing and potential markets. We need to create a perception that India is safe. Infrastructure like information centres, clean toilets, should be up to the mark.
The Plan of Action	MICE will be the leader for growth in India. But we haven't gotten it right. We have fairly good infrastructure in several parts of India. But one of our failures has been our inability to connect the dots. We need to create an eco-system for bids like the Hyderabad model where HICC, the service providers and the hotels bid together. We must have state or destination level convention promotion bureaus.	Tourism is a state subject and some states do a fabulous job while some need encouragement from the government to move forward. We want to work with the states and the government and market the destination together.	Three things India needs to focus on: Have a co-ordinated plan between public and private sectors, co-ordination within governments to have public-public plan and address GST, human capital, policies, and focus on e-visas and infrastructure. India needs to focus on its domestic market before catering to the international market.	We need to tap the Asian countries because it is under-explored. We also need single-window clearances for hotels.

As told to Hazel Jain



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WTM 2016 comes with a new format

With India as the Premier Partner at WTM London 2016, the Indian contingent talks about the event and how this edition has been different from the previous ones. From this year the format has changed from four days to three days.

 PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA FROM LONDON



Ashok Chandra Panda
Minister of State (WC) for Tourism & Culture, Odisha Government

“Not just have the African countries and South East Asian countries displayed their products in a very attractive manner, but the India Tourism pavilion is also very eye catching. Along with WTM London, we will also participate at ITB Berlin. WTM London helps us get more business and it's very helpful as it's here we can get in touch with foreign tour operators. In Orissa we are now trying to encash on coastal tourism as well as the architectural beauty of our various sites.”

“Overall I'm very pleased to see that India is a Premier Partner at WTM London 2016, which is a very good step forward to bring India on the map of promotional activity. This is really important for the destination. A positive message like this is appreciated, we have seen interest being shown and we have had strong meetings. Business from the UK is developing extraordinarily well, despite the influence of Brexit and currency devaluation. Commercial effort on all fronts — DMC wise, partner wise and from tourism boards need to continue, a one-time effort won't work.”



Mario Habig
CEO Inbound Business
Le Passage to India



Anmol Nidhi
Deputy Manager Marketing
Punjab Tourism

“Congratulations to India Tourism for being the Premier Partner of WTM. WTM gives us an excellent platform to interact with quality tour operators. The interactions have been very good and it helps us to work very closely with the European market, the UK market, North America and other foreign tour operators. As compared to last year, the growth in FTAs has been 1.5 per cent so far, by 2020 it'll go up to 4-5 per cent. We have come up with new destinations and products that will help us to increase tourist arrivals in Punjab.”



Jehangir N. Katgara
Chairman and Managing Director, Trail Blazer Tours India

“Last year was good and this year it feels better, the pavilions look very attractive. We have had very good footfall and there has also been a lot of participation. We have been able to meet the people that we've wanted to meet. For any of these travels marts we need to come prepared and we need to make appointments in advance. If you just land up here and expect to get business, then you'll be wasting your time and money.”

“This year WTM has been better than last year. There is positivity in the market and people are keen to visit India. The e-Tourist Visa facility that has been launched in India has helped to a large extent, operators who had actually discontinued certain destinations are now showing interest to re-launch. For us it's been great, the three days were very hectic, we got to meet new tour operators as well. Business has been buoyant, the UK by far is the second largest market for India.”



Gautam Kaul
COO (Inbound)
YatraExotic Routes



Tirath Shah
Chief Operating Officer
Rezlive.com

“WTM has been very good for us so far. We had some important meetings lined up during the three days and all of them have been very good. Business in general has been very good, we now have our own technology and we have seen exponential growth so far and we hope that this will continue. We have been growing very well and we have opened new offices across the globe — in the Philippines and Thailand. We are into inbound business as well now, and our outbound and inbound business is growing very well, this is something we had been looking forward to.”

“We are coming to WTM after a gap of three years, so we are trying to revive our old links and meet as many people as possible. We have come up with a new campaign and we are trying to revive the brand of Rajasthan and in the years to come we plan to be present on a much larger scale and meet more and more people and promote tourism in Rajasthan.”



Anand Tripathi
Joint Director
Rajasthan Tourism

“What we have seen at WTM 2016 is a little difference in terms of appointments. The three days have been hectic for us; besides meeting people with whom we are already doing business we have also met some potential clients. Going forward the three-day format seems to be working for WTM. It is also good for the buyers, and everyone made it on time for their appointments.”



Rohit Arora
Area General Manager
The Park, New Delhi



Sandeep Jain
Director, Special Holidays

“WTM was very good this year and the overall experience was very exciting, we had some very good buyers come around, and largely it turned out to be quite an interesting show. The stand, the pavilion, and the participants seemed to be quite satisfying. Marts such as WTM are very important for us, it's an important show for us.”

“WTM, the show itself, has been very good, it's got a good connect to the UK market. It's a very important networking platform for those trading in the UK market. I think it's a good idea to do a three-day event but I somehow don't agree with the format to extend it till 7 PM as everyone leaves by 5 PM.”



Dipak Deva
Managing Director, Travel Corporation India (TCI),
SITA Destination Management and Distant Frontiers



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Hidden jewel in the Mediterranean

Bulktrip.com, in association with Atlantis Voyages, hosted a Fam trip to Tunisia for a delegation of 20 travel agents along with media partners. They covered all major Tunisian cities with an aim to showcase the country as a preferred outbound destination for Indian travellers.

 SEEMA DATT FROM TUNISIA



Karan Khurana
Managing Director
Prime Leisure

“Tunisia holds a very good potential for Indian market in future and has the right products for Indian travellers. From oasis of date trees in Tozeur to the vast Sahara desert, from luxury resorts with casinos and nightlife on the beaches of Sousse to the beautiful relaxing sunny Hammamet, we saw it all! Not to forget the capital city Tunis bustling with history, culture, good food and ancient sites along with the Mediterranean coast.”

“Tunisia, with over 2000 years of heritage, is a small country with a rich cultural history. Tunisia is a complete destination offering finest beaches, casinos, modern cities, snow-covered mountains as well as desert. With air connectivity with all major airlines like emirates, Qatar Airways and Turkish Airlines, Tunisia has great potential to attract Indian tourists. For gourmet lovers, it's a paradise to enjoy the unlimited cuisine options from Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Indian, Asian, Continental and of course Tunisian.”



Tushar Jain
Group Managing Director
Bulktrip.com

“Highlight of the destination is of course the gateway to Sahara desert. The Bardo National Museum has archaeological exhibits of Roman mosaics and the site of Ancient Carthage features the artefacts of that era. Sousse has beautiful beaches and thriving nightlife and casinos. The other advantages are pleasant climate most time of the year, good infrastructure and not too expensive. They have good gastronomy options for non-vegetarians but have very limited options for vegetarians. Tunisia can be considered as an add-on destination with Turkey, Dubai or any other Mediterranean country.”



Rajesh Jain
Director
Travel Leaf India



Ankush Jain
Managing Director
Go Now Travels

“Tunisia is a hidden Jewel for Indian tourists. A beautiful combination of blue waters, and blue skies and fresh air all around. I would like to thank Ministry of Tourism Tunisia for giving us an opportunity to visit this beautiful country, inbound operators Atlantis Voyages and their team for taking such good care of us during the entire tour. The people of Tunisia are very welcoming and they are the real asset to the country.”



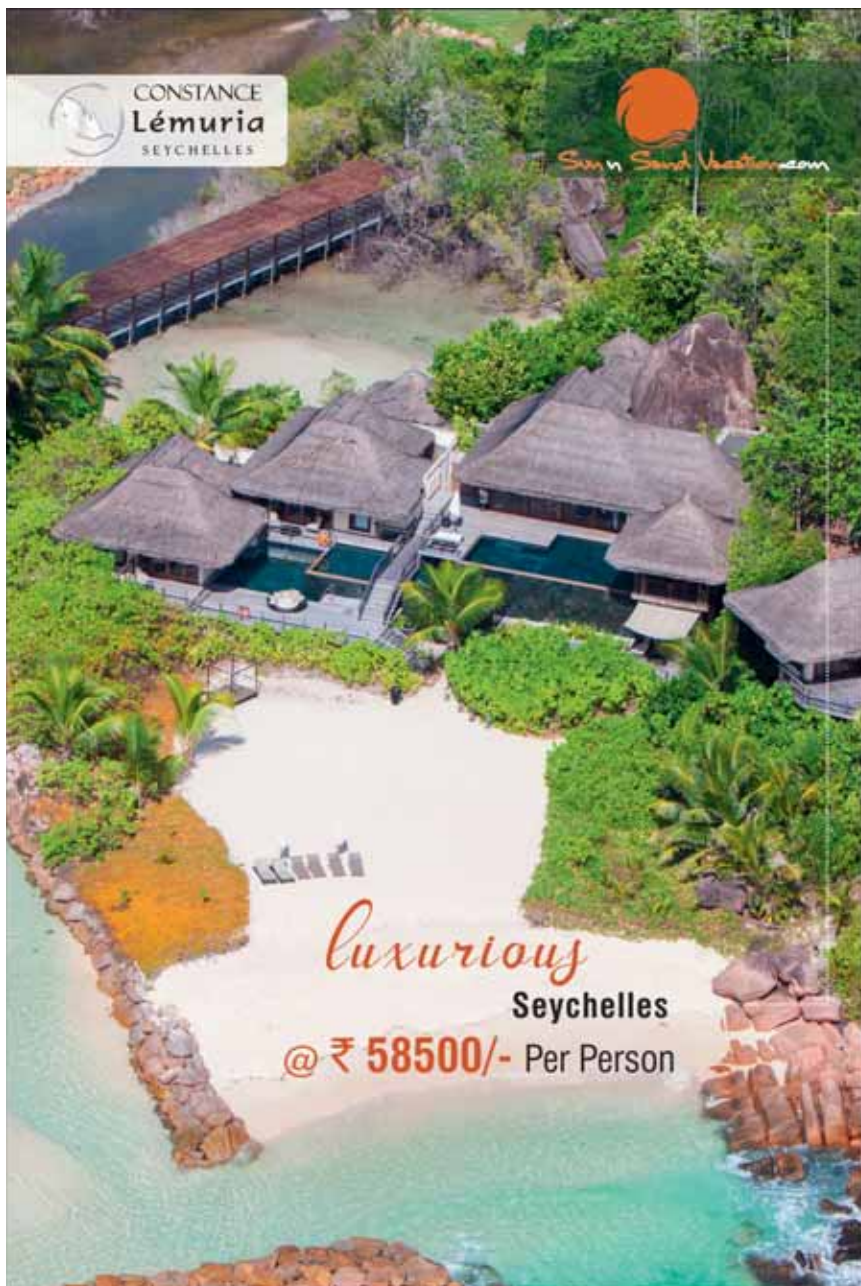
Mayank Maheshwari
Director
Rainbow Vacations

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Aiming for 30% growth from India

Minor Hotels was in India for its fourth roadshow along with 19 partners. With about 30 per cent growth this year, they are hoping to see better growth by the end of the last quarter.

SAMAPTI DAS



Meg E. Evans
Regional Director of Sales & Marketing SE Asia, Minor Hotels

“Indian market is extremely important for all our hotels. We see good growth in Maldives and obviously Thailand is a very big destination. We have seen big Y-o-Y growth from the market in both MICE and FITs and also Indian weddings. We anticipate the same for 2017. We want to see more awareness in India market and are hopeful about a Minor Hotels property opening in India in mid-2017.”



Crystal Abrams
Sales and Marketing Manager, Avani Seychelles Barbarons Resort & Spa

“The Indian market has grown very well for us. Last year we saw a number of arrivals. India comes number fourth in the clientele and it's raising its position to number three and we have seen 30 per cent growth from the market. It is growing faster by the month and with the weekly direct flight there is a lot potential for this market to grow in the coming years.”

“This time we've got 19 partners from Maldives, Bali, Thailand and others in this roadshow. We have seen a growth of 30 per cent in 2016 over 2015. We will be happy if we receive 10-15 per cent growth next year as compared to this year. The last six months have seen the Indian corporates ready to spend. We are going to open an Oaks property in Neerama and focus will be mainly on the Japanese and the Korean corporate market.”



Shannon Creado
Regional Director of Sales-India, Minor Hotels

“India is our largest market segment because we are located at downtown Bangkok. Our hotel has a large room inventory. We are doing a lot of MICE events. Our huge range of à la carte Indian cuisine is quite popular among Indian guests. The property is also very popular among the Indian FITs as we have seven different room categories.”



Clinton Lovell
General Manager Avani Atrium Bangkok



Joao Corte-Real
General Manager, Anantara Lawana Koh Samui Resort

“India market is very important for us. We have grown about 11 per cent in 2016 as compared to 2015. There is a lot of potential in this market. India is one of our top international markets and it is very important for us to be physically present here and promote our property to our trade partners. We hope that 2017 also will be a great year for us.”



Raghav Kochar
Resort Manager, Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas

“India market is growing at a fast pace as compared to past years. A lot of awareness has been raised in Delhi, Mumbai and other cities. A lot of honeymooners come here and also to celebrate various occasions like birthdays and anniversaries. Through this roadshow we look forward to increasing the awareness among travel agents who can go back and sell our properties to their clients. We're looking at an increase of 20 per cent.”

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Thomas Cook's summit to scale the peak

The tour operator's first shot at initiating a serious discussion managed to do just that. It focused on three pertinent issues: visas for Indians, outbound from India, and inbound tourism.



TT BUREAU

Thomas Cook India Limited's maiden edition of 'India Travel Summit: Facilitating Travel in Turbulent Times' was recently held in Mumbai. The half-day event was kept exclusive by making it a closed-door



Madhavan Menon
Chairman and Managing Director,
Thomas Cook (India)

We had a mix of people like government officials, global tourism body in WTTC, tourism boards, airlines and hotels

affair, which no doubt kept the numbers low but the quality high. Three one-hour sessions focused on visas, outbound and inbound tourism with each topic having huge potential



Abraham Alapatt
President & Group Head- Marketing & Service Quality, Financial Services & Innovation, Thomas Cook (India)

We will be considering the feedback to understand if we need to make any changes in format

for a meaningful discussion. The tour operator plans to make it an annual event.

The first session focused on visa issues and had Consul Generals from five countries on the panel. This was followed by a discussion on India's outbound market with four

India heads of NTOs. The last and the most interesting session discussed inbound tourism with four speakers: **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; **Ragini Chopra**, VP-Corporate Communications, Jet Airways; **Renu Basu**, Global VP-Sales, Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces; and **David Scowsill**, President & CEO, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

Madhavan Menon, Chairman and Managing Director, Thomas Cook (India), said, "We wanted this to be different from any other travel event. We had a mix of people like government officials, global tourism body in WTTC, tourism boards, airlines and hotels. We started off with discussing visa regulations. One of the biggest challenges we face is about visas. It is not

because the visa authorities are being difficult, instead they work hard to help us. But we work in an environment where the accuracy of some documents is highly questionable. The second session involved tourism boards discussing traffic from India. Then we got into the regulatory topics like policies. We tried to create a variety which worked but we have set the bar very high."

Speaking about the inspiration behind this initiative, **Abraham Alapatt**, President & Group Head- Marketing & Service Quality, Financial Services & Innovation, Thomas Cook (India), said, "We didn't really have an India equivalent of WTTC's Global Summit and saw the need to create a platform which would allow everyone in the eco-system to come together. We wanted a summit where we could get the

opinion-makers and leaders of the industry to come together by invitation only. This year, it was in Mumbai but we are considering Delhi next year. We also got the Consul Generals on stage. These are people we hardly get a chance to listen to and even they hardly get a chance to talk on the public forum. We will be considering the feedback we have received to understand if we need to make any changes in format."

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Currency ban affects leisure & weddings

In the wake of the government's demonetisation drive, various tourism and hospitality businesses have taken a sharp nosedive. TRAVTALK finds out from India Travel Award winners how this move, despite being applauded as a brave one, will affect the industry in the long run.

 ANKITA SAXENA

► Gainwell Travels and Leisure — Best Travel Agency Leisure travel to reduce by 50-70%

According to **Manoj Saraf**, Chairman and Managing Director, Gainwell Travels and Leisure, demonetisation is a very bold move and hopefully will bring about the right reform in the Indian economy. "More electronic transactions will happen; online travel portals and travel companies primarily servicing corporate accounts will be least affected; but leisure travel business and FIT business has come to a virtual standstill. I feel that the effect of demonetisation will last for at least two quarters. Leisure travel will go down by 50-70 per cent and business travel by 30 per cent. Airlines and hotels will experience a large number of cancellations and under-utilised inventory. They will offer huge discounts and special deals to fill up empty rooms and seats. Hopefully things will start improving from April 2017," says Saraf. He further informs that the company is planning to undertake a big marketing exercise in February 2017 to kick-start the summer holiday business and generate early bookings.



► Tibet Tours and Travels — Best MICE Operator

Move towards technology

According to **Eashita Ghosh**, Promotional Manager, Tibet Tours and Travels, demonetisation has come as a boon in disguise as it will bring an opportunity to enhance the functioning of the tourism industry. Ghosh, however, points out that immediate effects have resulted in postponement or cancellation of trips due to current monetary crisis. Explaining the company's efforts to tackle the situation she informs that in destinations like Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan and Nepal, the company has introduced payment gateways on the company website and swipe machines as a mode of collecting money from the guests. "Technology in our line of business has been seen as a curse but in the current situation it is a saviour and soon tourists and agents would look forward to the use of technology for faster and smoother money transactions. As per our company policy we majorly deal in cashless transactions with our clients and hence, it has been quite easy for us to overcome demonetisation. Most of our vendors are also opting for online transaction with us," says Ghosh.



► STHI Holidays India — Best Destination Management Company-International Travel low on priority list



Gagan Kumar, Founder and Director, STHI Holidays India, feels that demonetisation as a policy move is in the positive direction for the growth of the economy. However, he points out that tourists, both foreign and domestic, have scaled down. Kumar says, "Travel has been people's least priority, given the current economic scenario in the country. Travel agents are suffering as bookings are being postponed and business is reduced."

Contd. on page 14 ►



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HOTELS

Key to staying relevant in the changing market

OYO says they put in extra efforts to understand guests and believe this to be a key differentiator. The brand has now shifted to a revenue share model.

AHANA GURUNG

Starting from one hotel in Gurgaon in 2013, OYO today is India's largest hotel network with 7,000 hotels across 200 cities and is poised to become the next unicorn of the start-up world. The online hotel aggregator records nearly a million room-nights booked every month and is seeing a very steady, healthy growth, informs its Founder & CEO **Ritesh Agarwal**.



Ritesh Agarwal
Founder & CEO, OYO

nai for both corporate and leisure travel.

"Today, we offer 70,000 rooms across 7,000 partner hotels in 200 cities spanning India and Malaysia," he says. "Our focus on delivering exceptional customer-experience, building strong partnerships and opening up new market opportunities have been key facilitators for our growth while our strategic investments in customer service, technology and supplier acquisition have further supported this."

OYO's popularity is high in Delhi, Bengaluru, Gurgaon, Hyderabad and Chen-

One of the most recent innovations is 'Sunrise Check-in' that provides assured early check-ins as early as 6 AM, leading OYO to become the first hotel brand in the world to offer guaranteed early check-in to guests. Agarwal explains, "This is keeping in line with major shifts in consumer-behaviour. Customers from Ahmedabad to Amsterdam are increasingly used to an on-demand model, where brands cater to their unique preferences and needs - as and when they

arise." OYO's self-serve platform 'OYO for Business' offers rooms to especially cater to the needs of corporate travelers. The platform offers ease of creating bulk bookings via the web and mobile app along with the added convenience of travel-expense management.

So, what does it take to stay relevant in this ever-changing market full of disruptions? "Our size and agility gives us the advantage to test different models, make changes to optimise resources and efficiencies, while continuing to be focused on the big picture." Partners' operations including training staff, conducting regular property audits and collating guest feedback, are of equal importance, he said.

Initially, the group offered minimum guarantee of occupancy to partner hotels during launch phase, a strategy to help onboard hotels in the early growth stage. "This is now redundant, so we shifted to a revenue-share model earlier this year."

Pacto's 3rd roadshow

Pacto Indonesia organised its third roadshow in India themed 'Pacto goes to India 2016', with the objective of expanding product knowledge for Indian market.

The India market has shown sustained growth to Bali from 2014 to mid of June 2016. It has increased to more than 120,000 tourists in 2015. The roadshow took place in Mumbai and Delhi on September 21 & 23, 2016, respectively, with 25 representative partners from the tourism industry of Bali including AccorHotels, Conrad, Fairmont, Four Seasons, Grand Hyatt, Hard Rock, InterContinental, Pan Pacific, Starwood, Bali Hai Cruise, Bali Zoo and Queens of India Restaurant.

The first day at the Trident Bandra Kurla Hotel, Mumbai saw an overwhelming 150 tour operators attending the free flow table top meeting with 120 more joining in for dinner and cocktail party in the evening. **Saut Siringorin-go**, Consul General of General Consulate Indonesia in Mumbai graced the event with his presence.



Randhir Narayan
Director
AHS India & UAE

Similar agenda was set up at the Le Meridien Hotel, New Delhi, where more than 180 tour operators joined the table top and dinner that culminated closing speech by His Excellency **Rizali W. Indrakesuma** as the Indonesian Ambassador to India.

Umberto Cadamuro, Chief Operating Officer of Pacto Indonesia, said, "Having already achieved a great turnover in the Indian market, we have planned more activities



Umberto Cadamuro
Chief Operating Officer
Pacto Indonesia

to promote Indonesia, to help achieving target for the year and for the upcoming "Visit Wonderful Indonesia 2017."

The aggressive marketing plan, prepared with the invaluable support of our representative office in India, Absolute Hospitality Services (AHS India & UAE), is another proof of how, to Pacto, we do not aim at capitalise sales in the short term but we reinvest in marketing to remain market leader, he added.



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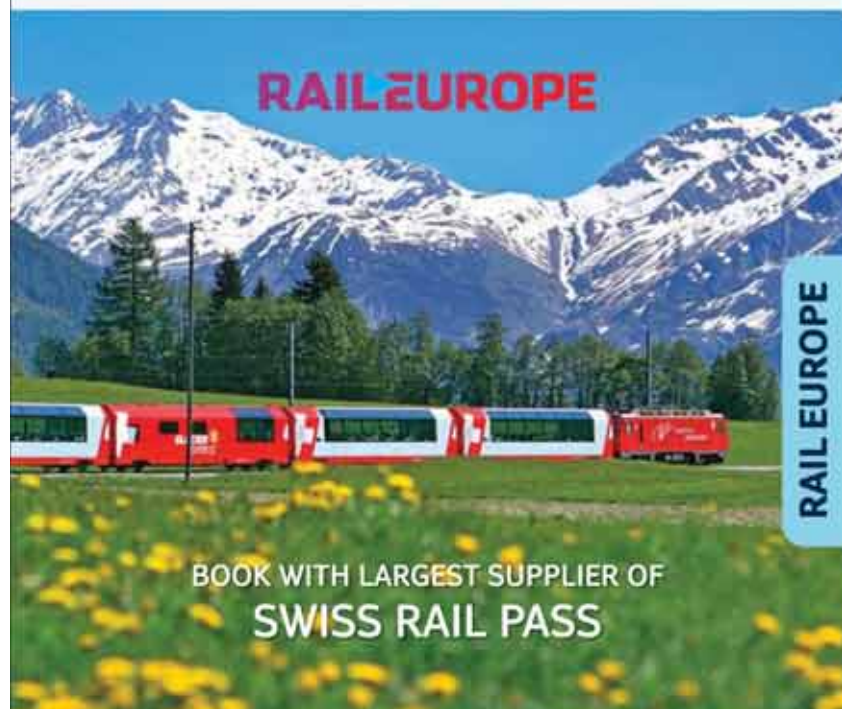
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Domestic offsets fall in foreign travel

► **Cygnett Hotel Group — Fastest Growing Hotel Brand**

Slump in weddings business

Sarbendra Sarkar, Managing Director and Founder, Cygnett Hotels and Resorts, points out that leisure tourism business has been affected as the extra spending is being curtailed. "Domestic tourism contributes majorly to the total number of tourists in the country.



We handle Goa and Digha as leisure destinations and have seen a reduction in spending from domestic tourists due to less disposable cash in hand. The weddings and events hosted in hotels have also reduced due to client's attempts to cut cost wherever possible." Sarkar also adds that international tourists are less affected than domestic tourists as they are managing with plastic money.

► **Leisure and Travel World — Best Destination Weddings and Events Travel Planner**

Shift from international to domestic destinations

Akashdeep Chanana, Director, Leisure and Travel World, applauds the move by the government but also points out that the sudden announcement of demonetisation has impacted the FIT segment of travel majorly. Despite the slow business from this segment, Chanana points out that people will not stop travelling. "People will continue to travel and thus if someone cannot afford a Europe trip right now may shift to Asian destinations and in case that too does not fit in the budget then many domestic destinations are likely to see tourist movement. Business travel may reduce its cost by 20-30 per cent but this essential travel will continue. Tourism business in general has become slow and the next three-six months are very crucial for the industry," says Chanana.



► **HotelExpertz.com — Fastest Growing OTA**

Business declines by 20-30%

HotelExpertz.com has seen a decline in their business due to demonetisation, informs **Raman Kehar**, Director, HotelExpertz.com. He says "We have been receiving queries for holiday packages as it is the travel season time but we are forced to decline those clients, which is very disheartening. We have seen a 20-30 per cent reduction in business post this policy was announced and the market has slowed down considerably." Kehar also adds that the sentiment to travel has not been compromised and travellers are asking to shift from international destinations to domestic ones in order to still travel. "The industry has seen a setback and the effects of the policy will take time to show. Apart from that, the execution plan was poor which has resulted in chaos across industries," he elaborates.





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Kyrgyzstan opens skies for Indian trade

To mark the 25th anniversary of diplomatic ties with Kyrgyz Republic, the Embassy of India in Kyrgyzstan and Air Manas hosted Indian travel trade in Bishkek for B2B sessions. Industry stakeholders tell TRAVTALK how tourism ties between the two countries can be strengthened.

 SHIVANI KAUL FROM BISHKEK



Jayant Khobragade
Ambassador
of India to Kyrgyzstan

“It’s for the fourth time we organised this, but not on such a big scale. It is very important for people to know about our culture, our people, and what kind of experience India can offer. From that point of view, roadshows of this scale are very important. We are very prompt and flexible in giving visas and usually give it in a day. eTV will also help, especially for people who are living in different regions and we will go into

that when even Kyrgyzstan agrees for it. Involving the trade is very challenging as Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked country, the route is a bit longer. Our focus is now how to make travel to Kyrgyzstan quicker and faster, what are the bottlenecks to address, to link it with international north-south transportation corridor. Last year we had 45 pharma companies coming to Kyrgyzstan and out of that we are going to have a joint venture with a Gujarat-based pharma company. As part of medical tourism this year 100 patients have gone for treatment as India is very cost effective. Hospital groups like Apollo, Medanta, Fortis, Jaypee and Wockhardt are very active here. They sometimes operate OPDs here, or through telemedicine network some hospitals conduct live surgeries from India with hospitals in Kyrgyzstan.”

“We want to increase the destinations we operate to in India, especially for the winter season from Goa, Hyderabad, and Kerala. If there are passengers between Mumbai and Bishkek we would certainly start operations there. We have a Boeing 737-800 new generation aircraft that can fly six hours distance, which is perfect for Delhi, Doha. Maybe we can start Kerala soon. We are planning a code share with Malindo Air. Our GSA in India is working towards involving the trade. Next year again we will have our roadshow in Delhi.”



Ilgar Alptekin
Director General
Air Manas

“Initially when Air Manas started operations from Delhi to Bishkek there were only a couple of agents who knew about this part of CIS region. Now we can proudly say that we have been successful in creating awareness for the airline and the destination pan India through our marketing strategies. We have successfully organised two roadshows in India which have proved beneficial in creating awareness among the trade fraternity and our target market. There have been many delegates visiting Kyrgyzstan for tie-ups in various business sectors. The Kyrgyzstan Government needs to devise and establish favourable policies in order to encourage and increase trade and investment including tourism between the two countries.”



Sharad Goel
Managing Director
Lark Logistics, Air Manas’
GSA in India



Gajesh Girdhar
Owner & CEO, Paryatan

“Kyrgyzstan is the perfect destination for honeymooners, family, & MICE tourists. This destination has a lot of activities and sight-seeing places like Issyk-Kul and Bishkek. It’s a new upcoming destination and if little efforts are put into marketing this it can develop very well. The flight between Delhi and Bishkek is only three hours so travelling is easy. We want to have B2B sessions between travel companies in India and Kyrgyzstan here as well as in our country. We are planning to have these sessions in April.”



Akshay Kumar
President, Adventure Tour
Operators Association of
India and CEO, Mercury
Himalayan Explorations

“I think this is a brilliant effort to bring the two countries closer for tourism. Kyrgyzstan, specially with the direct Air Manas flight with Delhi, has a huge opportunity for short haul tourism out of India. Personally I am looking at promoting adventure travel in Kyrgyzstan. It has all the natural resources from rafting and riding trips, camping and hiking, skiing is really good here too. We are looking forward to doing some good business with Kyrgyzstan in the future. We have not had any inbound coming from Kyrgyzstan to India till now. We are still exploring that market. I have met a couple of people from here so hopefully we will take that forward.”





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Charters need infrastructure thrust

For Santosh Kumar Sharma, Director, Foresee Aviation, the Indian charter industry is looking up and it could reach greater heights with better infrastructure and smooth procedures.



TT BUREAU

The entire world is looking at India as an emerging economy. However, the policies and the infrastructure must be in place, says Sharma. "There are a lot of people who want to charter in India, and there are a lot of foreigners who want to come to India and charter aircraft. However, we are still not geared up for that," he adds.

Only Delhi and Mumbai have separate entry for charters. Sharma observes that those who are paying a heavy amount for a charter would like to be treated like a VVIP. More-

However, he was quite hopeful about the Ministry of Civil Aviation's Regional Connectivity Scheme. "The basic concept behind charters is flexibility. With more airports being operational, and the permission procedures getting simpler, there will be ease of operation for charters."

Sharma says that instead of owning the aircraft,

Foresee Aviation has bought hours on many aircraft from their operator. "We pull out one aircraft as per the requirement of the clients. We charge for these aircraft on per hour basis and the price can be as low as `60,000 to as high as `5 lakh per hour depending on the aircraft."

When it comes to selling packages that may

require charter aircraft, understanding the needs of the travel agent is pertinent, says Sharma.

"There are a lot of inbound tourists coming to India. We discuss with the travel agencies the kind of queries they get for charters and how can they answer the questions by the agencies outside India," he concludes.

Malaysia promotes Johor Bahru to the trade



Tourism Malaysia and Tigerair recently conducted a familiarisation trip for 10 travel agents from Uttar Pradesh. The five-day itinerary focused on Malaysia's southern state - Johor.



Santosh Kumar Sharma
Director
Foresee Aviation

We pull out one aircraft as per the requirement of the clients. We charge for these aircraft on per hour basis and the price can be as low as `60,000 to as high as `5 lakh per hour depending on the aircraft

over, the reason they charter a flight is to save time, especially when they plan multiple meetings at different places in a single day. "We are still 25 years behind the Americans and Europeans as far as private charters are concerned," he claims.

He asserted that most of people today are looking at Tier II cities like Ludhiana, Rajkot, Indore, Bhopal, and even Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu. "Our clients are industry leaders who take charters to these places for meetings, and most of the airports in such cities do not operate after a certain time, which becomes a hindrance for us as well as our clients. There are several limitations. Unless we resolve these problems, this industry cannot grow," Sharma adds.



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Mega Maldives' swift flight

Mega Maldives Airlines has forayed into India with its thrice a week flight between Delhi and Male, and aims to boost its presence through its GSA, the Bird Group.



Announcing the new flight in Delhi, **George Weinmann**, CEO, Mega Maldives Airlines, said, "We are really excited that the ticket sales are going forward and is open through us as well as our partners in India for the non-stop flights from Delhi to Male."

The Bird Group is the GSA for the airline in India. Weinmann elaborated, "The Bird Group is actually doing the free sale portion of our sales in India, which is the non-packaged side." Weinmann is hoping for a good number of Indians flying to Maldives with the new connection. "We operate three flights a week and we have a decent number of passengers on these flights, which is around 150 or more. We will see the response in the next two months, as this is the peak time to go to the Maldives."

He further said that the travel trade is an important

part of their sales strategy in India. "One of the things that we know about Maldives is that it is a packaged destination. We design our fair structure and our distribution to partner with wholesalers, travel agencies and OTAs



George Weinmann
CEO
Mega Maldives Airlines

that do packaging in India. We really want to support all those who are preparing packages for the Maldives, where they combine both the flight and hotel, because that's the strongest selling unit for the destination."

He said that they have seen a great response for

the flight, especially with the inaugural fares. "We have got some great prices for our flights. The travel trade has some special promotional price, which is very good. We have also launched a public price, where one can book the flight at ₹22,990 from Delhi to Male on Mega Maldives."

When asked about their strategy for the India market, especially since many other airlines from the Maldives have shut shop in India, he said, "Firstly, the previous efforts to launch non-stop flights between Delhi and Male happened many years ago. The market has really grown over these years, and the number of people travelling between India and Maldives has dramatically changed. There is a lot more demand. The other thing is that our schedules are just right for the India market. Lastly, we have done a lot of work on distribution and have several partners, including the resort community and the travel trade."

Tier II on Thai Smile's radar

Thai Smile Airways is exclusively focusing on Tier-II cities in India, which according to them has huge potential.



Thai Smile Airways has introduced its new connections from Bangkok to a total of four Tier-II cities in India. While the Bangkok to Gaya and Varanasi route started operating on October 1, the Bangkok-Jaipur and Bangkok-Lucknow route will start operating on November 15 and December 1 respectively. Speaking on how these connections are going to work in their favour, Captain Woranate Laprabang, Acting Chief Executive Officer, THAI



Captain Woranate Laprabang
Acting Chief Executive Officer
THAI Smile Airways

Smile Airways, said, "We consider these connecting flights as one of our strategic destinations in Indian region.

THAI Smile Airways is undertaking an ambitious growth strategy to develop network and ensure international connectivity. Moreover, we are committed to ensure that our passengers have greater choice and opportunity to discover new destinations by flying with THAI Smile Airways."

He, however, asserted that THAI Smile is only planning the operations to the Tier-II cities of India. "There are more than 1.25 million people from India travelling in a year. THAI Smile Airways understands the immense need for passengers travelling among these four cities. A journey which can be covered in less than four hours can take up to 8-10 hours. We wish to make it more comfortable and affordable to Indian passengers," he added.

As part of their Indian strategy for promotion and sales, Thai Smile Airways has appointed The Bird Group as its GSA for the Indian market.

"Thai Smile Airways provides full service with the same standard as with that of Thai Airways. The flight schedule is favourable for tourists to travel during important festivals or long holidays."

Gaurav Bhatara
Country Head - India, Thai Smile Airways



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Portugal discovers India through tourism

His Excellency **João da Camara**, Ambassador of Portugal, feels tourism is a very important and valuable segment. It doesn't just generate jobs and revenues, but can also build excellent bridges between countries.

INDER RAJ AHLUWALIA

QWhat has been the highlight of your India posting as the Portuguese Ambassador?

I would say that there have been many different highlights of my posting in India: the beauty of the country, the kindness of the people and the realisation of the interest of the Indian authorities in

strengthening bilateral relations with Portugal.

QHow important is tourism for Portugal?

Tourism is a prime industry and an extremely important work segment for Portugal and for the Portuguese economy. It accounts for 5.8 per cent of the country's GDP and generates 7.2 per cent of direct employment.

QWhat are Portugal's greatest attractions for foreign tourists?

The fact is that Portugal had diverse attractions, and offers a bit of everything. There are white sand beaches; beautiful countryside; historical and modern cities; old monuments; mountains; a delicious gastronomy experience; lots of sunshine and, above all, very welcoming people. All these attributes



“We want more Indian tourists in Portugal and we want also to promote Portugal as one of the best places in the world to organise conventions, seminars and big events.”

João da Camara
Ambassador of Portugal

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become easier to enjoy because the country also has a good transport system and one of the best highway networks in Europe.

QDo you feel that tourism and local traditions can be blended in a positive way?

Yes, I think they can be blended, and such a blend is possible and desirable. Portugal is basically a very traditional country, and even in the most touristic places you will have the presence of this traditional element. It is something that's valuable and worth cherishing.

QIs Portugal keen on getting Indian tourists and conventions?

Even though Portugal is now considered one of the best touristic destinations in the world, it has still to be discovered by the Indian public. There is a growing interest in India, noticeable by the increasing number of visas the Embassy is issuing, but the figures are still very modest. We intend to change that. We want more Indian tourists in Portugal and we want also to promote Portugal as one of the best places in the world to organise conventions, seminars and big events. Just to give you an example, Lisbon, our capital, will be hosting in November the Webb Summit with an attendance expected of around 70,000 people. In this event we hope to have the participation of around 700 Indian companies.

QDo you feel tourism would boost other businesses and lead to further bilateral ties between Portugal and India?

I have no doubt about it. It is much easier to do business and to develop relations when you know the country and have been in contact with its people. Portugal and India will have to rediscover each other, and tourism can certainly play a big role and help in that. ↴

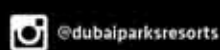
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FCM Travel Solutions launches FCM 360

■ FCM Travel Solutions launched FCM 360, a new product suite for customers which delivers an all-encompassing travel experience. FCM 360 consists of three categories of products and services falling under: 'FCM 360 technology', 'FCM 360 travel' and 'FCM 360 services'. The program provides real solutions for travellers, travel bookers and organisations designed to meet every need throughout the travel buying process. Introducing the product suite, Global General Manager for FCM Travel Solutions **Marcus Eklund** said that FCM 360 was born to demonstrate the total approach FCM take when developing and managing client travel programs. "Within FCM 360 we offer a wide range of specialised travel services and technology solutions which drives transformation of our clients' business travel programs," said Marcus. "In most markets we offer a complete suite of products and services ranging from our own exclusive travel product, best-in-class technology tools, specialised services and partnerships with leading travel service providers, which demonstrates our holistic approach to travel management."

New source markets for India tourism

The UK and the US have traditionally been the largest contributor for foreign tourist arrivals in India. But with newer destinations emerging as potential source markets, TRAVTALK finds out from tourism stakeholders if the trade should rely on conventional markets or explore fresh ground.

<p>Participants ▶</p>	 <p>◀ Subhash Goyal <i>Past President IATO</i></p>	 <p>◀ Bharat Bhushan Atree <i>Managing Director Caper Travel Company</i></p>	 <p>◀ Rajan Sehgal <i>Chairman-Northern Region, TAAI</i></p>
<p>Should India target new source markets or focus on aggressive marketing in a few countries that have proven to be the largest source markets to grow inbound tourism?</p>	<p>We have to do aggressive marketing in countries like the UK, USA, Germany and Sri Lanka from where we receive the largest number of foreign tourists. Under no circumstances should we allow to lose our grip on the existing source markets. However, since there is a recession in Europe, we also have to develop new markets like China, Japan, Korea, etc. so that a loss of Europe could be compensated by other countries.</p>	<p>We would have to diligently focus on both, target on new source markets and aggressively do promotions and marketing in our traditional markets. We should do some aggressive and effective promotions, events, print and electronic advertisement with the help of leading international PR firms and media agencies, digital marketing, inviting international writers, journalists and celebrities to write blogs in international travel magazines and media platforms. Travel programs on India on television is another good tool for visibility and to induce demand. Tourism Ministry has huge budgets to promote India as a destination but unfortunately have never been able to utilise the same to the full-est due to lack of a professional team.</p>	<p>We should definitely target new markets. We need to observe the tourists who are coming to neighbouring countries like Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and Sri Lanka and analyse the potential of their source markets. If the tourists can come all the way to South East Asia then we need to see if they can come to India as well. However before targeting new markets we also need to position and market Indian tourism products better and move beyond the Golden Triangle which is already popular.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>As told to Ankita Saxena</i></p>

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Industry reflects on demonetisation

If you are in India and haven't questioned the after-effects of demonetisation on your business, you must be living under a rock. The Government's move has been bookmarked as bold by many and is being looked at as for the greater good of India in the long run. This is what the travel and hospitality industry thinks of it.

 HAZEL JAIN



Suman Billa
Joint Secretary,
Ministry of Tourism

Long-term benefits

“Demonetisation will create short term problems for tourists who are already in India. We have taken some steps to ease their inconvenience. For instance, ASI monuments are accepting old currency. We are also in talks with the Finance Ministry to ease the pain points for tourists. Other than that, we will see more transactions happening online and through cards or banks which will be good for the travel industry. It might dampen the market marginally, initially, but will prove beneficial in the long term.”



Urs Eberhard
Head of Markets
Switzerland Tourism

Towards a cashless economy

“It will be very positive for the Indian economy. The government's plan to encourage cashless society in India is a great move. I would like to congratulate the government for taking such a bold step. Although it will have some short-term effect on people, in the long run it will have a positive impact.”



Dilip Puri
Managing Director,
Starwood India
and South Asia

Improve infrastructure

“For the long term it is the right move by the government, bringing in more unaccounted money into the system should allow the government to invest in infrastructure. Like in hospitality, we always say we don't need anybody to invest in hospitality. We need more development in infrastructure like improving accessibility, airports, roads, etc. So we hope the government invests this huge amount of money coming back to them in improving infrastructure.”

Better money management

“This will have a medium-term effect as people are more focused on how the situation will play out and how to deal with it. There will be a certain segment of the society preoccupied with money management and methods of payments. But this will be short-lived for two to three months.”



Sheetal Munshaw
Director-India, Atout France

Transparency in investment

“This is a very good step because FDI, or for that matter organised sector, has not stepped into funding for hospitality or hotels as much as they should. Currently, the hospitality and hotel industry is predominantly owned by high network individuals (HNIs). We believe that this transparency and regulations will allow more confidence to be built in investment in land and real estate and consequently into the hotel industry.”



Raj Rana
Chief Executive Officer-
South Asia, Carlson
Rezidor Hotel Group

Small-scale sufferers

“There will be a short-term effect of demonetisation because hotel bookings and payments are mostly done online through cards. It will be difficult when there is cash transactions involved in the initial two months. But after that we expect things to function normally. However, small scale hotels and restaurants will be affected by this for a longer period of time.”



S.P. Jain
MD, Pride Hotels



Saeid Heidari
General Manager
JW Marriott Hotel
Mumbai Sahar

Favourable for hotels

“It will affect all those people who use cash to manage all their day to day expenses. In the long term, it will benefit the country. For an international hotel chain like us, it is much better when the business coming to us is in white money. It is always in our favour.”

IndiGo's gift to agents

► Contd. from page 3

We don't have any differential pricing and all the ancillary products are available. Thus, life is much easier for travel agents.”

Wilson adds, “People usually book packages with travel agencies, which involves hotels, tours and comparison and consultation. Customers go to the travel agents for a variety of reasons. In fact, the international travel agencies can advise their

customers about IndiGo and its connections in India, which is now available on the Travelport platform.”

Gordon, also said he is bullish on the Indian market. “We have been here for 20 years and that helps in building new opportunities. India is the third biggest GDS market by air bookings in the world today, much bigger than the UK and very close to Germany, which is Number two.

We are only seeing an acceleration in this market because a huge number of Indian population is moving from trains to planes. There is an increasing investment from India, which is causing trade to come into India and is boosting outbound travel from India as well. IndiGo has been at the forefront of this growth and offering international connections as well. Thus, we are very positive on the Indian market overall.”

48-room Lords Eco Inn to open in Bharuch

■ Lords Hotels & Resorts has recently signed its 26th property in Bharuch, Gujarat. To be branded under the Lords Eco Inn banner, it is scheduled to commence operations from December 2016. This makes Lords Hotels & Resorts the largest hotel chain in the state.

Located between the two major cities of Surat and Vadodra, Lords Eco Inn – Bharuch serves as an ideal stopover destination. With 48 rooms, the eco inn offers luxurious accommodations and full-service at friendly prices for the discerning business and leisure traveller. **P.R. Bansal**,

CMD, Lords Hotels & Resorts, says, “The addition of this hotel to our chain of hotels marks a significant milestone and one that is unique, for us. From the first hotel back in 2007 which was set in this very state to this one in 2016, we have gone on to become the largest chain of true value hotels in Gujarat.”



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- Q3 In October 2016, Air Canada started flying non-stop to Vancouver from which Indian city?
- Q4 How old will Canada turn in 2017?
- Q5 Name the attraction recently opened at Niagara Falls which allows you to zip through to the falls?

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Indulging in black-tie bonhomie

On the occasion of its President and CEO, **David Scowsill's** visit to the capital, World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC) held an evening of networking at The Lalit New Delhi on November 14. The who's who of the travel and hospitality industry and members of the WTTTC India Initiative descended on the venue and welcomed the global personality over cocktails and canapés.



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Dubai's Bollywood connect

Bollywood Parks Dubai, a first-of-its-kind theme park, aims to offer an authentic Bollywood movie experience to discerning visitors.



TT BUREAU

Dubai Parks and Resorts recently opened the Bollywood Parks Dubai, following the opening of LEGOLAND Dubai and Riverland Dubai. The inauguration ceremony witnessed performances by Bollywood artists and dancers and live entertainment shows. **Raed Kajoor Al Nuaimi**, Chief Executive Officer, DXB Entertainments PJSC, says, "Following the successful opening and commencement of operations at LEGOLAND Dubai and Riverland Dubai, we are very excited and eager to witness our guests' reactions when they experience Bollywood Parks Dubai. Today we celebrate the



Agents on a Sri Lankan sojourn



In an attempt to showcase some of the finest hotels from the pristine collection of Aitken Spence Hotels, the hotel company along with Aitken Spence Travels Sri Lanka, represented by Nijhawan Group in India, hosted Indian travel agents on a four-day fam tour to Sri Lanka in association with SriLankan Airlines.

This is the first Bollywood inspired theme park in the world, and we're confident that it will appeal to a large segment of fans due to its popularity in the region

Raed Kajoor Al Nuaimi
Chief Executive Officer
DXB Entertainments PJSC

opening of the first Bollywood inspired theme park in the world, and we're confident that it will appeal to a large segment of fans due to its popularity in the region."

Bollywood Parks Dubai will recreate the Bollywood experience through themed attractions and rides spread across five zones: Bollywood Boulevard, Mumbai Chowk, Rustic Ravine, Royal Plaza and Bollywood Film Studios. Visitors will experience bold action, colourful story-telling and captivating dance sequences inspired by nine popular films: *Rock On!*, *Don*, *Lagaan*, *Sholay*, *Dabangg*, *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, *RA.One* and *Krrish*.

The theme park offers an 850-seater Rajmahal Theatre that will be home to a separately ticketed Broadway-style, Bollywood-themed show. During the day, the park will have up to 20 live shows across five stages: *Rock On!*, *Crossroads*, *Mumbai Express*, *Rangmanch* and *Stars on Steps*. The park will also offer six themed restaurants that capture India's culinary offerings and eight retail outlets stocking quintessential filmy fare. 📌

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A new address for Oman Air in God's Own Country



Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, celebrated the country's 46th National Day with the inauguration of its Kochi office at a new location — MG Road. The airline was the first international carrier to operate from the Kochi International Airport. Oman Air now operates twice daily from Kochi since it started in December 2015.

Rare aims at 44% occupancy

From four properties to now 44, Rare Experiences & Destinations has grown by leaps and bounds, and with new partners coming on board, the group is hopeful to cap it at 50.



SAMAPTI DAS

Rare Experiences and Destinations recently organised an event in Delhi with its new partners on board including Bera Safari Lodge in Rajasthan, Soulitude in Uttarakhand, Snow Leopard Lodge in Ladakh, and Champakali in Goa. **Shoba Mohan**, Founder Partner, Rare Experiences and Destinations, said, "We

need to nudge away from the regular which is easy to sell. This allows us to delve into the history of the place to find out various avenues of the place in order to promote the property located there."

The tour operator fraternity increasingly looks at Rare as somebody that they can approach for a new concept, she said, adding, "They try to get us

involved so that they can promote things in a unique way."

Beginning with four properties, Rare now boasts 44 properties under its umbrella and aims to cap it at 50 very soon. Mohan said, "We want our hotels to start making money out of this. For most of our partners it's a sustaining business. We are looking at 44 per cent occupancy and to break

that barrier and reach 60-70 per cent is actually when they will start making money"



Shoba Mohan
Founder Partner
Rare Experiences and Destinations

We are looking at 44% occupancy and to break that barrier and reach 60-70 per cent is actually when they will start making money

Rare is also looking at foraying into South India in 2017. **Sowmya Rao Vijaymohan**, Founder Partner, Rare Destinations & Experiences, said, "Our portfolio in terms of wildlife in North India is doing quite well. Now we are looking at a stronger profile for South India and we are soon



Sowmya Rao Vijaymohan
Founder Partner
Rare Destinations & Experiences

Our portfolio in terms of wildlife in North India is doing quite well. Now we are looking at a stronger profile for South India

going to roll out new addition from the region. Some of them are destinations that are not yet explored by tourists market."

The year 2017 will also be a year when Rare will look at consolidating all its partners and experiences. Vijaymohan also said that North East is another region that Rare is going to focus on more next year besides Glenburn tea estate in Darjeeling that is already on board.

Nominate Now for India Travel Awards 2017



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Stars galore at 'World Tourism Night'

Zee TV, in association with World Tourism Services and Digital Arabia, hosted a special dinner and award show — 'World Tourism Night' to recognise industry stalwarts, at The Montcalm, London Marble Arch.



Keep GST sensible: IAAPI

Double taxation on the amusement industry has led to low footfalls, laments **Ajay Sarin**, President, Indian Association of Amusement Parks and Industries (IAAPI).



High taxation levels have been a burden to the whole industry and its consequences have not spared even the amusement sector. The implementation of service tax in the Union Budget 2015-16 that came into effect last year, has had a cascading effect on the Indian Amusement industry, Sarin reveals.

“Double taxation has hampered the growth of the Indian amusement industry as footfalls to the parks have reduced drastically because of increase in tickets rates. Amusement parks are visited mostly by families with about four to six members, and since they find the price very high, they look at other sources of entertainment.



Ajay Sarin
President, Indian Association of Amusement Parks and Industries (IAAPI)

The high rate of taxation is dissuading new entrepreneurs from entering the industry with new formats and additionally preventing current industry players from adding both capex and new centres. Entrepreneurs, thus, are seeking to explore other investment avenues,” he comments.

The state government levies an entertainment tax which varies in states. In addition, the amusement sector was imposed a service tax of 15 per cent and unlike any other sector the high operation cost, man power cost to render services available to set off the service tax paid is negligible, according to Sarin.

Keeping in mind these concerns, IAAPI is hoping for a sensible GST rate to neutralise these setbacks and reiterates the fact that global markets where GST has been introduced, the tourism rate is half of the GST rate and under 10 per cent. Sarin highlights, “Everyone recognises the GST rate as very crucial. It is important to stimulate tourism demand because it has an economic multiplier effect on GDP and

on sectors like jobs. The CAGR generated in Asian countries is 5.1 per cent with a worldwide CAGR of 2.1 per cent (North America 2.7%, Europe 0.8% & Latin America 2.8%) which is higher as compared to other countries. There is huge potential here.”

Sarin emphasises that a rational tax structure for the industry will help in increas-

ing footfalls to the amusement park whereby revenues will not be affected because increase in ticket sales will help in collection of more tax. “Amusement park operators can have dynamic pricing structure to attract more footfalls. This scenario will attract FDI in Amusement sector which is currently negligible and encourage international players to invest in India.”

FITUR 2017: On a click

■ FITUR 2017, the International Tourism Trade Fair organised by IFEMA which is due to be staged at Feria de Madrid from January 18 to 22, remains strongly committed to technology and to promoting online communication and interactivity with all exhibitors. In this regard, the trade show has started an interactive Exhibitor Guide through which exhibitors can hire, learn about participation modalities, rates, stand assembly, organisation and promotion as well as generate contacts. The interactive Exhibitor Guide, a technologi-

cal tool set to facilitate communication and interactivity with the event participants, contains all the information that by going digital, adds the advantages of greater visibility, connectivity and interconnectivity with each one of the IFEMA/FITUR areas. Far more comprehensive consultations can thus be made, with all the sought-for information only a click away; and they will be more direct, too, as the different interdepartmental contacts can be reached for opening or closing any transactions.

The Guide will allow businesses, organisations and official bodies to resolve in a speedy and direct manner any queries they may have regarding their participation in the trade show. The Guide also features an Exhibitor Zone, a Co-exhibitor Section and an Exhibitor Schedule. In the contracting section, exhibitors can learn about general regulations for IFEMA and specific ones for FITUR as well as terms and forms of payment. In Participation Modalities and Rates they can choose a “turnkey” stand or a free-design stand.

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World Travel Market London 2016 witnessed a joint-record attendance of 51,500 and the highest number of exhibitor invitees and buyers in the event's 37-year history. The new-look three-day event with extended opening hours was well received by the global travel industry with 51,444 senior industry executives in attendance – a 4 per cent increase on last year, reveal unaudited figures.





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Thailand's luxury offerings for India

■ Tourism Authority of Thailand hosted its fourth luxury roadshow in India in Mumbai and Ahmedabad. This was the third luxury roadshow for the Mumbai market. Its first edition was held in Mumbai and Delhi and since then, Bengaluru, Kolkata and Ahmedabad joined the fray. The roadshow witnessed 14 business partners from Thailand including hotels from Koh Samui, Phuket and some hotels having properties all over Thailand ranging from four to five star categories and two DMC companies. Commenting on this,

Soraya Homchuen, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand in Mumbai, said, "We see great potential for the luxury market in Mumbai and Ahmedabad. The spending power of Indian tourists has increased tremendously and therefore we see a demand for luxury products. With this luxury roadshow we try to offer new luxury products to the market. We expect an increase between 5-6 per cent growth from the Indian luxury market." TAT also plans to bring the luxury roadshow to Bengaluru and other potential cities next year. Until August



Soraya Homchuen
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand in Mumbai

this year Thailand has witnessed around 7.9 lakh Indian tourists and by the end of 2016 they expect to reach the target of 1.1 million tourists from India."

Digital marketing: The way forward

Avijit Arya, Chief Mogul at Internet Moguls, believes it is imperative for traditional travel agents to invest in digital marketing to get some direct business and is essential for sustenance in the long run.



QHow has business fared this year? What is your USP?

Digital marketing is a booming business and is creating a strong impact in

the world of marketing and advertising. The year is not over yet, but we've scaled new markets, introduced new revenue solutions and some software with solid guarantees of revenue expansion within the first year.

Until now, digital and ad agencies helped hotels market themselves, there was no niche or someone coming to help hotels with pricing revenue coupled with digital expertise, I'm a hotelier and Internet Moguls is working for 120 hoteliers.

QTell us about your upcoming initiatives.

Internet Moguls has recently introduced the Digital PR division to manage online reputation for its existing and potential clients because it's again a niche and the hospitality industry needs more focus in this domain.



Avijit Arya
Chief Mogul
Internet Moguls

QIn this ever-changing world of travel & hospitality, what is your growth strategy?

For any kind of growth you need to take that first step and the risk. We at Internet Moguls constantly challenge the status quo, the team is always reading, finding and experimenting with the latest technology. Growth strategy is very simple, we are nimble and go all out and create limitless possibilities for our employees so that they can think laterally as well as horizontally.

QWhat is your opinion on the increasing focus of digitalisation in the travel & hospitality industry?

Things have moved very fast and our industry is still waiting and attending conferences, Fam tours, trips and dinners with travel agents. I'm not saying that it's wrong but what I mean is that it's not enough. It's time to spend and invest into digital marketing to salvage some direct business lest one day we all will be OTA named hotel corporations and that day is not too far. And hats off to the OTAs for pulling this off under our noses. 🍷

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03-Feb	Friday	Mumbai	10:00hrs - 16:00hrs	St. Regis

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When meetings translate into business



Think out of the box, tap new markets

Inbound in India has been relying on traditional source markets, but tour operators believe that tapping new markets like South America, South East Asia and China can boost inbound numbers further. TRAVTALK finds out from industry players about such upcoming markets.



NISHA VERMA



Jyoti Kapur
Chairman
Vietrade Tours & Travels

“The South American market needs to be tapped. Also, South East Asian markets, as well as Australian market is looking up. These are some of the untapped countries. Tour operators have always been focusing on the traditional markets like the UK, Europe, USA and Canada.”



Himanshu Agashiwala
Managing Director
Columbus Travels

“For us, China is a major market to look at for business, apart from some African destinations which largely remain untapped. However, the South American market is also a potential one if some of the Indian destinations conduct marketing initiatives in these places the potential of which is yet to be realised. This can further help improve inbound figures for India.”



Martin Joseph
CMD, Freedom Holidays

“China, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea and the entire South East Asia are potential markets. Even eastern Europe and countries like Czech Republic and Estonia can be tapped. Tour operators should also look at BRICS nations, as it is a good platform to get good business. Canada and USA are also good markets to explore.”



Prayag M. Shah
Chairman, Destination
Tours & Travel Services

“I think the UK and USA have been good source markets and will keep on performing for India. There is a lot of potential in these markets and the numbers are going to increase.”



N.S. Rathor
CEO
Garha Travels

“South America and Brazil are the upcoming markets for India as there are not many tourists coming from there. Not many tour operators have also ventured into these markets and hence the opportunities are abundant.”



Ajay Prakash
Chief Executive
Nomad Travels

“I believe that China is going to be a great source market. It's a huge untapped market, and tour operators should work on it to get more business from there.”

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Thailand's grandeur comes a-calling

The Amazing Thailand Luxury roadshow in New Delhi organised by the Tourism Authority of Thailand witnessed the presence of around 60 buyers and 10 sellers who participated in B2B sessions followed by an authentic Thai dinner. Held on November 18 at The Imperial New Delhi, the décor of the exhibition reflected the culture and heritage of the kingdom and focused on its most exclusive offerings for the affluent Indian traveller.



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EVENT TALK

DECEMBER 2016

Travel Turkey Izmir Tourism Fair & Conference	Izmir, Turkey	1-4
Chengdu International Tourism Expo (CITE)	Chengdu, China	2-4
Atout France workshop	Mumbai	2
PATA India AGM	Delhi NCR	2
Germany workshop	Delhi NCR	2
India International Travel Mart (IITM)	Hyderabad	2-4
ITLM	Cannes	5-8
Best of Australia workshop	Pune	6
Brussels Travel Expo	Brussels	7-8
Best of Australia workshop	Ahmedabad	8
Global Tourism Council meeting	Mumbai	9
Travel Business Show	Delhi NCR	17
Travel Experiential Show	Delhi NCR	18

JANUARY 2017

TTF	Chennai	6-8
Global Hospitality Conclave	Gurugram	7
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	Delhi NCR	1-4
CAPA India Aviation Summit	Mumbai	8-9
IITT	Mumbai	9-11
SATTE	Delhi NCR	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
IAAPI Amusement Expo	Mumbai	22-24
ACE of M.I.C.E.	Istanbul	22-24
Goa Carnival 2017	Goa	25-28
TTF	Delhi NCR	27-Mar 1
Phocuswright India	Delhi NCR	28-Mar 2

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

ASSOCIATION TALK

FAITH lobbies for 5% GST for tourism

For FAITH, the single point agenda is to get the rate of Goods and Services Tax (GST) for tourism under the lowest slab possible, reveals Sarab Jit Singh, Vice Chairman, FAITH.



The Federation of Associations of Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) has held multiple discussion meetings with all its member associations regarding GST. "Finally, we have come to the conclusion that we are seeking the lowest slab possible for tourism sector. Earlier, we were asking for six per cent, but now we are requesting for five per cent. We have given requisite examples of other countries, where the GST is low. We have given a list of 20 countries, which have kept tourism in the lowest slab for GST, and are recording huge number of tourist arrivals," Singh says.

FAITH has also urged the government to keep the



Sarab Jit Singh
Vice Chairman
FAITH

foreign exchange transactions under tourism tax free. "Our second demand is that any transaction in foreign exchange by the tourism sector should be on zero rating. In fact, it should be the same for all tourism organisations, be it hotels, tour operators, transport operators or con-

vention providers. That will give us incentive to make Indian tourism products more competitive worldwide and win business, which is going to other countries. The third thing which we have asked is that the definition of these services under GST should be amended so that the services provided to foreign tourists in India should be treated on a par with the services provided outside India and given all benefits," he adds.

FAITH has reached out to all states and central government officials and ministers and Singh hopes that things will pan out in favour of tourism.

The association is also involved in the upcoming Incredible India Global Tour-

ism Mart (IIGTM), scheduled from February 1-4, 2017, in Delhi. "IIGTM would most probably be inaugurated by the Prime Minister at Vigyan Bhawan. Other things are being worked upon including the hotel bookings and the invitations for foreign tour operators. MOT is considering bringing all states and union territories to participate, to not only showcase their tourism potential, but also their culture and handicraft. The event will focus on both inbound, outbound and domestic tourism, and we are looking forward to around 400 hosted buyers as well as international media. Foreign tour operators will be taken on Fam tours around the country, which is also being worked out."

SKÅL Mumbai extends invitation to govt

The association will now be offering its membership to government bodies like MTDC and India Tourism as well as hospitals to encourage growth of medical tourism.



One of the main aims of Partha Chatterjee on taking over as President of SKÅL Club of Bombay this October is to offer memberships and actively engage with all government bodies that are involved with travel and tourism and invite them to be members of the club. This includes the Maharashtra Trade Development Corporation (MTDC), IRCTC, as well as India Tourism.

Chatterjee adds, "We will actively engage with MTDC for all our events and offer our membership to their senior executives. We will be meeting the MTDC Chairman and

some of their senior executives this month to finalise our partnership. It is important to involve the government. IRCTC is also an important constituent as is India Tourism and we will be approaching them as well. The Principal Secretary of Maharashtra Tourism is already our member."

Another entity that SKÅL Mumbai will be tapping is the airport, which is relevant to its entire member base. "We want to get them more involved with the trade. We are also talking to premium restaurant owners who have never been part of SKÅL. We will be introducing medical tourism for the first time this year and we are approaching some of the top hospitals



Partha Chatterjee
President
SKÅL Mumbai

and their doctors to join us as well. In fact, we have invited some of them to be part of our event for them to see how we function," the president adds.

This year, SKÅL Mumbai introduced something new in the form of SKÅL Bazaar,

where destination companies can set up stalls and talk about and expose their destinations to the travel agents at special prices. SKÅL Mumbai has 170 members right now.

Chatterjee says, "For 2017, one of the events we want to organise is the SKÅL Ball around the March-April period. We are also planning a unique event for which we are partnering with Chambers of Commerce as co-hosts. One of the first will be with the British Business Group, the Cigar Club, Indo-German Chamber of Commerce and the European Business Group to give members an opportunity to interact with them."

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Singapore

Matt O'Keefe joins CWT as Chief Technology Officer of Hotel Distribution. O'Keefe's 20 years of technology and software experience provides rich expertise and deep knowledge of the travel industry. He was most recently Chief Technology Officer for Hyatt Hotels & Resorts. Before joining Hyatt, O'Keefe served as Senior Technology Architect at Morningstar, Inc., where he was responsible for technical architecture, standards and platform services. O'Keefe graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago with a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science.



Matt Brennan joins CWT as Vice President of Hotel Operations. Brennan has been in the facilities space since 2009 and has supported other third-party service industries since 1996. He most recently served as Vice President of Field Partner Management of OSI Facilities. Previous roles included Vice President of Operations for Oakleaf Waste Management. Earlier, Brennan was Vice President Vendor Network & Wholesale Product Marketing for GE Finance. He graduated from Concordia University-River Forest with a Bachelor's Degree in Organisational Management.



Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences

Kolkata

Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences has appointed **Sandeep Johri** as the General Manager. In his last assignment, Johri led the team of the very first hotel of AccorHotels in Ahmedabad – Novotel Ahmedabad. He has 23 years of experience in hospitality and brings with him a varied experience of being in the position of General Manager for 12 years. Previously, he has worked with the Sarovar Hotels, the Chancery Group, Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Centre, The Ambassador Group and Ramada in Mumbai. Johri is a Hotel Management Graduate from IHM, Kolkata.



JW Marriott

Kolkata

Ranju Alex has been appointed as the General Manager of JW Marriott Kolkata, and the Multi-Property Vice-President, East. She joined Marriott International in the year 2010 after being the officiating GM at the Oberoi Grand Hotel, Kolkata. She moved to Goa as GM of Goa Marriott Resort & Spa after completing a successful tenure with the first Marriott property in Pune as the GM of Courtyard by Marriott, Pune Hinjewadi. Alex brings with her close to two decades of experience in hotel management and operations. A diploma holder in Hotel Management, Alex is an alumnus of IHM, Kolkata.



Poetree Sarovar Portico Thekkady

Kerala

Sarovar Hotels has appointed **R. Ravi Varma** as the General Manager of Poetree Sarovar Portico, Thekkady. Varma brings with him a wealth of experience spanning almost three decades in the industry. Prior to joining Sarovar Hotels, Varma had worked as Executive Vice President- Linbur Group of Hotels, UK, and Group General Manager at Barracuda Beach Resort and Pearl Hotel, UAE. His other assignments include roles as General Manager at Orbit Park Inn International, Jamnagar, Gokulam Park Inn, Kochi, Madurai Park Inn, Madurai, The Raviz Hotel, Kollam.



Jaipur Marriott Hotel

Jaipur

With over a decade's experience as a hospitality professional in luxury and business hotels, **Rajneesh Kumar** has recently been appointed as the Director of Operations at Jaipur Marriott Hotel. He has expertise in revenue management, cost management control and operation management. Kumar joined the Marriott fraternity in 2008. Ever since joining the Marriott fraternity, he has been associated with various hotels of Marriott India and successfully progressed into different roles in diverse surroundings. His last assignment was with the Courtyard by Marriott, Agra.



Marriott Hotels

Mumbai

Megha Ajgaonkar has been promoted as Market Director of Sales & Marketing for all the Marriott properties in Mumbai. She will be responsible for the overall sales & marketing activities of the property including devising appropriate sales strategies in all market segments towards maximizing the hotel revenue. Prior to her promotion, she was the Director of Sales & Marketing at Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet Marriott Executive Apartments. She began her career 15 years ago with the Taj Group of Hotels.



WWW Travel

Mumbai

Anahita Avari joins WWW Travel as Chief Executive Officer. WWW operates their own network of International DMC offices to benefit the travel partners pan India. Avari comes with 25 years of experience in travel trade. She has been associated with TravelOptionz Holidays, Kuoni, Cox and Kings and Orbit in her previous assignments. In the first month of operations, WWW has successfully launched offices in Canada and USA.



Jaipur Marriott Hotel has appointed **Abhishek Roy** as the new Food and Beverage Manager at Jaipur Marriott Hotel. With a career spanning over 12 years in the hospitality industry, he brings in a lot of knowledge and experience with him which fits right for the role. Roy will be responsible for the day to day operations of the F&B unit, achieving revenue targets and driving strategic food and beverage promotions in the hotel.



TALKing People

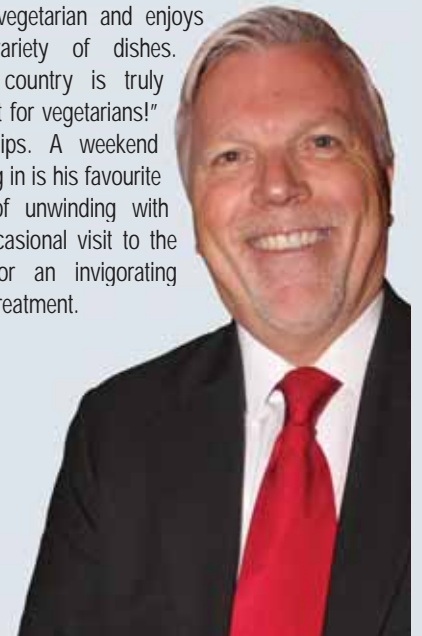
One of the most memorable memories **Rakshit Desai**, Managing Director, FCM Travel Solutions, has of his travels is while on holiday in Nepal. "After a miraculous landing on a treacherous runway straight out of a Bond flick, I found myself at a mountain lodge in Nepal, just metres away from the Everest," he narrates. The travel professional dubs London as his all-time favourite city and escapes to the city as often as he can.



Olivier Boulland, Commercial Director, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka & The Maldives, Air France-KLM, spends most of his free time with his daughter as he rarely gets the essential bonding time. He enjoys hanging out with his friends every now and then as well. His trip to Madagascar struck a chord with him and is on his top three destinations that he would love to go back to. "I've never been to Japan so I'd love to see what that country is like too," he says. New York and Paris are cities that he says he never gets tired of visiting.



As much as **Wolfgang Will**, Director-South Asia, Lufthansa, likes his gadgets on while travelling, he always remembers to carry a good book with him too. What's more, the airline specialist loves Indian food as a vegetarian and enjoys the variety of dishes. "This country is truly perfect for vegetarians!" he quips. A weekend staying in is his favourite way of unwinding with an occasional visit to the spa for an invigorating body treatment.



Incredible !ndia

I visited Gujarat during Uttarayan. I saw adults draped in childhood, decorating the canvas of the sky with colourful kites that soared, drifted and dipped at the flick of one's wrist. In all the pulling and cutting of the kite strings I didn't realize when the excitement and affection started tugging at my heartstrings. Nowhere else had I witnessed such amazing bonding among competitors but here. Next time too, the kites will fly high, painting the sky. Will you be there?



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What India tourism needs...

In a tête-à-tête with **TRAVTALK**, **David Scowsill**, President & CEO, World Travel and Tourism Council (W TTC), explains why Incredible India needs a larger marketing fund, a cohesive strategy and a sensible taxation rate to effectively harness the country's tourism potential.



AHANA GURUNG

QWhat is your opinion on the growth of tourism in India?

Domestic travel has been growing at a huge pace with domestic airlines booming and the increase in airline frequencies, the amount of movement in cities like Delhi and Mumbai has particularly escalated. There's so much competition between the airlines that despite high taxes, the fares are relatively moderate to stimulate the market, so that's going well.

However, the inbound to India has been very static for such a long time and there's so much room for growth here. The way I see it, it's been quite slow for India since the past 10-15 years. There have been some good decisions in some key parts of infrastructure, like the e-Tourist Visa (eTV), but the government needs to invest a lot more and increase their marketing funds to give tourism a push for both business and leisure.

QWhat do you think is lacking?

India's eTV has been a very important decision but many factors need to be looked into, like an extension of the duration of stay. The Incredible India campaign has a lot of resonance but needs more funding because it is a very competitive world after all. When a government's acknowledged that travel and tourism is one of the key pillars to the economic growth, which the Indian government has, the focus then goes into the development of infrastructure. And I don't mean just the investment in rails and roads, it's also telecom, banking and extended services that go hand in hand. Inbound can be boosted if more money is pumped into marketing and if visa is more like a two-year waiver program, it would be far more efficient for everybody.

QWith a variety of destinations, India still faces the issue of seasonality. How can this be addressed?

India needs a coordinated marketing approach especially because the market is huge and extremely competitive. A cohesive marketing plan would be most effective where the state and central level share good communications with each other. These days with the Internet and

its capabilities, you can have a very small business operating in a niche area, but it still has to be under the umbrella of what India is trying to sell. It needs to be relatable with the brand image and then build awareness around it. The marketing and the products offered need to be in sync with each other.

QHow can one ensure that a tourism policy is both effective and beneficial?

A coordinated approach to a policy is absolutely necessary to help the industry grow. It needs to be linked to a national and a state-level plan on what the coun-

We know it's happening and the industry needs to contribute by consistently following sustainable practices to keep the situation from going out of hand.

When it comes to terrorism, at this point, we know we're going to contend with more attacks. It's not going to stop at any point of time, but the travellers are more resilient than ever and will not, in any way, stop travelling. Despite the terror strikes, travel will continue to grow.

QWhat does next year's Global Summit aim to discuss?

The next W TTC Global Summit will

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David Scowsill
President & CEO
World Travel and Tourism Council (W TTC)

try needs to do for the next 10 years. The policy should cite capital investment for infrastructure and most importantly, it needs a sensible level of taxation, whether it is the aviation tax or whether it is the goods and services tax that should be kept at a moderate level.

QWhat are some of the key areas of focus in tourism?

An important aspect that needs more emphasis is managing destinations better. We have to make sure the volumes of people coming to a certain destination is not going to harm the place because the next decade will see a lot of travel taking place. W TTC has forecasted a total of 1,931,830,000 foreign tourists to travel by 2026, so managing destinations is going to be crucial in this.

Climate change is another challenge that has to be brought to attention.

be held in Bangkok from April 26-27, 2017. This year has been declared as the Year of Sustainable Tourism so we'll be really focused on how the industry is going to tackle things differently. How it's going to handle climate change, destination management, disruptions be it political or terrorism. The agenda is to bring all the world leaders together to discuss and brainstorm on all these issues and challenges and collectively mull over the solutions.

Expert Speak

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