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New flavours in India's platter

India Tourism is pulling out all stops to make the India experience incredible. MOT is showcasing new flavours and experiences among tourists, trade operators and agents. **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, MOT, tells **TRAVTALK** more.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

QThe India stall at this year's ITB Berlin had a few new elements such as virtual reality. What are the various media used to engage more people to raise awareness about the country?

It is about the experience we give our visitors, we realise that when people come to a trade fair they come for business but we also feel the need to make it lively and attractive, to give them a flavour of what it is like to be in India. The virtual reality piece is something that we have created because India is very popular for certain elements and so it's also something fun to do for people and perhaps click a selfie. That's not all, it also helps us to keep a track of people as once they have taken the picture they need to log in to our social media platform from

where they can retrieve the picture. So, it's a good way to create a database of trade operators who come here. It's also a good way for us to get a list of the attendees and of course the ones who are interested in the India market. This year at ITB Berlin we had a lot more cultural performances, a yoga programme and some fun activities involving Bollywood. One of the things we did this year is to ask states to bring their artists to these fairs where we have created a platform for them to perform.

QHow do such fairs help promote a country as varied and big as India. What's the difference between roadshows and fairs?

Fairs are important from the point of view of retaining connectivity with those we do business with, because it's important for you to come face to

“One needs to evolve a combination of trade fairs where we retain business and continue with client base but we also need to do roadshows where we bring in new business.”

Suman Billa

Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India



face with your business partners. It's a good way to connect with them but fairs also tend to be very busy as the buyers have several competing meetings to attend. One needs to evolve a combination of trade fairs where we retain business and continue with client base but we also need to do roadshows where we bring in new business. The road-

show format is more suitable for getting new business.

QIndia has a lot of bad press to fight when it comes to safety and security. How is the Ministry of Tourism working to correct this image?

This concern was very live three years ago but now I

don't think this issue exists as prominently as it did before. Firstly, we have appointed a PR agency now. All the 100 positive things that happen in India go unreported, but when one bad thing happens gets prominence, so we are working with the PR agency to look at all positive things that happen in India, especially with regards to women. That's a perspective that people need to get about India.

Secondly, we have strong social media handles in which we are propagating these messages, we also have an Incredible India EU handle.

And thirdly, last year we got a DRV workshop, DRV is the largest tour and travel agent association in Germany. We flew in 60 people from Germany into India and divided them into four groups – East, West, North and South.

We told them to travel, go around and then come back to Delhi and have a debriefing. Once back, they unanimously said that the India they saw is nothing like what they had in mind, and that's exactly what we wanted. We didn't want them to sell it because we are asking them to, we wanted them to experience the real India. We are planning such exercises with other countries as well.

Target Areas

- ➔ MICE is a big element that can bring numbers into the country
- ➔ MOT is trying to develop five mega destinations for tourism in 5 different parts of India and these will be models for others to replicate. Buddhist Circuit is a low-hanging fruit, which will have a huge impact

Industry is now left high & dry

As an unintended consequence of the recent ban on liquor sale near highways by the Supreme Court of India, the hospitality and tourism industry has been left in a dither. The industry shares its perspective and further effects it will have on business across the country.



TT BUREAU



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

“Such a policy is difficult to both implement and justify. The unintended consequence again here lies on the hotels and restaurants. I do not believe that this ban was aimed at the travel industry. The impact of the ban on drunk driving is impossible to measure, as businesses beyond the stipulated 500 metres will still be allowed to sell alcohol. Businesses within the proposed banned distance, including many hotels, restaurants and bars that serve tourists, will lose customers and revenue.”



Pronab Sarkar
President
IATO

in a hotel and not going on the road should not be dragged into this matter.”

“Tourism means entertainment and if there is no entertainment, tourists will not visit those places. There will be a setback for the hotels that have invested huge money on building their properties near national highways. Approximately one million jobs will be affected and almost `50,000 crores of the government is at stake because of this ban. The government should work out some solution and offer some relaxation so that the tourists who are already staying



Nakul Anand
Chairman, The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH)

“The Indian tourism and hospitality industry as a people intensive industry, respects, honours and commends any judgement which upholds the safety of human lives. As Indians first, we are grateful for a highly functioning legal and governance system which advocates our safety and security. As the nodal body representing the tourism industry in the country, FAITH is reviewing the way forward with key stakeholders.”

Contd. on page 10 ►

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OTOAI convention at Ras Al Khaimah

Ras Al Khaimah will host the Outbound Tour Operators' Association of India (OTOAI) convention to take place tentatively from September 12-14, 2017.

 NISHA VERMA

Guldeep Singh Sahni, President, OTOAI, and **Haitham Mattar**, CEO, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the convention during the Ras Al Khaimah roadshow held at The Imperial New Delhi. "We are going to have our convention most probably from September 12-14 in Ras Al Khaimah. The dates are tentative and will be finalised in some time. We will be coming out with more details about the convention very soon. Our intention is to introduce new markets to the tour operators so that they have another destination in their kitty, which will add value to the already existing markets that they sell. If one looks at the numbers, there is a big gap between Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah, and we are looking at utilising that for the benefit of the

tour operators so that they can extend their tours to this destination, with an added cost," Sahni said.

Currently, OTOAI is planning for its Educon in Turkey to be held from May 3-7, informs **Riaz Munshi**, Vice President & Chairman Convention, OTOAI. The Educon is organised in association with Turkish Indian Tourism Council (TITC).

Talking about the Educon, Sahni said, "The Turkey Workshop is in the process and we are amid preparations. We have sent the modalities to the members for the same. We have decided that this time we are not going to do a big Educon to Turkey and will take groups of 40-50 members. The first Educon will have two third members from Delhi and one third from Mumbai. Then, there will be another one happening in July, which will have more



members from Mumbai and the western region, and we would include other regions as well. Thus, we will be doing 3-4 series for Turkey."

Unlike the previously planned Educon, which was supposed to happen in Istanbul with pre and post tours, this one would take members to different cities. "Member delegates from across India will get a chance not only to get the first-hand experience of the cities like Caucasus, Akyaka, Marmaris, Olu

Deniz, but also will get an opportunity to interact with local DMCs, hoteliers, obtain business opportunities and understand the destination and its culture personally," reveals Munshi.

Riaz also informs that the Ministry of Tourism, Turkey has made a subsidy of \$150 for the agents who would attend the Educon. The all-inclusive fare for the agents would be `38,316 and `47,375 (based on the sector), he reveals.


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Liquor ban woes

The word liquor ban has taken on a special meaning for our travel and hospitality industry. Already beleaguered by various licenses and undercutting, industry stakeholders are now reeling under the recent SC directive. The ripple and a seemingly unintended effect of the ban on liquor sale near highways is giving rise to a new problem, not unlike the ban we saw some states put on the sale of beef. Yes, travellers don't visit a destination for alcohol or, for that matter, beef, but these are things that some would appreciate being made available to them.

But like the previous ban, this too shall settle down in face of yet another dispute that concerns the public at large. For now though, this topic is trending. Discussions at a two-day hospitality investment conference in Mumbai recently revolved around the challenges of running a hotel. If the low average room rates and high costs weren't enough, hotels also have to fight political, legal and cultural issues that are far trickier than ensuring a healthy P&L. It makes one wonder whether doing business outside India would make more sense given the mugginess of the current climate in India.

Air India gains ground

Following in the footsteps of Emirates Airlines, which had cut travel agent commission to one per cent, Cathay Pacific Group went a step further to zero commission in India — much to the plight of the travel trade community in the country. This, in addition to the ban of Middle Eastern airlines in the US and UK, could just be Air India's chance to grab hold of a major chunk of the big Indian travel pie. Not only does the national carrier offer around 2-3 per cent agent commission, it now has many long-haul direct flights to various destinations in the US as well as Europe. In fact, Air India would also be playing a huge role in the Civil Aviation Ministry's UDAN scheme for regional connectivity with its regional arm called Alliance Air. According to the results of the first round of bids for the UDAN-Regional Connectivity Scheme, Alliance Air would be flying to as many as 8-9 routes in Tier-II and Tier-III cities. With a huge expansion plan set out, Air India might just push itself ahead in Indian aviation.

25 years

TRAVTALK brings to you the news and events that made headlines 25 years ago and are relevant even today. From the March issue of 1992:



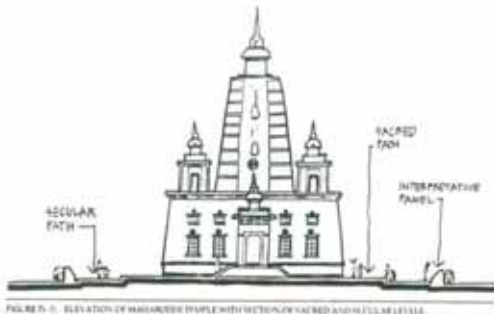
Sudhir Gupta
Sales Manager
The Oberoi, New Delhi

From being the Assistant Manager, Sales at The Oberoi, New Delhi, Sudhir Gupta was appointed as the Sales Manager for Oberoi Grand, Calcutta, in 1992. He has come a long way in the last 25 years and is the Founder & CEO, TLC Relationship Management, a hospitality consultation firm.



Sudhir Gupta
Founder & CEO
TLC Relationship Management

Sarnath - Design Guidelines



In order to evolve guidelines for the touristic development of Sarnath, a cooperative project was undertaken in 1992 by the Government of India, UP Government's Ministries of Tourism and the National Park Service of the US Government.

Gujarat to have Heritage Hotels

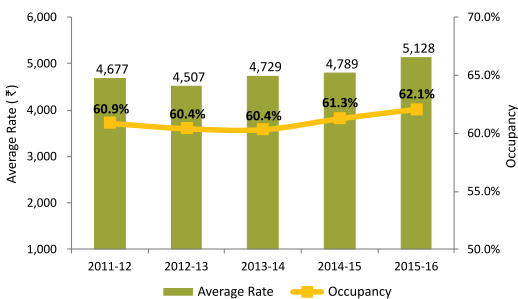
In 1992, Gujarat was the eighth state to join Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu to implement the heritage hotel concept of the department of tourism.

- This was announced at Baroda by Jayanta Sanyal, Additional DG, Department of Tourism
- He said that the government has identified 150 sites for the purpose and entrepreneurs and hoteliers were invited to take up those properties

Occupancy rises 62% in 2016

A survey on hotel trends for 20 Indian cities reveals the average rate registered in 2015-16 at ` 5,128, the highest recorded since 2009-10.

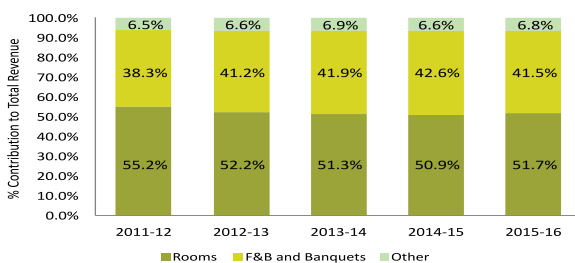
Exhibit 1: Occupancy and Average Rate (2011-12 to 2015-16)



❖ Contribution to Total Revenue:

The last few years had witnessed a steady decline in the contribution of the Rooms division to the topline. However, 2015-16 did not follow this trend, with the Rooms Revenue showing an increased contribution of 51.7% to the total revenue. On the other hand, contribution from Food & Beverage and Banquets declined to 41.5% from 42.6% recorded in 2014-15. The contribution of the Other operating departments has remained range-bound for the past five years. Exhibit 2 displays the contribution to Total Revenue by the different operating departments.

Exhibit 2: Sources of Revenue (2011-12 to 2015-16)



Source: FHRAI Indian Hotel Industry Survey: 2015-2016

❖ Decrease in Departmental Expenses:

Departmental Expenses as a percentage of Total Revenue decreased for the third year in a row, mainly driven by the percentage decrease in Rooms and Other Expenses. However, F&B Expenses increased to an all-India average of 64.1%, a sharp increase from the previous year.

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IATA pays attention to travel agents

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has appointed an individual who'll help increase engagement with agents. **Amitabh Khosla**, Country Director — India, tells us more.

HAZEL JAIN

QHow do you see the relationship between airlines and agents develop in India?

The airline-agent relationship is fundamentally a commercial relationship. Given the bullish outlook for growth in passenger travel in India, coupled with the innovations that the travel indus-



Amitabh Khosla
Country Director - India
IATA

try is seeing in the distribution space, we are sure that the airlines and the travel agents will be able to strengthen their existing strong relationship further.

QLately, there have been a lot of developments from the airlines side that is having an adverse effect on the travel agents. Is IATA taking any steps to protect its members?

IATA is not involved in the setting of commissions airlines pay to travel agents. This is a commercial decision by individual airlines.

QCould you elaborate on what IATA is doing for IATA agents in India?

In 2018, we will be rolling out the New Generation Industry Settlement Systems (NewGen ISS) program to India. With NewGen ISS, the agency community will have more options to choose the model of accreditation that fits their business profile, risk management and payment methods to the Billing and Settlement Plan (BSP). This will provide more options for agents from the current one-size-fits-all model.

Moreover, to strengthen our relationship with the agency community, we have recently appointed Rodney D'Cruz as Assistant Director – Passenger and Cargo Services, this April. He will be based in Mumbai.

GCC set to entice Indians @ATM

Major tourism hotspots in the GCC are experiencing a surge in Indian visitors as the region prepares to showcase its offering to leisure and business travellers at this year's Arabian Travel Market, at Dubai World Trade Centre, April 24-27.

TT BUREAU

India will be under the spotlight at this year's Arabian Travel Market, with a dedicated session on the ATM Global Stage, entitled: 'Capitalising on Experiential Travel: China & India Mega Source Markets'. Filippo Sona, Director, Head of Hotels MENA region, Colliers International,

will discuss how countries in the Middle East can increase promotional activities to attract more visitors from two of the future biggest inbound source markets: China and India. **Simon Press**, Senior Exhibition Director, ATM, said, "The number of visitors to the GCC from India has been strong for a number of years due to the excellent political, trade and

business links the region enjoys with its neighbour.

"UNWTO (United Nations World Travel Organisation) data shows that 62 million Indians have passports, yet many do not travel. However, the demographic patterns we see currently – an increasing younger population and a growing middle class – pro-

vide strong indications that the country is about to see a steep rise in the number of nationals travelling abroad, as well as the number of foreign visitors it welcomes." India has been named the largest growing outbound tourism market in percentage terms, with the UNWTO predicting 50 million Indians will travel overseas annually by 2020.



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1800 meetings at Travel Experiential Show

The second edition of Travel Experiential Show-Beyond Luxury, held from April 8-9, 2017, at Sheraton New Delhi Hotel, brought together exhibitors and buyers in a B2B speed-meeting format over two days to transact business and target the High Network Individuals (HNI) of India.

ANKITA SAXENA

The 2nd Travel Experiential Show was inaugurated by His Excellency Alphonsus Stoelinga, Ambassador of Netherlands to India, Bhutan and Nepal. The show saw a total of nearly 1,800 meetings conducted among 27 exhibitors and nearly 60 buyers. Representatives from hotels, travel agencies, cruises, railways, tourism boards, etc., met tour operators and travel agents from across Tier-I, Tier-II and Tier-III markets under one roof to network and explore business opportunities for the experiential and luxury segment of travel.

Deliberating on his understanding of luxury, Stoelinga, said, "I feel luxury begins from the airport. What is the point of travelling Business Class if your flight lands at an economy-standard airport? Also, luxury is in the destination. It is how welcome and at home a traveller feels away from home. It's also defined by the fact that

people are at ease with the destination and themselves. In a way time too is luxury!"

Tekla Maira, Director Luxury Sales-India, AccorHotels Luxe, elucidated various trends and growth horizons for the market in India. According to the report by Kotak Wealth Management, Top of the Pyramid India-Decoding the Ultra HNI 2014, the growth of ultra-high net-worth households (HNHs) in India is estimated to have grown from \$45 trillion in 2010 to a whopping \$135 trillion in 2016 with as many as 146,000 HNHs in FY 2016. "An HNI or high net-worth individual is somebody who has a net-worth income of over ₹25 crore or approximately \$4 million. The luxury market has grown tremendously for the last five years and is still growing. It is estimated that by 2025, the net-worth of HNHs in India will be \$319 trillion," said Maira.

Maira further deliberates that for people with high disposable incomes, shop-



(L-R): Punam Singh, Shahnawaz Shah, H.E. Alphonsus Stoelinga, Tekla Maira, Neha Lidder and Sarika Bhambhani Rawal

ping features very high on the spending list while holiday contributes 15 per cent of that spend. "The fact that holidays features in the top three warrants the fact that luxury travel is bound to grow," commented Maira. Also, according to a report by Amadeus-Shaping the Future of Luxury Travel, the luxury segment in India is growing at 12.8 per cent CAGR, which

is the highest amongst the BRICS nations. "Luxury travel also outpaces other forms of travel and is the highest from South Asia where India is a major contributor. While 55 per cent of luxury travellers are from Tier-I cities, 45 per cent is contributed by Tier-II and Tier-III cities. The smaller markets have the propensity and will to pay and the accompanying

bragging right is for us to capitalise on," added Maira.

Neha Lidder, Marketing Head, DLF Emporio Mall, defined luxury as bespoke. "Luxury in India is an oxymoron. The biggest brands of the world have been catering to the royal families for centuries and their riches have been displayed in museums globally. Anything

that has been tailor-made and delivered with special care to provide an experience is luxury." Agreeing with Lidder's concept of luxury, Shahnawaz Shah, Manager Marketing Tourism, SKICC Srinagar, said, "Whatever is satisfying and fulfilling experience can be termed as luxury and different people will have different understandings of the same."



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Liquor ban puts spanner in business

► Contd. from page 3

“It is a sad moment for the industry, not because this happened but because it is indicative of the priority the tourism or hotel industry has in the country. If tourism is important for a country and if it is one of the five T's the Prime Minister has spoken about, how can we take such an ad hoc decision without consultation. Hoteliers have invested hundreds of crores of rupees to get close to the highway to get more customers. Though liquor is not the bedrock for tourism, it is the hygiene factor for many people, not only foreigners but for many Indians as well.”



Deep Kalra
Founder & Group CEO,
MakeMyTrip

“The alcohol ban on highways to me is not a logical decision. The decision in my view has jeopardised hundreds of jobs and the government should look at this carefully because it is a big deterrent to tourism, infrastructure investments and for people who have spent crores of rupees building these units. The ban should be reviewed, revised and then revoked to avoid major losses to the hospitality and tourism industry across the country.”



Peter Kerkar
Group Chief Executive
Officer, Cox & Kings, India
Travel Award winner

“Everybody is keeping their fingers crossed. If this ban continues, it's going to hit tourism in a big way. However, we hope that the Supreme Court may review and relax its decision. While we haven't received any cancellations as yet, we understand that in the future if this highway liquor sale ban continues, international travel would suffer for sure because liquor is a necessity for them and plays a big role when it comes to booking hotel stays and subsequent travel plans.”



Paramjit S. Duggal
Executive Director
Minar Travels, India Travel
Award winner



Rajiv Mehra
Director
Uday Tours & Travel

“The ban will definitely affect our businesses. If this continues then in the long run, foreign tourists coming into India who want to come here and relax will not do so. Even the domestic market is going to see an impact of this ban. Destinations like Goa or other beach destinations, or any hill stations around state highways are going to see an impact of this decision. Even domestic tourists would prefer to bypass India and go to international destinations like Singapore, Bangkok or Colombo where no such ban exists.”



Sandeep Jain
Director
Special Holidays

“A few of our hotels will be affected. However, in the smaller towns, which have limited room capacity, it would really be a dampener for both inbound and domestic tourism. Liquor is something which foreign guests generally look for when booking hotels and stays. We

respect the honourable court's decision which they might have taken after considering various parameters. My only submission is that the government should relook at its policy in a liberal way in the greater good of developing tourism in the country.”



“The Honorable Supreme Court's order will have a direct impact on the tourism industry as the ban is applicable not only to liquor vendors but also to restaurants, hotels and resorts along the highway. It is imperative that the hospitality industry and tourism industry will bear the brunt of this decision as these industries cannot survive without alcohol. Both domestic and international traveller numbers will be impacted by this decision, which in the long run will be detrimental to tourism.”



Mukesh Goel
Director
Oriental Travels



Rajesh Mudgil
MD
Planet India Travels

“This decision has been taken without realising the impact it would have on the tourism industry. The person who filed this suit was only against liquor vendors and shops on the highways, and not the restaurants and the hotels located there. Many hotel giants like The Leela Ambience Gurgaon or The Trident, Gurgaon, were built much before any such issues arose. Not everybody on the road goes to five star hotels. Most of them are in-house guests and those who utilise the services of these hotels are normally chauffeur-driven. The court should be clear in their mandate on what they mean in the jurisdiction.”



Soma Mathew
Director of Sales & Marketing,
Holiday Inn Cochin, India
Travel Award winner

up as popular MICE and leisure destination and these kind of restrictions will further spoil the prospects.”

“Though we all respect the law of the country and the decisions taken for the betterment of society, the liquor ban was not a healthy decision as tourism is one of the major industries that drives in business to the country. The rules and regulations for driving under influence of alcohol should be stricter. Banning or restricting people will not yield positive results. This move will hamper the overall business prospects and India's loss will be someone else's gain. Other countries are already catching



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

hotel industry will be heard and a middle path will emerge.”

“This has wide ramifications and not only on the sales of beverages in the hotel. When we compare this to the international market, it is a complex issue. While I condemn drunk driving, there are better ways to address this issue. An arbitrary ban on legitimate businesses has affected sales and the return expected from investments that owners make in these properties. It will also have an impact on people working in these establishments. It is a difficult situation and we hope the voice of the



Rohan Sable
Complex General Manager,
Novotel Goa Resort & Spa,
and The Novotel Goa
Shrem Hotel, India Travel
Award winner

“We always talk about getting more people to travel to India and then we put such rules that deter inbound. People who want to do it, do it anyway but we need to start being more responsible. In Goa, 760 restaurants have been affected by this ban though it may be a boon for some as people will go to

other outlets to get their daily tittle. It will also have an impact on the jobs of people working in this business, especially those working at restaurants and hotels near the highways.”



“Several of our hotels have been impacted by the ban on sale of liquor on highways by the honourable Supreme Court of India. We have got a copy of the judgment and we are working through the nuances it mentions to ensure that we are in compliance of the law. We also see an impact of this directive on our business especially on our properties in the tertiary markets in the country. We will work with the industry bodies to put forward our voice.”



Neeraj Govil
Area Vice President - South
Asia, Marriott International

“We see a significant impact. The bars have been closed; hotels have been impacted which has also affected employment. The decision is of course taken because of what has happened in the past but what is important is how to curb drunken driving and making sure lives are not lost. While the ban has been imposed, it has severely affected the hotels and jobs of people involved. We need to come up with a solution where the liquor ban is done in the right way and where employment and businesses don't suffer and innocent lives are saved.”



Srinivas Srirangam
General Manager
Novotel Imagica Khopoli

“It came as a big surprise to us and it's quite amazing what is going on in the country. It does affect tourism for sure. Although not all of our hotels are affected, but in some locations it will have a big impact and it will be important to see how it plays out. At the end of the day, it's a strange signal being sent out by the government and we would like this to be removed in some ways.”



Kurt Straub
Vice President-Operations,
Hyatt India Consultancy

Road tax hike irks IATO

Representatives of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) will be meeting Haryana's Chief Minister to bring relief to its members and tourists.

NISHA VERMA

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) organised a luncheon meeting for its members, where its President **Pronab Sarkar** expressed his happiness on having the e-Visa website updated with the changes that the government had announced. "Now the new e-Visa amendments are available for foreign tourists. With 120 days of application time, double entry and 60-day limit, it's going to help tourists. Three of the ports have also been included in e-Visa, which was something we had requested for cruise tourism development, as it is very important for cruise tourists to get e-Visa onboard," he informed.

However, he insisted that with the changes in place, the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) needs to do a lot of promotions internationally about the same along with the fraternity. "People should come to know that these facilities are available, so that more tourists come," Sarkar added.



Pronab Sarkar
President
IATO

We will be requesting the Haryana Chief Minister to gradually increase the taxes, instead of doing it suddenly

Raising the issue of increased road tax in Haryana, he said, "Haryana tourism has suddenly put in place a steep hike in charges for commercial vehicles entering Haryana, which is quite cumbersome. In fact, if we do calculations, there has been as much as

1700 per cent increase in some of the taxes, which is exorbitant. It is not possible for a tourist to pay that kind of money just for visiting or crossing a state. Thus, we will be requesting the Haryana Chief Minister to gradually increase the taxes, instead of doing it suddenly."

Talking about the pending issue of partial hospitality scheme with the MOT, he said, "We are hoping that it will come through because during the summer months a lot of Fam tours are coming from outside India and our members also undertake those facilities with the help of MOT. If they get some partial assistance from the government, that would be of great help for organising those tours."

On the annual convention front, he informed that it will take place in September at the Mayfair Convention Centre in Bhubaneswar, and their team is working towards the same and would share more information with their members soon.

Maya to set off for Kochi

The fourth edition of the South India Travel Awards, will be held on May 2, 2017, at Crowne Plaza Kochi, to honour stalwarts of the tourism industry.

TT BUREAU

India Travel Awards honour the achievers of the tourism industry, who have gone above and beyond to make a difference. **Gunjan Sabikhi**, Convener, India Travel Awards, elaborates that these are the first and the only regional awards which recognise and reward the efforts of a company from every nook and corner of India.

"These awards set a company apart from its competition and differentiate the quality of its achievements from others thus placing the awardees at the forefront of the industry. The number of nominations we have received for the fourth edition of South India Travel Awards has increased manifold from the past which is proof of the fact that winning this award is very prestigious and they bestow credibility to the winning company or individual.

"Being nominated or shortlisted can be helpful



Gunjan Sabikhi
Convener
India Travel Awards

because it places you at the forefront of your genre and industry in addition also increases awareness about the brand," says Sabikhi.

Divulging the detailed preparations made at the venue, **Shuvendu Banerjee**, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Kochi explains that the hotel's operations committee is taking care of every element from set up, menu, lighting among others. "We are very excited to host this prestigious award for the second time. Crowne Plaza Kochi's unique offering is its convention space which



Shuvendu Banerjee
General Manager, Crowne Plaza
Kochi, India Travel Award winner

can cater to 1500 pax at a time. The benefit of hosting India Travel awards is that it provides us mileage in the industry to showcase the hotel with the whole gamut of services on offer.

Stakeholders from tourism and hospitality industry get a chance to experience the hotel first hand which increases the brand value as well," says Banerjee. The hotel offers state-of-the-art accommodation services with 269 rooms and suites; five F&B outlets; two swimming pools; a total of 24,110 sq ft meeting space.

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Agents celebrate Korean Night in Delhi

Korean Air organised a special Korean Night for its trade partners at The Lalit New Delhi, which saw the who's who of the travel industry enjoy a cultural performance from Korea, lucky draws and relish the delicacies and cocktails on offer.



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Hahn interline EMDs to empower agents

With new products and airlines added to their system, Hahn Air is reaching out strongly to the Indian travel agents, reveals **Jorg Troester**, Head of Corporate Strategy, Industry and Government Affairs, Hahn Air, in an exclusive tete-a-tete with TRAVTALK.



NISHA VERMA

Q How has the Indian market been for Hahn Air?

The Indian market is one of the most important markets for Hahn Air and ranks under the Top 5. Thus, we try to nurture the relationships with Indian travel agencies allowing them to sell and run a good business. It is very important for us to be a member of the travel community here, especially with the liberalisation that is happening in the Indian market. We are excited to see how it would develop further and how we can support the travel agencies.

Q What kind of growth have you seen in the Indian market?

We have seen growth from both the travel agencies as well as the airlines. On the travel agents front, we have been able to sell more international flights all over the world, even in regions where they would not

sell that much, as those airlines would not be a member of BSP India. Thus, we can help travel agencies to get a complete set of products available to sell whatever the market is demanding. On the other side, we are excited to see how the market is growing on the airline side with increasing number of start-ups coming in. There are many low-cost carriers as well as Indian airlines that are cooperating with us, using Hahn Air tickets.

Q What kind of challenges have you faced in the Indian market?

There are always challenges, but we have not seen any specific challenges in the Indian market. However, we have grown and shown more commitment in the market by placing people here who are taking care of the Indian market by being in touch with the travel agents and helping them out when they have questions regarding ticketing etc.



Jorg Troester
Head of Corporate Strategy, Industry and Government Affairs, Hahn Air

There are many low-cost carriers as well as Indian airlines that are cooperating with us, using Hahn Air tickets

Q What kind of new products are you bringing for the travel partners?

The latest product, which has been growing for the last few years is the so called

interline EMDs (Electronic Miscellaneous Documents). EMDs have already been in the market for a while now. They are available as an interline standard as well, which means that Hahn Air is offering EMDs to the travel agent for other airlines. We have many airlines available using it and there are more airlines in the pipeline to be implemented even in this region. Thus, we are looking forward to widen this product to help the travel agent become more relevant and important in their role as consultants to the customer offering a full range of products. Now with interline EMDs in place, they can sell additional ancillary services of the airlines as well to their customers.

Q What kind of ancillary services are you offering?

It's usually luggage and seat reservations. Today, many airlines offer limited baggage allowance and seat reservations against pay-

ment and other services, which can be done online through their own booking engines. However, with interline EMDs, when the airline is offering these additional ancillary products and services through the GDS or through the sales system the travel agency is using, they can directly make a reservation.

Q Which are the new airlines you've added to the system?

We have added some new airlines even in South-east Asia, which includes VietJet from Vietnam. We are now in cooperation with SpiceJet from India as well. Apart from this, under our Hahn Air System's products represented by codes H1 and 5W, we have now added two more exciting partners. We have the first ferry company available, called Tallink based in Estonia, which can now be sold through the GDS under the 5W code, whereas under the

H1 code many new airlines are available.

Q How are you making your system more user friendly?

To make it as user friendly as possible for the travel agencies, we still believe in the traditional indirect distribution channel, which is the GDS. Thus, the travel agency doesn't need anything else but its GDS terminal. Also, there is no need to switch between different terminals and different computers, as everything works through the GDS. They can look for flights available, make the booking and then issue the Hahn Air ticket from the GDS system.

New Additions

- ✦ Hahn Air has added VietJet from Vietnam to its system
- ✦ It is now in cooperation with SpiceJet
- ✦ They have the first ferry company, Tallink from Estonia in their system

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India fastest growing among G20 countries

David Scowsill, President and CEO, World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), who was on a quick trip to India amidst a busy travel schedule, shares findings from the latest WTTC Economic Impact Report with TRAVTALK. We bring you some excerpts from the interview:

AHANA GURUNG

On the backdrop of several unforeseen conditions such as terror attacks, diseases, natural calamities and political changes and instabilities, tourism has shown resilience that has undeterred the spirit of travellers around the globe. So much so that WTTC reports a 3.3 per cent growth in 2016, the sixth consecutive year that the travel and tourism industry grew faster



David Scowsill
President and CEO
WTTC

We expect similar growth to continue this year, averaging at about 6.7-7 per cent. The biggest advantage here is the current government's focus on the industry

than the global economy. A 3.8 per cent growth is anticipated this year and an average of 3.9 per cent for the next decade.

Southeast Asia (8.3%) was the region with the fastest growing travel and tourism sector in 2016, while other regions like South Asia (7.9%), North East Asia (4.6%), Oceania (4.4%) and the Caribbean (3.2%) followed suit.

India: Potential tourism powerhouse

India has shown a promising performance in this scenario and is the 7th largest tourism economy contributing to GDP, informs David Scowsill, President and CEO, WTTC. "India is definitely one of the industries to watch out for, having registered a growth of 8.5 per cent last year," he says. "We expect similar growth to continue this year, averaging at

about 6.7-7 per cent. The biggest advantage here is the current government's focus on the industry. Our industry is one of the five key pillars for economic development and when a country recognises that, then a lot of things fall into place – e-Visa waiver, development of infrastructure, opening skies, etc., which will stimulate

tourism both domestically and internationally."

The country's strong growth has been backed by domestic travel, which accounts for 88 per cent of the sector's contribution to GDP in 2016. In addition, the regional connectivity scheme is going to render more accessibility in the

country by connecting 42 smaller towns and cities. He comments, "India's booming aviation industry is one of the fastest growing in the world. Connectivity has to do with everything – connectivity between the LCCs, infrastructure build-up. By infrastructure, I also mean other aspects like broadband and

banking which I think is finally taking off."

However, he mentions that India's marketing spend needs to be increased manifold for a more comprehensive campaign, owing to the country's large size. He elaborates, "If India wants to match up to the bigger markets, then they have to

find a way to increase the budget for marketing. That is completely essential."

Watch out for

WTTC's Global Summit 2017 will gather the industry's biggest personalities who will address key issues prevailing in the sector from April 26-27 in Bangkok, Thailand.



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Chennai in Ethiopian route

The African airline has seen steady growth in India and on its 45th anniversary of operations here, it has decided to invest further with flights to Chennai this year.



TT BUREAU

After recently completing 45 years of service to the Indian subcontinent, Ethiopian Airlines has announced that it will expand its India operations further by adding Chennai to its network. **Esayas Woldemariam Hailu**, Managing Director (International Services), Ethiopian Airlines, said, "We are considering adding Chennai to our network in India soon. It is difficult to comment on the timeline. We don't have an exact date yet but we want to keep it as a surprise for the travel trade. This will be thrice weekly which will be upscaled to daily as the route develops. The aircraft for this route will be the Boeing 787 Dreamliner."

Ethiopian Airlines began its debut flight to Mumbai in December 1971 and has since increased its airlift to 28 scheduled weekly flights to Mumbai and New Delhi. The airline simultaneously celebrated its 70th anniversary of flying as well. On this occasion, it offered a 70 per cent on its Business Class



Esayas Woldemariam Hailu
Managing Director (International Services)
Ethiopian Airlines

This will be thrice weekly which will be upscaled to daily as the route develops. The aircraft for this route will be the Boeing 787 Dreamliner

companion fare and 45 per cent discount on its Economy Class fares for a week till February 10 was valid for travel originating from India for the rest of the year.

Hailu added, "The travel trade has been a very good

host and a very good partner to work with. To thank them and commemorate our anniversary in India, we gave them this great offer. Last year has seen very good growth for us. In terms of passenger increase, we saw a jump of 10-12 per cent. The fleet that we are operating in India right now is all new. We have the Boeing 787 Dreamliner as well as Boeing 777 with 400 and 320 capacities."

Speaking about 2017, he revealed that the airline expects a continued growth from 10 to 15 per cent on a sustainable basis. "Mumbai was one of our earliest destinations and is one of our strongest markets in Asia today. We now want to diversify our market segment with more leisure travellers as we are working hard to promote Ethiopia as a tourist destination through our 'Ethiopian Holidays' arm. We will do some familiarisation trips for the travel trade to promote the destination. Ethiopia has nature, culture, history and wildlife, especially the central and the north parts," he added.

More airlines for Durgapur

Neena Sharma, General Manager-Airport Operations, Bengal Aerotropolis Projects Limited, Durgapur, says Zoom Air's flights would boost traffic to the city.



TT BUREAU

India's latest scheduled carrier Zoom Air started flying Delhi-Durgapur-Kolkata and brought back Kazi Nazrul Islam Airport in Durgapur in the limelight, which was earlier served only by Air India. The airport is partly owned by Singapore's Changi Airports International which has 36.32 per cent stake in BAPL.

Ecstatic about Zoom Air's arrival at the airport, **Neena Sharma**, says, "Earlier all the people from this area, i.e. Durgapur, Asansol, Raniganj, Bardhaman and Dhanbad would go to Kolkata, which means at least 3-4 hour journey, and then take a flight forward. With this airport being commissioned, and with the Zoom Air flight from here, the time gets reduced to half an hour maximum."

Sharma informs that Durgapur would be serving as a feeder airport for international flights. "We are anyway connecting to the metros like Kolkata and Delhi, which of-



Neena Sharma
General Manager-Airport Operations
Bengal Aerotropolis Projects Limited (BAPL), Durgapur

We are talking to other airlines to come here and start their training flights. It would save them a lot of money as the fuel is cheaper here

fer international connections. The same happened when Air India was operating from here," she says.

The BAPL is in talks with Air India and hopes that the

national carrier resumes its service to Durgapur soon. "We had done 84 per cent from this airport for Air India earlier with a 120 seat carrier. We hope that Zoom Air, which is operating a 50 seater aircraft, would definitely boost our business and passenger base," Sharma adds.

For expansion, they are in talks with other airlines as well. "Zoom Air had done their trial and training flights at this airport. We are talking to other airlines to come here and start their training flights. It would save them a lot of money as the fuel is cheaper here," Sharma says.

Besides, two companies are assessing the cargo capacity at the Durgapur airport and they were interested in setting up cargo on BAPL's behalf as well. "This area is known as the Sky City, where a lot of logistic companies were coming up. Thus, cargo is on the cards, because finally the revenue always comes from cargo," Sharma claims.

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Lanka to host PATA summit

Being held from May 18-21, 2017, the PATA Annual Summit will address disruption, innovation and transformation through a notable line-up of industry stalwarts.

TT BUREAU

Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) is all geared up for the upcoming Annual Summit scheduled to be held in Jetwing Blue in Negombo, Sri Lanka. The three-day programme will gather the crème de la crème of the tourism industry along with an inspiring speaker line-up who will address current key issues in the travel and tourism industry.

So far, panellists with the likes of **Dr. Taleb Rifai**, Secretary General, World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO); **Thao Nguyen**, Head of Strategic Partnerships, APAC, Airbnb; **Vijay Poonosamy**, Vice President, International Affairs, Office of the President & CEO, Etihad Airways; **Erick Stephens**, Chief Technology Officer-APAC, Microsoft; **Hiran Cooray**, Chairman, Jetwing Hotels; **Lawrence Leong**, Former Assistant Chief Executive (International Group), Singapore Tourism Board; **Sarah Mathews**, Head of Destina-



Dr. Mario Hardy
CEO
PATA

This is the perfect opportunity for all industry stakeholders to stay abreast of the rapid changes that are taking place in today's ever evolving landscape

tion Marketing APAC, TripAdvisor, among many others will take the stage. Topics such as 'Managing Disrup-

tion through Innovation', 'The Transformation of Marketing', 'Research Innovation', 'Disrupting the Travel Industry', etc. will be explored.

"We are excited to assemble such an impressive line-up of speakers for the PATA Annual Summit. These speakers represent companies that have been in the forefront of disrupting, innovating and transforming the global travel and tourism industry," said **Dr. Mario Hardy**, CEO, PATA. "This is the perfect opportunity for all industry stakeholders to stay abreast of the rapid changes that are taking place in today's ever evolving landscape."

Under the theme 'Disruption. Innovation. Transformation: The Future of Tourism', the event also features a half-day UNWTO/PATA Ministerial Debate where industry leaders and government representatives will discuss 'The Shift to Recognised Sustainability Leadership' and 'The Sharing Economy in Travel and Tourism'.

Digital edge for partners

Riyaz U.C., MD, SpiceLand Holidays, says combining Kerala and Sri Lanka in packages and offering digital convenience to trade partners is key for growth.

TT BUREAU

SpiceLand Holidays is one of the largest DMCs in Kerala and have presence in Sri Lanka as well. In fact, in an innovative strategy, the company is now combining Kerala with Sri Lanka for their customers. **Riyaz U. C.**, Managing Director, SpiceLand Holidays, reveals, "To improve the flow of tourists towards South India, we are basically combining the extreme end of India, which is Kerala with Sri Lanka. With this move, we are targeting our inbound market. We introduced the combination of Sri Lanka with Kerala last year and it has become a big hit in the Arab market. Hence, we thought of putting in more efforts and popularise it in the inbound market as well."

Riyaz claims that their innovative approach and unique products, packages and style of work is their biggest USP. Talking of Sri Lanka, he says, "We are one of the major local DMCs in Sri Lanka. India is the number one source market for



Riyaz U.C.
Managing Director, SpiceLand Holidays,
India Travel Award winner

We introduced the combination of Sri Lanka with Kerala last year and it has become a big hit in the Arab market

Sri Lanka, followed by China. From India, there is movement to Sri Lanka for both leisure and MICE."

Even Kerala is doing very well in terms of MICE business. "Kerala definitely is a place with huge demand for

small and mid-size MICE activity. Of course, there are major medical conferences happening in Kerala as well but the regular business comes from the steady small and medium MICE movements," he reveals.

Riyaz says that travel agents are very important for them and they offer great technological ease for their premium partners. "We have a number of B2B partners as well as a big sales force across the country. Thus, almost all the Tier-I and Tier-II cities are covered fully in our network. We have a fully integrated online system for our premium partners. They have an online option to access our back-office operation with their login. Thus, they don't have to wait for an itinerary or quotations for a long time or even for a few days. They can build their own itinerary right in front of the customer. Nowadays, everyone wants to do things within 5-10 mins, and it's easy for our trade partners, instead of sending 10 mails to us and wait for hours to get it done," he claims.



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Nine experts, one platform

Nine travel specialists in nine off-beat regions of India have come together to offer quality solutions to agents, and named it 'India B2B'.



HAZEL JAIN

Nine domestic tour operators who were destination experts in their right have come together to form a consortium in offer B2B solutions to the travel trade. Named 'India B2B', the platform was formally launched in January this year. **Gopesh Sharma**, CEO, Discover Gujarat, who has been chosen as the spokesperson for the new company, says, "We have known each other for a long time, as friends and as fellow tour operators who helped each other when it came to destinations that we were familiar with."

The first seed for this thought was sown in 2006 and a few of the partners were already discussing coming together. It took shape in the form of 'East India Tour Experts' two years ago that had only three members. As the discussions progressed, a few more people joined in and now India B2B has nine experts in nine different destinations of India plus Bhutan.



Gopesh Sharma
CEO
Discover Gujarat

We have the right infrastructure in place on ground, and we own our own fleet

The idea is to pass on a query to the person who is expert in that particular region. "The beauty of this platform is that people can get in touch with any of us directly. There's no profit-sharing nor any financial involvement between us. The only thing we are invested in is commitment. We have the right infrastructure in place on ground, we own our own fleet,

we are destination experts, so why not come together and offer a bouquet of destinations to people who are in search for the right connect and the right solutions," Sharma says.

A lot of the ready packages are on the India B2B website but their main strength lies in customisation as per the agent requirement. "All of us have our own transport fleet in place, which means we are all invested in this. We have anything from 200 to 60 vehicles to even 10 vehicles of our own according to the size of the company, and we have been operating in our areas for more than two decades," Sharma adds.

Initially, India B2B is promoting itself only through trade fairs such as TTF Chennai, TTF Bengaluru, IITT Mumbai, SATTE and OTM Mumbai. After that, they might try something else to connect to agents, specially in Tier-II and -III cities where these trade fairs are not organised, through one-on-one meetings or roadshows. ↴

Ideal partner for agents

TI Infotech offers solutions to the travel industry to help enhance the traveller's booking experience with products like the travel cloud suite and travel assist.



TT BUREAU

TI Infotech offers comprehensive tour management solutions, DMC solutions, online travel booking engines, travel CRM, mobile Apps, corporate self booking tool, responsive e-commerce portals etc. to the travel agencies and online travel agents alike. "Our company likes to give attention and contributes to every idea or challenge for our customers that can be solved by a robust and a cutting-edge technology. We believe in innovation. Our products have a constant roadmap for new innovations and sales channel, helping travel management companies to tap into new markets and consumer segments," says, **Meenu Sachdeva**, Co-founder and Managing Director, TI Infotech.

The company has introduced Travel Cloud Suite to automate the travel business processes, starting from content acquisition and all the way through distribution, in-

forms Sachdeva. The Travel Assist offered by the company is a comprehensive tours management software that enables an organisation to efficiently manage the complete tour cycle from product planning to profitable opera-



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

tions to accounting to MIS suite for all levels of the tour/DMC business. This application enables a tour company to manage operations for all business segments; FIT, GIT, series departures, charters and excursion management.

Sachdeva elaborates that companies are now collecting actionable insights

with their existing data and business intelligence forms a key part to track and monitor important components of a travel business. "The traveller today is more tech-savvy and expects all information in real time along with booking flexibility on the move and thus mobile Apps and mobile compatible sites are necessary to facilitate such flexibility. Currently, companies are also evaluating new and advanced payment solutions that help in simplifying the processes, reinforce program compliance and offer protection against fraud," she adds.

TI Infotech's focus this year is both national and international market and thus the company would be participating in all key domestic and international travel events. Apart from this, the company's major focus will be around online marketing and social media activities. The company hopes to gather new business leads along with networking with industry peers, meeting existing clients at ATM 2017. ↴



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Value addition for travel agents

RezLive.com to offer more benefits to partners through the e-Learning programme, as well as rezRewards.



TT BUREAU

In a bid to educate travel partners on practical information related to Rezlive.com, the global reservation system of Travel Designer Group has launched an e-Learning programme for travel partners. According to **Jaal Shah**, Group Managing Director, Travel Designer Group, more than 1500 travel partners have registered and the numbers are increasing day by day.



Jaal Shah
Group Managing Director
Travel Designer Group

"The response for the e-Learning program has been rewarding as on the launch day itself 80+ travel agents registered." The e-learning program contains one study material that the travel partner can study at his/her own pace and give the certification exam. On successful completion of the course by scoring the required marks, the participant will be termed as a RezLive.com specialist opening the doors to a host of benefits such as certification, a logo for letters/brochures/website/resumes/business cards, etc, along with worldwide recognition.

In addition, Shah informs of another recently launched initiative called rezRewards, a loyalty program for valued travel partners. "The programme gives the travel partners the opportunity to earn reward points for every single successful transaction done on RezLive.com. These accumulated reward points can be redeemed to get products and services through rezRewards. So, with the reward points you can receive a new smartphone, tablet, shopping vouchers, free holiday stay/package or theme park tickets by turning bookings into rewards at rezRewards," he says.

Along with launching a host of value programmes, the Travel Designer Group has relocated their corporate

office to a bigger premise in Ahmedabad. Shah says, "It is ideally located and will be the perfect place to meet and welcome travel partners from across the globe. This change will act as a perfect platform to have an even bigger team and venture into newer fields and regions."



TT BUREAU

Zillious Solutions has been fuelling over six million travel bookings with over \$960 million travel turnover annually with clients such as Carlson Wagonlit, Thomas Cook, Kuoni, Flight Centre, Cox & Kings, International Travel House, ATB Uniglobe, PL Worldways, Atlas Travels and Pearl Travels in India. While the focus so far has been the Corporate Booking tool which has resulted

in more mid and large Travel Management Companies (TMCs) looking at Zillious for providing e-commerce solutions, the company is now entering the leisure space as well. **B. Rajan**, Director Sales, Zillious Solutions, says, "We have had the opportunity to move ahead in the leisure space following the success in the corporate field. Our new leisure product is available for all customers who focus on selling leisure in the domestic and



B. Rajan
Director Sales, Zillious Solutions, India
Travel Award winner

international market." The year advances positively for Zillious

with an increase in volume despite the effects of demonetisation. "We have not seen any drop in business compared to the previous year," he comments. "This clearly shows the acceptance of our products by a large number of players."

The technology provider recently made a foray into the UAE market and Rajan is hopeful and continues to strive for its success in the region.

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Robust B2B marketplace

QuadLabs' new venture Connect.Travel, a B2B marketplace for global travel players, currently has 120,000 IATA agents on board.



With South East Asia currently being the most potential region for travel, QuadLabs Technologies plans to tap this market this year. The technology provider boasts of a presence in India, as well Middle East, which was the first venture out of the country.

Gaurav Chiripal, CEO, QuadLabs Technologies, says, "This year, we are going to focus more on Southeast Asia. Our agenda is to target virgin markets where there are more chances of success. We don't want to hit a saturated market. In addition, we recently made a foray into South Africa as well. We are testing waters in these areas before we go out into the more mature markets like America and Europe."

Chiripal says that their commitment to provide innovation is strong and the team is constantly working and investing in something new. He elaborates, "We've now

made a new platform called Connect.Travel which is a B2B marketplace for travel agents and suppliers. We've just done a deal with IATA on a global basis and brought in about 120,000 IATA agents onto the platform out of which 40,000-50,000 have been migrated to the platform. We are yet to see how well it is received because these are early days for us." Chiripal states that the next two-three months will emphasise on migrating the remaining agents to the marketplace.

Connect.Travel aims to be a one stop shop for the agents for which partnerships are being forged with global suppliers like cruise liners, car rental companies, ground transport, hotels, etc., who will provide live inventory. The benefit of the platform is that the agent does not have to go to multiple places and they can get everything under one single window.

On the whole, 2016 fared well for QuadLabs, comments Chiripal.



Gaurav Chiripal
CEO
QuadLabs Technologies

This year, we are going to focus more on Southeast Asia, we recently made a foray into South Africa as well

pal. "We had a lot of new products, went to new geographies, so it was a very interesting year. We see a lot of challenges coming up in 2017 and we will be concentrating on solving a lot of problems with our customers."

Digital travel dragons roar

If you're interested in content specific to your business needs and networking, the Digital Travel Summit APAC in Singapore from April 25-27 is your best bet.



The Digital Travel Summit APAC is a must-attend event as it provides an in-depth and interactive agenda addressing the biggest e-commerce and digital marketing pain points. The event to be held at Resorts World Sentosa from April 25-27 is APAC's most senior-level e-commerce and digital event for travel.

The speakers at the event share practical tips on how to successfully adapt your digital strategies to capitalise on the latest travel trends in 2017 and beyond. And discussions centre on the future of travel and the impact of new technologies such as AR, VR, AI and block chain on the APAC travel market.

The summit will also talk about APAC's fragmented markets and understand the unique challenges and opportunities they present.

The event provides dedicated in-depth tracks for direc-

tors and VPs of e-commerce and digital marketing, giving them an insight into conversion and retention and owning the customer lifecycle.

The new learning formats provide information in detail, so there will be no all-day presentations and panels, instead the attendees will be regularly involved in intense, small working groups to uncover practical solutions to your day-to-day pain points.

Talking about the ever-growing markets of China and India, the summit will throw light on critical success factors for succeeding in the world's fastest growing travel markets?

Questions on how to combat pricing competition, how to extract actionable intelligence on every consumer and how to cater to local clients to increase sales, reduce risk and build trust are often raised by the travel industry. The summit will help shed light on these

topics and also touch upon how to own both the front and back end of the customer relationship.

In a world obsessed with PokémonGO, artificial intelligence and virtual reality, the summit will also help businesses and marketers to gain insight on how the rapid evolution of technology will increase their revenue.

The highly interactive pre-day workshop has been specifically created to give the attendees an unbeatable, time-saving opportunity to meet and compare the leading technology platforms in one afternoon of networking alongside their peers.

Addressing Issues

There will be no all-day presentations and panels, instead the attendees will be regularly involved in intense, small working groups to uncover practical solutions to your day-to-day pain points



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Caper: The perfect launchpad for small business units

On the lookout to add more divisions to its existing portfolio, Caper Travel Company (CTC) and its group of SBUs reminisce their journey of growth with the company and highlight milestones along the way.



“Caper’s journey from three passionate multitaskers to a team of over 300 professionals has been a roller-coaster ride, and a reflection of our determination and willpower. From a small one room office to our current corporate office and branches at multiple locations in India and over the world, we have been witness to both the highs and lows. Withstanding the hurdles, Caper today is a force to be reckoned with a host of accolades under our belt for our sundry contributions of tourism growth and proficient practices. One of the key differentiator has been my personal involvement in every aspect of the business. Now with a strong foundation, a pool of talent we are ready to push our growth to unimaginable levels. To achieve and accomplish our goals, we are all packed up ready to travel the extra mile and make our customers smile. In the coming years, the group has multiple plans of growth; one such endeavour is to go public. We aim for global presence, targeting markets untouched by Caper and its group of companies. We also invite professionals who aspire to live their dreams of entrepreneurship, to head new SBUs supported by CTC Holding.”

Bharat Atree
CMD
Caper Group



“I have had an incredible journey as part of the Caper Group for the past 13 years. My life-changing journey began as a tour guide and slowly and steadily I moved on to now heading the group under the guidance of our CMD Bharat Bhushan Atree. I have grabbed and optimised every opportunity that came my way and strengthened my knowledge regarding all aspects pertaining to the travel business. Currently I am overseeing Caper’s latest venture, software development. The technology plans to steer our company ahead of our peers. Our company’s logo, ‘Live your dreams’ is not just for our guests but also for all members of staff working for the company.”

Anupam Kumar
Director, Caper Group



“My ceaseless association with Caper goes back 18 years, and it has been an honour to help lead one of the largest and foremost tour operators of India. On the other hand, Hi-life Tours and Travel is a technology driven online company and a specialist in B2C segment servicing end travellers from across the globe. Branching out from CTC Group and creating its own brand identity was a strategic decision so that the young company can focus on its core values of serving independent travellers in their planning, organising and operating tours to India and ensure they return with good memories.”

Vishal Jaiswal, CEO, Caper Travels and Director, Hi-Life Tours and Travel



“Having been associated with the industry over three decades, we came together to form a joint venture travel company ‘Aamantaran’. It was an incontestable choice keeping in mind the resilient foundation of The Caper Group and also the leadership of Mr. Atree, who is responsible for furthering business to the corners of the world. The journey in the past few years has been challenging due to the metamorphic market scenario, however I am upbeat that the support of The CTC Group and the changing dynamics of travel, Aamantaran will soon be a leader in all markets around the globe.”

Deepak Bhatnagar, Managing Director, Aamantaran Travel Company



“As part of Aayan Journeys, I am responsible for devising an effective strategy and, overseeing operations and supervising partnerships for Australasia. Applying 30 years of experience in operations, customer relations and sales with specialisation in developing new markets, our efforts and hard work have begun to pay off as we have managed to capture close to 20 per cent of the market in less than two years. Aayan Journeys is one of the top emerging Indian DMCs in the luxury segment and we endeavour to acquire 50 per cent of the Australasian market in the next three years.”

Sanjeev Chopra, CEO, Aayan Journeys



“My tryst with CTC started over a cup of coffee some years ago. We instantly got along since we both shared a similar vision and passion, which was chiefly a strong motivational factor behind forming the association. Within a span of three years, Era Hotels & Resorts’ portfolio includes five hotels and 270 rooms across Goa and Mussoorie, with two more properties opening over the next three months in Goa and Bengaluru. We aim to be a major player in the hospitality sector and aim at adding 20 properties in Rajasthan, Kerala and the hills of North India.”

Vinay Albuquerque, COO, Era Hotels & Resorts



“Internet has changed the way we live, travel and work, by offering new tools and opportunities. Tourism business too is evolving with time. This is why we feel the need to provide travel solutions through extensive research and development in understanding international and domestic ERP solution to now package a world-class solution in two of its offering Formula Uno & Easyhols a complete turn-key ERP Travel Solution. I have been associated with Softtix Technology from its inception, and the company has hugely benefited from the CTC Group.”

Sean Kennedy, Co-Founder & CEO, Softtix Technology



“Being associated with the aviation industry for the last two decades and being witness to the gradual increase of traffic to India has brought the group to my focus, thanks to its widespread global presence. Being appointed as the president of Jetconcepts has given me great insight into markets which were earlier inaccessible as also with the free reign given to develop the internal system. We hope to retain our prime position in the market in Trip support services and also look forward in moving and adapting to new client base which is being developed and pursued by our company.”

Rakesh Mathur, President, Jetconcepts



“It has been an implausible journey with CTC Group for the past 13 years. Slowly and steadily I have groomed with the Caper Group and learned a lot about the travel domain. Pegasus is a luxury transport service provider that works with the core idea of pampering travellers with best on-road experience. An extensive fleet of the most luxurious cars are equipped with GPS and in-house software, which can either be chauffeur driven or self-driven and serves the demands of customers. We aim towards being the largest transport service provider contributing towards Indian economic growth.”

Anurag Jain, Director, Pegasus



Bouncing back post demonetisation

The impact of demonetisation on the travel industry was short-term, lasting for only a few months. Now that normlacy has been retained, business seems to be back on track as agents gear up for the summer season. TRAVTALK finds out from the travel trade how business has been faring so far.



TT BUREAU



Sampat Damani
Chairman-Western Region
TAAI

“In my opinion, demonetisation was a necessary bitter pill we all had to swallow. Today, it has affected all businesses and travel is no exception! When it was first announced, it definitely put everyone into a tizzy as the whole country was caught offguard, especially the travel industry with so many players who are still offline and deal in cash. But now, we are coming to terms with ‘Sorry, no cash accepted’ system. This summer, travel business has been hit but it is a temporary phenomenon. More than demonetisa-

tion, a lack of clarity and continuous changes in Income Tax rules and Service Tax has made passengers wary.”

“Demonetisation is first and foremost, great for the country, and secondly very good for us. It has been one of the biggest reasons for people going online and introducing more options for payment, booking etc. Once it was put into effect, we had one or two weeks’ hiccup after which we saw people coming online with even more gusto. It has changed the way forward for the entire nation by embracing technology and giving it a huge, much-needed push that put India in the spotlight for more investments, and as a competitor in the field. The move has opened up more avenues for online players and on the whole, broadened the options.”



Deep Kalra
Founder & Group CEO,
MakeMyTrip



Meenakshi Tomar
Director-Leisure, Luxury and
MICE, Make You Travel

“When demonetisation was announced, it seemed like the industry will be hit very badly, especially the outbound segment of travel. However though demonetization had stalled business for approximately two months in various segments of travel, the MICE segment has not been hit. The initial month was tough as there was confusion about the procedures to be followed. Since business travel is a necessity for any company and crucial for its growth, MICE movements have continued to take place. I feel in the coming months, GST will be something to watch out for which may have long term impact on the tourism industry if a high tax slab is decided.”

“November looked like a very difficult month flowing into December when it looked like the travel and hospitality trade would be impacted badly. However, since January 2017, the travel patterns have resumed and business as usual is back on track. I can say that even though there was a dip in the market for two months, travel did not stop. Those months were peak seasons for travelling and it can be said that demonetization slowed travel but did not affect it for long. Given that GST is yet to be implemented, I think that is where the giant is lurking and we shall have to be ready for new mandates to come.”



Naresh Aggarwal
Proprietor
Travel Raze

“Demonetisation has impacted the tourism industry just the way it has affected many other industries. Both domestic and international holidays have taken a hit for many travel agents and tour operators. However, a few months have passed since the initial brunt was felt, the travelling public is also coming to terms with this reality and it is just a matter of time when the business will start picking up again. This is just one of the many hurdles the tourism industry has faced, and since the future is always ambiguous and perceptible to change, such impacts will come and go.”



Mahendra Vakharia
Chairman-Western Chapter,
OTOAI

“The demonetisation actually helped us in the long run and was beneficial, rather than it being a setback. What happened is that the smaller travel shops weren’t rigorous about controlling where their clients came from or how the clients paid for it, which was draining business away from us. Post demonetisation, we saw the fragmented market move to the organised players making us the main beneficiary since we are the largest tour operator out of India. It definitely did more good than harm and has changed the way business is done in the country.”



Peter Kerkar
Group Chief Executive
Officer, Cox & Kings



Amit Kalsi
CEO, Experiential Travel
Journeys, India Travel Award
winner

“We felt as if demonetisation will lead to collapse of the outbound travel industry but the fact is that it has been just few months and nobody is talking about it! It is the beauty of India that people find their ways around an incident, adapt and move on. I feel there has been no impact of demonetisation on travel. Travellers will need travel designers and travel consultants to help them plan their holidays and it depends on how one projects their area of expertise. In fact the rupee has gained and technically outbound travel should grow.”



Radhika Krishnan
Head-Sales and Marketing,
German National Tourist
Office

“According to us, demonetisation has not had any immediate impact. Our figures for Indians travelling to Germany in January have shown that travel is strong and continuously growing. It may be so that smaller markets where cash transactions were more common may have seen some impact. It did seem like travel will dip for a little while but the impact has been very short lived, even shorter than what was forecasted. The Indian market is showing great travel patterns and demonetization has not been able to dull the travelling spirit of the Indians which is very encouraging and speaks volumes of the resilience of Indian travellers.”

“In my opinion, the effect of demonetisation is now over. There were a lot of reports on foreigners having a problem in India, which surfaced at the time the announcement was made in November. At that time, there was a cash crunch throughout India. However, right now, there is plenty of currency moving around in the system and there should not be any effect on international tourists visiting India owing to currency shortage. People are booking holidays in India as well. However, not many tourists come to India, especially north India, in the summer months of May and June, as it’s too hot.”



Lally Matthews
Honorary Secretary
IATO

“It is very encouraging to see that the number of people taking a holiday during summer is increasing year-on-year. It is heartening to note that demonetisation did not have a major impact on the peak travel season. Post demonetization, 90 per cent of Indian travellers book by debit/credit card and ironically, demonetization, luxury travel has also witnessed a rise with almost 48 per cent people willing to spend above INR 50,000 on travel in summers as against 18 per cent last year. The surge in international travel highlights that things are back to normal and also underlines that millennials are relatively intrepid and unlikely to be phased by economic problems or political unrest.”



Sharat Dhall
President
Yatra.com



Anshul Shah
Partner
All Four Seasons

“I feel demonetisation affected tourism and hospitality business in the initial two months where the industry was stalled for sometime. This was majorly due to confusion in the market about how to go about the various processes and travellers paused their immediate plans. However I feel that it did not affect the industry for long as the situation has normalized and effects have more or less worn off. Having said that, I think GST is what we have to watch out for. It looks like the new mandate will hit the bread and butter of travel agents which will have longer affect on the business.”

“When demonetisation was announced, the first few days can be defined nothing short of mayhem. The predictions and speculation were high and the future of leisure outbound travel looked weak. However, at present, the market has recovered at an exponential rate and it looking positive. We have had very high end queries from East India market and even though a few segments may be struggling to come up immediately, one thing is for sure that eventually, say in another month or so, the tourism market will move back to its growth trajectory. I think rather than demonetization, we should be concerned about the month of July which will bring the GST Bill.”



Chandranath Banerjee
General Manager-Marketing
and Product Development,
Voyagers Club Tours

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Celebrating support from travel trade

China Southern Airlines cheered for their trade partners at a special evening recently, where they presented their product offerings and followed it up with some cocktails and a sumptuous dinner.



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AccorHotels to impart MICE training

AccorHotels will work closely with the Incentive Conference & Event Society Asia Pacific (ICESAP) to improve training standards, support education and advance best practices on the society's agency accreditation and distance learning programme.



HAZEL JAIN

Part from highlighting its various brands and hotels at its annual 'AccorHotels Showcase' that was held in Mumbai and New Delhi, the hotel group also announced its partnership with the Incentive Conference & Event Society Asia Pacific (ICESAP). The aim is to professionalize the MICE industry in Asia Pacific region.

This year, 'AccorHotels Showcase' saw 30 delegates from 95 countries like the Middle East and Asia Pacific countries as far as Eu-



Kerry Healy
Vice President Sales, Asia Pacific
AccorHotels

The partnership was a perfect alignment for us. India ranks in the top three in the Meetings market that we anticipate getting more Events business but more particularly the Incentives market and probably the association market moving forward

rope representing more than 4,100 hotels meet members of the Indian trade. This was the first time it was done as a showcase. Prior to this, it was like a sales mission and smaller in size. **Kerry Healy**, Vice President Sales, Asia Pacific, AccorHotels, says, "Meetings and Events segments has always been important to AccorHotels as we acquired the Fairmont and Swissotel brands. We are now 767 hotels and we will definitely close the year at 800. A third of this development is sitting in our luxury and upscale brands which is an important part of the Meetings and Events segments. Not to discount the third of the network sitting in that mid-scale which is also a convenient

plus point from the value proposition for Meetings and Events. The partnership was a perfect alignment for us. India ranks in the top three in the Meetings market that we anticipate getting more Events business but more particularly the Incentives market and probably the association market moving forward," she adds.

ICESAP is a single body for the Incentive Travel, Conference and Business Event sector and its members are individuals and organisations made up of customers, intermediary agencies and the suppliers of products and services to the Incentive Conference & Event (IC&E) industry in Asia Pacific. As the principle partner on ICESAP's Agency Ac-

creditation and Distance Learning programme, AccorHotels will work closely with the society to improve training standards, support education and advance best practices throughout the sector. AccorHotels will work with ICESAP to build industry-wide professional standards across the APAC region. The accreditation scheme

is developed in APAC for the APAC region.

Vishal Dhale, Regional Vice President – South Asia, Incentive, Conference & Event Society Asia Pacific (ICESAP) who is also Regional VP, Birla Sunlife Insurance, is spearheading ICESAP operations in India since December 2016. He says, "We have just gotten our advisory panel in

place with three members from Mumbai and expanding to other towns where we are looking at members from Bengaluru, Pune, Dubai and then Sri Lanka. The first thing that we are driving is the agency accreditation piece along with learning and development piece. The industry is growing fast and if there is a structure to it, it will benefit everyone." ↓

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India pitches in Canada's tourism dream

Canada welcomed a total of 20 million visitors in 2016, out of which more than 215,664 were Indian tourists. TRAVTALK finds out from travel trade stakeholders why Canada is a favourite among Indian tourists and how can they help Canada achieve its dream of 20 million visitors by 2020.



TT BUREAU



Suman Billa
Joint Secretary, Tourism
Government of India

“India and Canada are natural allies. We have a large Indian diaspora which lives in Canada, and thus our relationship has always been warm and cordial. In terms of tourism, we get around 300,000 Canadians who come into India every year and we send around a similar number back into Canada. However, most of these numbers are actually coming from the diaspora, and hence we need to expand that. In fact, all the direct flights that Air Canada has started, with Air India following suite, would be a big lever to push this momentum forward.”

“We specialise in Canada and Alaska, and have been selling this destination since the year 2000, when nobody knew Canada beyond Toronto and Niagara Falls. Being specialists in this area, we have a variety of programmes. However, the normal itinerary which the Indian traveller prefers is Western Canada, especially Canadian Rockies, which starts from Banff to Jasper and also includes the most scenic rail journeys. In fact, one can travel across Canada by train and then to Vancouver, Whistler, and Victoria.”



Zubbin Khmbatta
Director
Shree Yash Destinations

“Canada is a long-haul destination and with Destination Canada doing a lot of promotions, the destination is coming up well. There are some hurdles like visa duration which we discussed with the Minister. Long back, the visa was much more difficult, but now for MICE movements it's simpler. Even for FITs, the turnaround period is around 20 days. I am expecting that the branding should reach Tier-II and III cities. Also we are looking at more workshops and interactions to see what else is there in Canada that we can sell in India apart from Toronto and Vancouver.”



Guldeep Singh Sahni
DDP Trailblazer 2016 and
President, OTOAI

“Canada is a high-end destination and is very popular among travellers from Gujarat. A lot of Gujaratis are now settled in Canada, which means that there are repeat visitors who are travelling including families of Indians settled in Canada. Another important factor that works in Canada's favour is that there is a huge student traffic that is increasing to Canada from India. For tourists, the Rockies still hold the flagship in any Canadian holiday, especially when combined with an Alaskan cruise.”



Mahendra Vakharia
Managing Director
Pathfinders Holidays

“People like to go to Canada and they like visiting Vancouver, Toronto, and taking the cruise. This is the preferred itinerary that Indians like to opt for usually. However, FITs and MICE needs are different, and there are also other requirements which may differ. India is a very important market for Canadian tourism. The world can't neglect two markets right now — India and China. Both have their advantages and big population. Indian outbound tourism is growing by leaps and bounds and people here have the disposable income. It's very important to capture this market.”



Sanjeet Johar
Vice President, Combined
Buying Group, Asia Pacific
and Middle East
Cox & Kings

“India is a growing opportunity, in terms of tourism for Canada. Year-on-year we have been experiencing double digit growth in tourist arrivals. With more flights and more airlift available to India, we would be one of the most sought-after markets this year for Canadian suppliers doing business overseas. In terms of itinerary, while leisure travellers prefer Western Canada, which is primarily the Canadian Rockies, Vancouver and Alaska cruise, for the MICE segment, the preferred itinerary includes Toronto, Niagara Falls and Montreal, which is the Eastern part of Canada.”



Mernoz Shastri
Director
Mazda Travel



Ashwini Kakkar
Executive Vice Chairman
Mercury Travels, India Travel
Award winner

“Canada has developed quite nicely as a destination and more and more people are taking interest in it. Now we also have the advantage as Air Canada will be operating direct flights from India. Over the next few years we will see a big rise in the number of Indians travelling to Canada. Canada has a lot to offer like Toronto which is very much different than the lakes of Canada, Montreal, Vancouver, cruises, rail road, etc. The destination is very good for summers and while in the winters it is very cold, the kind of experience one may have during the winters is altogether different. Right now the segment which has been doing best is the FITs and during the winters it's the honeymooners.”



Jyot P. Jhaveri
Director, Sunday Pure
Holidays

“Canada as a destination has always been on top of every Indian travellers' list and this is not limited to just the summers, it is equally popular during winters as well. We have been promoting Canada since the last four years, and it's not just the luxury packages of Canada that appeal to the travellers, but it is also self-drive itineraries and the parks are also a favourite among travellers. We do a lot of anniversaries and celebrations in Canada. People have been repeating travel to Canada and also small family and adventure groups have been more important. Adventure sports activities have picked up quite well too.”



Prasad Gopinath
President
DMCI Toronto

“Canada is widely popular among Indian travellers. For Canada tourism, India is among the top three source markets today. Indians travelling to Canada for tourist purposes prefer a six-day itinerary that starts from Calgary, driving through the Rockies, Canmore, and then goes on to Vancouver. The destination has been very popular among Indian travellers and we have seen a 15 per cent growth Year-on-Year in the number of Indians seeking to travel to Canada. More than the growth, which is substantial, we have a challenge with the rooms to keep pace with the growing demand.”



Jatin Shah
Director
Comfort Voyages

“Canada has been doing very good we normally do with the kitchen series taking our own chef onboard. We do Rockies Mountains, Vancouver, etc. and also the cruises. We also have departures in the winter seasons.”



“Our company specialises in niche destinations and with our expertise we've been doing very good numbers to Canada for the past several years. We also specialise in offering unique experiences and now we're marketing the Atlantic treasure that is the region of Halifax, Newfoundland, and other unexplored places. The country of Canada is on the map of every discerning Indian traveller and the proof of the fact is that we do longer itineraries for various places in Canada like Yukon, Whitehorse, Quebec, etc. Among the various experiences, Alaskan cruises are very popular among Indian travellers flying to Canada. We are trying to send people from Montreal to Boston and are trying to promote winters in Canada. One of the most unique experiences which is the Northern Light experience is also coming of age and more and more people want to visit and witness this phenomenon.”



Kaushal Bhuvra
MD, WOV Travel Company
Private Limited

Eyeing Indian MICE traveller

BMT REP, a division of Blue Moon Travels, has been appointed as the Sales and Marketing representative in India for San Clemente Palace-Kempinski, Venice, Italy.



TT BUREAU

Situated on the Venetian Lagoon on a private Island called Isola di Clemente, San Clemente Palace is only a stone's throw away from Venice. **Sachin Varma**, Sales Representative India, San Clemente Palace-Kempinski, Venice (BMT REP), said that the property is an intimate retreat suitable for the luxury traveller from India. "Offering awe-inspiring views of the lagoon adding a romantic and relaxing atmosphere with carefully selected practical amenities, and bespoke service, San Clemente is an ideal choice

target the niche clients and big corporates doing top notch MICE and personal holidays. We will also target destination wedding planners. For all those who dream of a wedding that is private but lavish, luxurious, romantic and magical; this property in the heart of Venice is for us to promote," he revealed.

For agents, they will extend special tariffs and value

add-ons that can be included to enhance the itineraries, informed Varma. Also, MICE could be a good opportunity. "I strongly feel Venice has not been explored as much as other European cities when we talk of pure MICE. San Clemente in Venice along with Rome and Milan can be a perfect itinerary that includes a luxurious offsite or a corporate conference," he added.



Sachin Varma
Sales Representative India,
San Clemente Palace-Kempinski, Venice (BMT REP)

It is an intimate wedding destination specially for Indians keeping in mind the requirement of open spaces for the wedding functions

for both leisure and business travellers. This plush beautiful resort overlooks the stunning Venetian lagoon. Its 190 keys include large spacious 61 suites. Above all the hotel has its own private helipad. The open lush gardens with beautiful clear skies and the serene blue waters to give you company, this property is the ideal host for a fairy tale wedding, a luxurious offsite or a corporate conference," he explained.

Claiming that it would be an ideal destination for Indian weddings, he added, "It is an intimate wedding destination specially for Indians keeping in mind the requirement of open spaces for the wedding functions. It is also a perfect retreat for the high-end clients travelling to Venice."

However, Varma and BMT REP would not leave any stone unturned to ensure that the property makes its way to itineraries for both leisure and corporate guests. "Our strategy would directly

Manohar Azgaonkar is the new Goa Tourism Minister

Goa has appointed a new tourism minister **Manohar Azgaonkar**. Under his leadership, Goa Tourism is planning to introduce new initiatives and infrastructure projects, promote the diverse cultures of the state and focus on improving all its products and services. Azgaonkar has travelled extensively and is set to infuse new concepts and ideas into the tourism sector here in Goa. In another development, Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) has re-appointed Nilesh Ca-

bral as Chairman. He is the current MLA of Curchorem Taluka. Under his leadership, GTDC has taken huge strides and given a new dimension to Goa Tourism. In his previous stint as Chairman of GTDC, the corporation achieved several milestones i.e the GTDC became a profit making corporation, introduced new and attractive activities and initiatives, formed a (Special Purpose Vehicle) SPV cell to expedite tourism infrastructure projects, procured funding from Central Govt. schemes



Manohar Azgaonkar
Tourism Minister
Goa

and has lined up new project for construction and commissioning in the next two to three years.



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CLIA offers accreditation in India

Expecting the cruising business in India to grow exponentially, the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) in association with Singapore Tourism Board, is now offering its accreditation programme for travel agents in India.



HAZEL JAIN

Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), a US-based cruise industry trade association, in partnership with Singapore Tourism Board in India, has launched its accreditation programme for the travel agents in India. The programme has been developed over the last five years and is currently being used in Australia, New Zea-

land, the UK and the Europe markets. It is targeted at any travel agent or tour operator who sells cruise packages.

Peter Kollar, Head, International Training & Development, CLIA, who was in Mumbai to announce the launch, said, "We have opened our membership to the Indian travel trade and it is the first market in Asia that we have done this. We see

India with a huge potential as a source market for cruising. The travel agents need to convince the travellers to cruise. For that to happen, they need to believe in cruising and be educated about the segment."

The accreditation, he adds, is comprehensive. "We start off with a general form of accreditation which is learning about basic skills and

knowledge that one needs to sell cruising. It then evolves into a more senior level certification called Ambassadors and then a Masters. It's not just for training. Travel agents actually have to also experience cruising. We take them for ship inspections, engagement through events, etc."

Annie Chang, Director, Cruising, Policy & Planning Group, Singapore

Tourism Board, added, "We approached CLIA to come to India and offer its membership and accreditation programme. We have also worked on the module to customise it to the India market. We know the India market, they don't. So we not only brought content to this module but also our expertise in the India's cruising market."

Through the program,



Peter Kollar
Head, International Training & Development, CLIA

The travel agents need to convince the travellers to cruise. For that to happen, they need to believe in cruising and be educated about the segment

agents can learn basic elements of cruising like sales and service followed by more advanced topics of specialisation like river cruising, destination specialisation or luxury and expedition markets. The program is open to anyone who sells a lot of cruise or nothing at all and is available online the CLIA website.

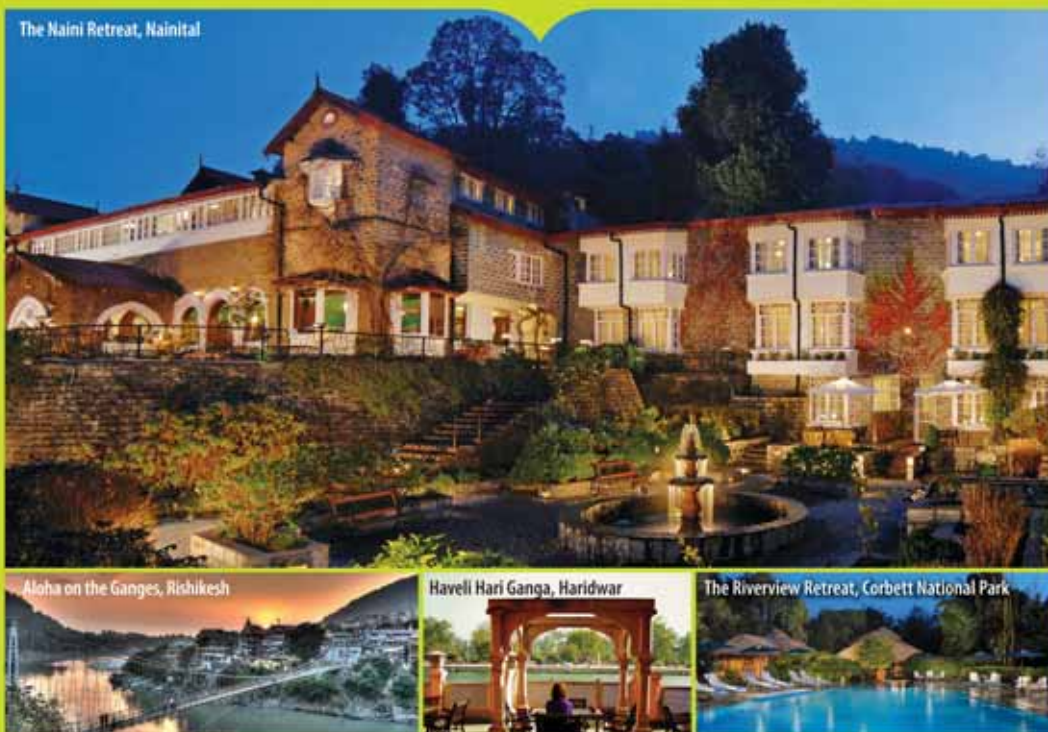


Annie Chang
Director, Cruising, Policy & Planning Group, Singapore Tourism Board

We have also worked on the module to customise it to the India market

"All the information is provided on our website. The training is divided into three levels. The first one ensures that all the basic elements of selling cruising are met by the travel agents. The second is the 'Ambassador' level where the agent continues learning further into more specialised fields. The final level is the 'Masters' where agents are taught how to market cruising and cruise packages and build their small business into one of the top cruise sellers," Kollar explains. ↴

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AI agrees on additional 2% commission

TAAI's meeting with Air India has yielded positive results for the IATA agents as the national carrier agrees to file additional commission of 2 per cent apart from the normal commission of 1 per cent.



TT BUREAU

Air India has led the way towards increasing agents' livelihood and recognising one of their main distribution channels. Subsequent to an in-depth interaction with the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and its suggestions made to the national carrier on March 14, 2017, the airline has announced a new assured incentive/PLB

they must remunerate all IATA agencies irrespective of their size. Our emphasis was to connect more agents with Air India. What's the point if our national carrier is not actively sold directly by a large percentage of IATA agencies in India? Currently, most agencies are compelled to pick up tickets from an intermediary and not an airline. This decision by Air India is reflective of the national air-

line's character, which is so important for every airline in its own country. TAAI is delighted to be doing this for our members."

Jyoti Mayal, Managing Committee & Chairperson (Airline Council), TAAI, adds, "We appreciate Air India's move to recognise and support each and every IATA agent. This flat incentive to all shall enhance the confidence of agents in

the national carrier that has led the way by implementing suggestions from TAAI. Under the leadership of CMD **Ashwani Lohani**, we have seen Air India work closely with the travel fraternity – first by bringing in credit cards then web parity and now with a level playing field where every agent gets incentivised to sell Air India. I would now urge all IATA members to support our national carrier to make it a leading

carrier in Indian skies. I want to see our national airline regain its glory and profitability. We at TAAI took this initiative with the airline to set standards in the industry."

The incentives shall be calculated on basic fare for domestic and for international it will be calculated on Basic Fare + YQ. There is no target for the scheme and will be valid for all tickets sold within

the territory of India by IATA agents registered in India. The scheme came into effect from April 1, 2017, for a period of one year till March 31, 2018. The travel validity is from April 1, 2017 with no end date.

Quick Fact

AI PLB Scheme came into effect on April 1, 2017, for a period of one year till March 31, 2018



Sunil Kumar
DDP Game Changer 2014
and President, TAAI

This decision by Air India is reflective of the national airline's character, which is so important for every airline in its own country

Scheme for the FY 2017-18. Air India will file additional commission of two per cent with BSP and the same will be deducted by agent as cut and pay as per BSP cycle.



Jyoti Mayal
Managing Committee & Chairperson
(Airline Council), TAAI

I would now urge all IATA members to support our national carrier to make it a leading carrier in Indian skies

This will be apart from the normal IATA commission of one per cent.

Sunil Kumar, President, TAAI, says, "We are happy that Air India heard TAAI and our proposal that



Canada sets stage for Indian agents

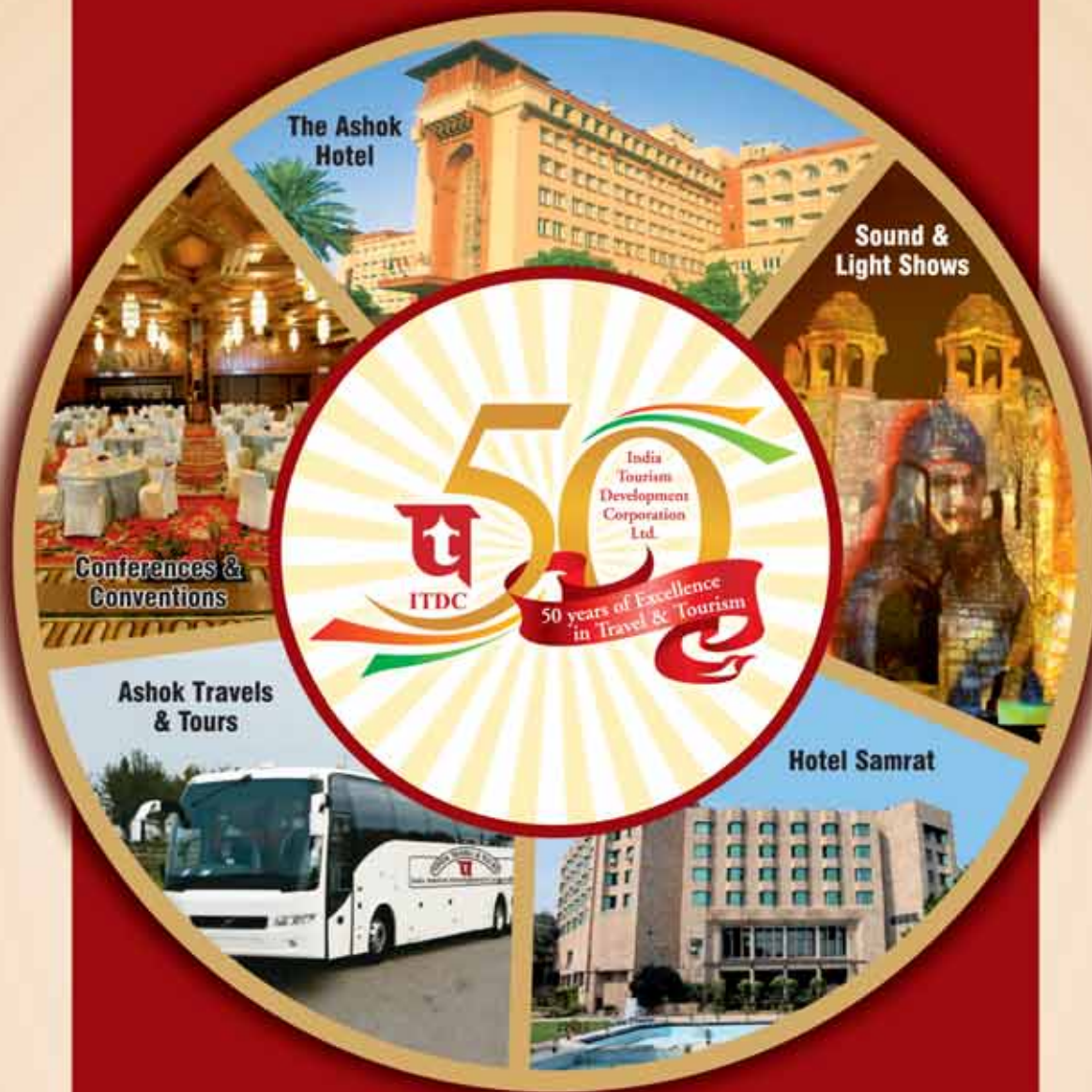
Destination Canada, along with **Nadir Patel**, High Commissioner for Canada, hosted an evening for **Bardish Chagger**, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism in Canada, which saw the trade fraternity of Delhi gather at the official residence of the High Commissioner for a fun-filled networking session.



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Portugal to open India office

Not only is Portugal Tourism opening an office in India, it will also appoint a local representative in Mumbai by May 2017.



TT BUREAU

Portuguese tourism ministry will be making a direct presence in India soon, by opening a tourism office in Mumbai. **Luis Araujo**, President, Turismo De Portugal, reveals, "We will open a new tourism office in Mumbai this year which will interact and work with the travel trade. We will have someone from Portugal stationed here. We will also appoint a local representative as it is important to have someone who already understands the market and will know what works here."

Araujo was in Mumbai promoting Portugal as a favourable destination for shooting films and TV productions. Underlining the kind of initiatives Portugal wants to undertake through the new office, he adds, "We will look to form strategic partnerships with travel agents and tour operators in India. This also means a significant increase in our budgets for the India market. We are hoping that the direct flight that will be



Luis Araujo
President
Turismo De Portugal

launched between Beijing and Lisbon this July will help push India numbers too."

Portugal is targeting honeymooners, weddings and MICE apart from leisure travellers. "But we want to give the travel trade in India the argument and tell us what products would suit the Indian market. We have a population of about 11 million of which 60 per cent speak English. In 2016, we welcomed 30,000 people from India, which is quite a small number and we plan to increase this number in the years to come. We do not have any direct flights to Portugal from India

but we have very good connections. Portugal is now the hub for North America, South America and the entire Europe," Araujo says.

Portugal has direct flights from every capital in Europe to Lisbon and Porto. It also has direct flights to Dubai and Istanbul on Turkish Airlines.

Portugal is also offering a tax incentive of 25 per cent cash rebate, apart from assistance in accommodation, and location scouting for future films and television series. "We offer beautiful landscape and great diversity ideal for film shoots. Portugal is a small country and one can travel from north to south in five hours passing through landscapes with snow and reaching sandy beaches. Most importantly we have great cameramen, photographers, make-up artists, etc., which is important because Indian directors know that when they arrive in Portugal, this will help them stick to their schedule," he adds.

Enabling differently-abled

Enable Travel, a specialised venture supported by Cox & Kings, is offering curated itineraries in 14 Indian cities to aid the aspirations of disabled travellers in India.



TT BUREAU

Debolin Sen, Head, Enable Travel, informs that the initial plan is to spread awareness

amongst the disabled persons, Enable Travel hopes to be the first dedicated player in this space. Also, Sen believes that since the disabled travellers always

domestic holidays and will introduce quality transportation, support services including investments in specially trained manpower such as



amongst the disabled persons that India is more accessible now and inbound tourists too can be catered well.

Sen points out that according to 2011 census, almost 27 million, which is 2.1 per cent of the overall population of India, are suffering from some form of disability and this number is growing at two per cent annually over the last decade. Putting the numbers in context, Sen says that 12 per cent of total travellers from the UK are disabled; 11 per cent of total Australian travellers are disabled and thus, eyeing the vast potential of this special-

travel with friends and family, the revenues for airlines, hotels, etc. increase manifold.

"We are launching in 14 cities and soon in the second phase we shall expand to other cities in India. Also, we will launch the outbound division for disabled travellers once they start travelling within India. Through this initiative we are trying to address various barriers like inaccessible travel information, lack of transportation and disabled friendly hotel rooms that prevent people from travelling," he says. The company is currently offering inbound and

caregivers, sign language interpreters, expert guides and escorts. **Karan Anand**, Head-Relationships, Cox & Kings, comments, "Many tourists with disabilities within and outside India are keen on exploring different travel experiences the country has to offer. It is important to tap this largely underserved segment of travellers by providing quality assistance and services that focus on individual needs. Enabling barrier-free travel for people with disabilities will contribute to a significant increase in inbound and domestic tourism."

Travstarz Mauritius' super luxury Fam

Travstarz Global Group conducted a Super Luxury Fam tour for 12 select trade partners from Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad & Bengaluru. The Fam was more destination focused and showcased Mauritius in a new light with some very exciting itinerary and experiences which included under sea walk, sub-scooter, the 1.5 km world's longest zip line and Casella Tour on Quad Bikes experience.



Korean Air offers more US connections to Indians

In its summer schedule Korean Air is offering Indians increased connectivity to West Coast, US

TT BUREAU
For its summer schedule, Korean Air will be increasing its flight frequency between Incheon and major US cities on the West Coast. This would further strengthen its routes to



San Francisco, Los Angeles and Seattle. This added with Korean Air's newly launched direct flight to Delhi as well as Mumbai, Indian travellers would be able to get an array of flight options for traveling to the West Coast.

Starting April 28, 2017, Korean Air will increase its flight frequency between Incheon and San Francisco on a gradual basis, in accordance with the increase in demand. According to an official statement, from April-end, flights will be increased from seven to 12 per week, and from September, flights will be further increased to 14 per week.

Apart from that, Korean Air will increase its flights on the Incheon-Los Angeles route from 14 flights to 19 flights per week from June to August. In addition, the current five weekly flights from Incheon to Seattle will be increased to daily flights from May. In fact, Korean Air has already increased its flights to Las Vegas from four to five per week starting December last year. Korean Air offers great connecting flight schedules for passengers travelling from India to the West Coast, from Delhi (5 flights weekly) and Mumbai (3 flights weekly) via Incheon International Airport, which is the hub airport of Korean Air.

Connectivity Boost
Korean Air will increase its flights on the Incheon-Los Angeles route from 14 flights to 19 flights per week from June to August

Soaking up the Seychelles sun

Destination Travel Services recently organised a familiarisation trip to Seychelles. The Fam was supported by Air Seychelles and Seychelles Tourism Board. Constance Lemuria, Constance Ephelia, Six Senses Sil Pasyon and Savoy were the hospitality partners.



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Kilimanjaro diaries: Pushing the limits

An ecstatic **Mahendra Vakharia**, Managing Director, Pathfinders Holidays, talks about his latest achievement of scaling 5895m Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain, also among the world's highest volcanoes, and the highest free-standing mountain in the world.

Last year we had an opportunity of arranging a dream itinerary for our clients. They visited Rwanda to do Gorilla Trekking, then arrived into Tanzania to climb the 5898m Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest free standing mountain in the world, followed by enjoying a wildlife safari in Tanzania, and ending with resting the tired body on the golden sands of Zanzibar.

This set my mind ticking and I said to myself, why should I not climb the Mt. Kilimanjaro? I shared this thought with my friends in Mumbai and incidentally they also had the same idea over a cup of coffee and so the journey to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro began. By no means

rapati Shivaji International Airport to board Kenya Airways flight to Kilimanjaro with a lot of excitement and nervousness. We reached Kilimanjaro at midnight, met with our friend, guide and Kili Climb Operator, Genes Shirima of Lava Rock Adventure, and settled into a comfortable hotel for the night.

The next day was spent with Genes to understand the route, get medical examination done for oxygen and pulse with important instructions on dos and don'ts during the climb. Also the hiking gear that we were to carry on the mountain was all inspected, checked and packed into our duffle bags and backpacks all ready for the start next day.



Mahendra Vakharia with Renuka Natu, Sunila Patil and Manu Kashyap

we are professional hikers or experienced in high altitude trekking, but that did not deter us a wee bit from going ahead with our plan and convert this dream into reality.

On Feb 22, 2017, I along with my friends **Sunila Patil**, Director, Veena World, **Renuka Natu**, CEO, Travel Representations and **Manu Kashyap**, Director, Windmill Holidays reached the Chhat-

The Mountain beckons

On Feb 24, we assembled at the starting point – Machame Gate, where we completed registration formalities, filled our water bladders, organised our backpacks and were ready for the strenuous climb full of energy and rigour. Climbers are required to drink at least four litres of water every day. We took the Machame Route for the climb as it is one of the most scenic routes to



Mount Kilimanjaro and popularly known as the Whisky Route owing to its difficulty in nature compared to other routes like Marangu.

The route gave us the opportunity to experience the Rain Forest zone, Moorland and Heatherland zone, Rock Garden zone caused by the huge volcanic lava rocks, Alpine zone, and semi-desert zone till we reached the Uhuru Peak @19,341 feet. During the course of the climb, we gained height on the mountain and stayed at different camp sites at different altitudes.

Due to the sheer beauty, challenge and adrenalin rush I'll never forget the terrain of our trek on Day 3 when we climbed to the Lava Tower with its majestic rock formations, and Day 4, when we climbed the Barranco Wall – the highlight of the Machame Route. Highlight of the day was crossing the 'Kissing a Rock' where we had to literally scrape our cheeks on the surface of the rock and "kiss the rock" so to speak to be able to cross it. A fall from here would have landed us few hundred feet below on massive rocks and boulders. We were hiking and trekking for 6-7 hours every day.

Our climb operator and 'saviour' Genes altered the plan and instead of starting the climb at night we decided to start the trek during the day itself. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise as we avoided the biting cold of the night.

Feb 28: Fantastic Four reach Uhuru Peak

There is a famous saying, 'When the going gets tough, the tough gets going'. At this stage mental strength took over physical tiredness, pain and exhaustion as we pushed ourselves to continue trekking to our destination. 'No guts no glory' was best understood today.

Reaching Stella Point at 18,885 feet renewed our energy and resolve to trudge on to the summit which we could see clearly shining in all its glory from here. The view of the massive Rebmann Glacier to the left of the summit was sheer joy and a sight to behold.

At the pinnacle

Finally, the few moments at the summit holding the Indian flag in my hand, were the finest of my life and for all of us. At this altitude, being exposed to thin air and hardly any oxygen, was enough

to numb our senses and so began the descent from 19,341 feet of the summit to our Barafu camp at 15,000 feet, in a span of two hours in the biting cold, the descent was actually more challenging than the climb. Reaching the camp and removing the shoes is the only thing I remember before crashing into my sleeping bag for the night. It was only the next day I remember the feeling of 'Yes. I did it' finally sink in.

Next day was spent in climbing down to Mweka Camp – the last camp on the Machame Route. This is a melting pot of climbers from different routes of ascent. The last morning in the mountain was heavy with emotions as it was time to bid farewell, and we then headed to Moshi town to collect our luggage. A flashback of the

side world, thanks to the digital technology.

Last night of the trip was well spent at the luxurious Arusha Coffee Lodge, and the joy of hot water bath after a week was worth much more than gold. The courteous staff at the lodge lifted our spirits with some dance and music as they celebrated our climb. Our meal at the Bomay Spice Restaurant in Arusha, after 9 long days, concluded with a glass of chilled beer aptly named Kilimanjaro Beer in the pleasant and cheerful company of Sangeeta Solanki from Sense of Africa.

Return journey on Kenya Airways flight was spent catching up on some sleep before arriving home to the comfort of family and friends. Thank you Margi Patel and



peaceful time, the tranquillity and serenity of the mountain was shattered the moment we connected with the out-

Karan Vakharia for believing in me, supporting me unconditionally and also for being my biggest critic. 🇮🇳

Harvey India opens office in Gurugram

With an eye on the North India market, Harvey India Holidays has opened a branch in Gurugram. It will now train its focus on the South India and Pune markets. **Joe Rajan**, CEO, Harvey India, talks about the new office opening and the strategy that the company will adopt to win more customers.



Harvey India Holidays is spreading its footprints in India in order to expand its existing inbound and MICE business. Revealing more details on this is **Joe Rajan**, CEO, Harvey India, who says, "We are proud to announce the opening of our branch office in Gurugram,

Delhi NCR. This is a major development for Harvey India. A team of 15 people has been appointed here who will take care of the business in North India. We are also looking at expanding in South India as well as Pune in the west."

Rajan adds that the company is looking at developing

and expanding its current inbound and MICE business. "Events and weddings are the other big segments we are targeting. In recent years, medical tourism has been on a rise and we are working towards developing that as well. There are ample business opportunities in the market. It's a matter of stepping up the ante and grabbing them. The year

2017 should be a good one for Harvey India," he adds.

Speaking about the strategy that the company will adopt to achieve this, he underlines people as the strength on which Harvey India will achieve its target. "High quality of service at the best prices possible has always been our mantra. We

will continue to do that. We are looking at hiring more people, specifically the right kind of people who can help the company reach the pinnacle. At the same time, we want to offer a good work environment to the team, help them balance work and personal life, thereby extracting the best out of everyone," Rajan says. 🇮🇳



Joe Rajan
CEO
Harvey India

Intensifying India footprint

The accommodation aggregator with a formidable presence in Europe, is looking to grab a piece of the Indian pie, but not without the support of partners.



AHANA GURUNG

Priceline Group's Booking.com is one of the several international online travel companies that believes India to be a valuable market and has been strategising accordingly. After forming a partnership with MakeMyTrip last year to increase the inventory and allow more options in the accommoda-

China leading the pack. The mobile app and mobile site draws most of the traffic in comparison to the website.

But with so much going on, Hua says the team is focused on one major aspect—to present the best end-to-end experience for accommodation. Hua adds, "We are currently concentrating on rolling out

a great customer-facing product, our mobile app. We want to take out as much friction as possible from the booking process and we're doing that globally. That being said, we are investing a lot, not just in optimisation, mobile app and mobile web, but also in customer services. We now have native Hindi speakers to assist problems of Indian customers."



Oliver Hua
Managing Director APAC
Booking.com

With India being such a large market, we are considerably a newcomer which is why we are tying up with various third-party partners to share our inventory

tion space, the metasearch engine has now collaborated with Paytm, allowing the latter access to over one million options in 227 countries.

Oliver Hua, Managing Director APAC, Booking.com, says that such partnerships with domestic travel brands are necessary for a stronger and prominent presence. "We have seen strong growth in South Asia, specifically India, both for outbound as well as domestic travel. With India being such a large market, we are considerably a newcomer and a little bit of an outsider which is why we are tying up with various third-party partners like MakeMyTrip and Paytm to share our inventory. It's a win-win situation."

According to Hua, 2016 was a year of strong growth for Booking.com and a similar trend is expected to continue this year. The portal saw a 70 per cent growth in expansion and with the impending opening of the fourth office in Kolkata, Booking.com is upbeat on the prospects. India is currently the second largest market in APAC, with

IndiGo adds Mangalore to its network



Aditya Ghosh
President and Whole Time
Director, IndiGo

Reinforcing its commitment to the south India market, IndiGo has announced Mangalore as its new destination. Effective May 1, 2017, IndiGo will operate daily non-stop flights from Mangalore to Bengaluru and Mumbai at fares starting at ₹1,499. Aditya Ghosh, President and Whole Time Director, IndiGo said, "Man-

galore, an important seaport and a major commercial centre in Karnataka with the state's second busiest airport, is fast gaining prominence as a business hub and a tourist gateway. We have been getting requests to connect the city of Mangalore for years. I am now delighted to announce the launch of IndiGo flights from Mangalore. With the inaugural flights attractively priced at ₹1499 onwards, we are hopeful that these routes will prove to be immensely popular amongst our flyers."

He further added, "Adding new flights and frequencies on our network is aligned with our commitment to expand affordable air travel in India. The new flights not only strengthen domestic network but also help us better serve increased demand in growing markets."

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CIS Mysore celebrates 10 years of Earth Hour



Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Mysore, celebrated 10 years of Earth Hour 2017 by placing a 5ft long candle procured through NGO working for mentally challenged students in the centre of the Hotel Lobby. They also held various activities like sketch writing competition for in house kids to create awareness about Earth Hour and presented the participants with green saplings.



Pop: Buzzword for S. Korea

Byungsun Lee, Director, Korea Tourism Organisation, shares new plans to highlight the country's captivating culture to increase Indian arrivals to the country.



AHANA GURUNG

Back in 2013, K-pop singer Psy suddenly shot to global fame with the release of his mega viral track 'Gangnam Style'. One could repeatedly hear the contagious tune in every mall, shops, at parties, you name it, and although the craze eventually died down, it did what it had to – it left a strong impact. The song highlights South

Korea's urban chic area Gangnam district that makes up a major chunk of Seoul and is a hub for shoppers.

Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO) is attempting to recreate the same fervour through a new Korean drama series called Descendants of the Sun, airing on the channel Zindagi to reach out to more Indians and familiarise them with the culture, enough



Byungsun Lee
Director
KTO

This year, we are upping the budget, the steps and the resources to raise awareness of the destination, and welcome more Indians to our country

to motivate them to travel to South Korea. "I feel that the Korean culture is not as well-known here in comparison to the South East Asian countries where there is a huge following," reveals Byungsun Lee, Director, KTO. "We want to create the same response. India is emerging as a very important market for us which is why we are aggressively promoting the country's tourism products. This year, we are upping the budget, the steps and the resources to raise awareness of the destination, and welcome more Indians to our country." Plans to organise large-scale Korean cultural festival in New Delhi towards the second half of the year are already afoot to create a buzz in the industry.

Almost 200,000 Indian travellers visited South Korea in 2016 and Lee mentions that a 20 per cent Y-o-Y growth in tourist receipts have been witnessed for the past five years. This is also due to the fact that Korean Air recently started plying between Incheon and New Delhi five times a week with the route receiving an average passenger load factor of 85 per cent and plans to add more routes after observing the demand. Lee informs that Asiana Airlines is already looking to add another route to South India, either Chennai or Bangalore. "This will give direct connectivity to South India which is beneficial for both parties, since Koreans love Kerala and the backwaters, tea plantations etc. are already very popular. This will give a lot of traction for two-way traffic between the two countries," he adds.

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Scouting for newer markets for inbound

While the US and European markets continue to occupy top slots in inbound tourist numbers, India Travel Award winners point out other markets that may be instrumental in increasing numbers this year.

ANKITA SAXENA

► Best Luxury and MICE Hotel (North 2014) – Crowne Plaza Greater Noida

US & Europe remain steady source markets

Owing to the recent geopolitical changes, strong speculations have risen, regarding the usual dynamic source markets of the US and Europe but **Greesh Bindra**, Regional General Manager, North and West India, InterContinental Hotels Group and General Manager, Crowne Plaza Greater Noida, believes that both these markets will remain unaffected and will continue to be significant contributors to inbound tourism. "As the service sector of India will continue to entice inbound tourism, economies like China, Japan and the Middle East will have a significant impact on our foreign exchange. With the government also laying an unprecedented focus on the development of manufacturing and industrial sector through various MoUs with numerous countries, tourists keen on investing in Indian projects will see a surge in their numbers," he says. Bindra feels that 2017 will be a year that will strengthen both leisure and MICE tourism in India.



► Best City Hotel (North 2015) – Holiday Inn Amritsar, Ranjit Avenue

Latin America is India's next bet

In 2017, Latin America is expected to emerge as a new source market for inbound tourism, feels **Amit Rana**, General Manager, Holiday Inn Amritsar, Ranjit Avenue. Rana points out Scandinavian countries, Austria, USA, the UK, Germany and the Far East as some of the source markets which will continue to grow for India. "I feel offbeat or new, unexplored destinations, with rich culture, heritage and wellness quotient will grow. It is not about luxury but to consolidate energy in these times. I also feel that adventure tourism will attract a larger number of tourists. With increasing demand, there has been a rise in boutique and mid-scale hotels attracting more inbound tourists to India," says Rana. He adds that domestic tourism is expected to grow better than inbound tourism and the numbers for this segment will be accentuated by an increasing number of budget young travellers as backpackers. Coupled with this, he feels that village tourism will also witness growth in 2017.



► Fastest Growing Travel Company (North 2016) – Holidays by Sahibji

Tap Asia & Eastern Europe market

Inbound tourism is showing signs of growth and in 2017, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and Eastern European countries are some of the emerging source markets, points out **Manheer Singh Sethi**, Co-founder and Director, Holidays by Sahibji. He feels that visa on arrival has been an important development that gave a fillip to inbound tourism. "Educational seminars and destination knowledge workshops encourage FTOs and foreign travellers to explore Incredible India. Cruise, adventure and medical tourism are the growing segments in the industry. Cruise tourism is aggressively growing and luxury cruise brands are keenly promoting their brand and products in the Indian market," he says, adding that adventure tourism is trending among the millennials and corporates in India.



► Best Tour Operator (East 2016) – Eastern Meadows Tours

Growth in community tourism

As the inbound tourism landscape is changing, unknown destinations are coming to the fore amongst travellers wanting to experience something new. "As I understand, the inbound market has huge potential and will grow manifold in the next few years. Places that will really benefit will include Darjeeling and Sikkim which are attractive and emerging destinations for inbound tourism. These two destinations have the potential to bloom," says **Sandipan Ghosh**, Chief Executive Officer, Eastern Meadows Tours. Ghosh feels that tourism in general has tremendous potential in the North East though the concept of home-stays and community tourism has caught the eye of most travellers to India. "One of the most exclusive and highly sought after tourism product in the region has been the Toy Train which is available at selected destinations across the country," adds Ghosh.



► Best Luxury & MICE Hotel (West 2016) – JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar

ME keen on Indian medical tourism

Tourists from the Middle East, who look at India for medical tourism, contribute in a big way to inbound numbers. This is majorly due to ease in visa facilities that India offers, claims **Saeid Heidari**, General Manager, JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar. "The influx of business from

various sectors such as IT, automobile, pharmaceuticals and finance has largely contributed to the expansion of the tourism sector. There is a market for all players, however, ours is a price sensitive market and the end user is spoilt for choices. In the end, a guest makes

a choice based on brand, service, quality and the value proportions offered," he says. Mumbai being the economic hub of the country attracts business travellers from around the world and within the nation. Cities such as Pune and Bengaluru are also following suite. Heidari observes that products such as popular tourist attraction points, transport, accommodation and entertainment have seen dynamic growth in India over the last decade and are also the indicative of high potential.



► Best Corporate Hotel (West 2014) – Radisson Blu Hotel Indore

Explore the Buddhist circuit

Tourism destinations in Madhya Pradesh such as Ujjain, Mandu and Maheshwar, have the potential to attract large number of tourists from Japan and China. **Rahul Joshi**, General Manager, Radisson Blu Hotel Indore, says, "Countries where Buddhism and Hinduism are followed are potential source markets for India as the country and in particular Madhya Pradesh has many spiritual and religious destinations." The US, Australia and the UK remain to be the top source markets for these products.



Sustain & develop tourism

Interaction between tourism students and those practising and teaching the subject is vital, if tourism has to reach the stakeholders. But is that happening?



ANIL MATHUR

An interaction between industry professionals and students of tourism is all the more important if the subject under discussion is as important as 'Empowering Communities for Inclusive Tourism Development,' which was the theme of the 4th International Conference On Sustainable Destination Excellence, organised by the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management (SHTM), University of Jammu, on March 3 and 4, 2017.

"What added to the value of the meet was the presence of delegates from as many as eight countries, apart from scholars, students and researchers from several parts of the country. Over a 100 papers were presented, which will be published in a book form," said **Prof. Parikshat Singh Manhas**, Director, SHTM, and Conference Convener.

There were 10 tracks during the technical sessions, where subjects ranged from case studies, social transformation, and entrepreneurial opportunities to human and social issues in tourism. The most interesting part of the meet was the presentations, heard in rapt attention by the students, of delegates from Hungary, Taiwan, Israel, Kazakhstan, among others, who added a fresh perspective to how the sustainable issues are handled in their respective countries.

Jammu and Kashmir Minister of State for Tourism **Priya Sethi** set the ball rolling, as it were, by pointing out that a proper way to analyse sustainable tourism is to scrutinize how it can meet the needs of the host population in improving the standards of living in short and long term. Making tourism work for sustainable development was vital, she said.

Farooq Shah, Secretary Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir Government, said it was important to see how tourism was changing and how fragile natural resources were.

Interestingly, Kashmiri politician **Sajjad Lone**,

spoke of the supply side, saying that infrastructure has to be developed

and the tourists given options and choices to see destinations.

TCEB launches incentive campaign

■ The Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), in collaboration with Visa International (Thailand) Company Limited, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Thai Airways, Thai Smile Airways Company Limited, and Department of International Trade Promotion, Ministry of Commerce, has launched the Spice Up Thailand 2017 campaign for the fourth consecutive year. The campaign offers special privileges for MICE travellers, such as 10 per cent hotel discounts, 50 per cent discounts for car rentals and airport transfers,

Bt500 cash coupons for shopping, 25 per cent restaurant discounts, and 50 per cent off golf course green fees. In 2017, the Spice Up Thailand Campaign is working in alliance with registered organizations with more than 60 exhibitions in total.

N o p p a r a t Maythaveekulchai, President, TCEB, said, "Promoting MICE-related business through adopting an online

marketing strategy has been a significant tool applied by TCEB, aimed to boost the domestic and international market of MICE travellers. This will drive the growth of Thailand's MICE industry, while also supporting the overall economic growth of the country." TCEB has developed the Spice Up Thailand campaign together with five partners in order to promote and create awareness of the MICE industry overseas, as well as delivering a first-class experience to MICE travellers.



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Ramee to expand in India

Ramee Group of Hotels, Resorts & Apartments, is all set to open more properties in India in both Tier-I and II cities.



TT BUREAU

Ramee Group of Hotels, a Dubai-based hospitality company, is not only managing properties they own, but also running others under management contracts, says **Nihit Srivastava**, Director Operations & Business Development (India), Ramee Group of Hotels, Resorts & Apartments. "By 2017 we will be 17 in number. We have already touched major cities including Mumbai with

they participated in trade shows in the country. "We've got good response in outbound because of our strong presence in the Middle East. We have many queries from people travelling out as they look at destinations like Dubai, Oman, and Bahrain because they want to explore more. There is also a lot of movement from India to Iran as well as Georgia. Thus, we are looking for

more expansion there as well as in India, since we are doing well in the domestic market," Srivastava adds.

Multiplier Effect

Ramee Group has sales offices in Mumbai, New Delhi, Surat and Mangalore and is targeting Ahmedabad



Nihit Srivastava
Director Operations & Business Development (India),
Ramee Group of Hotels, Resorts & Apartments, India
Travel Award winner

four properties, Bengaluru, Pune as well as Tirupati. There are new acquisitions in Delhi, Noida, Surat, Vadodara, and Manali," he says.

Ramee Group recently opened 72-room Ramee Strand Inn in Bengaluru in February and next property they will be opening in Surat, followed by Daman, Manali, New Delhi and Noida, Srivastava reveals. They have also signed up for a property in Badami in Karnataka, known for its heritage, forts and caves.

"Two years back, people did not know the brand as we were mainly focused on Middle East and were developing properties there. We have 11 properties in Dubai, three in Oman, six in Abu Dhabi and 14 in Bahrain. Next region we are targeting in this financial year is Iran," says Srivastava.

The company has tie-ups with many big companies for online reputation management and for sales and marketing, they have a centralised system. "We have opened various sales offices. We already have an office in Mumbai as well as in New Delhi, which we will strengthen as we are expanding in North India. We will have an office in Gujarat, because we already have presence in Surat and we are targeting Ahmedabad. We have a sales office in Mangalore, and we are working in all corners for promotion and expansion in India," he informs.

He claims to have received great support from the travel trade, especially when

AVIAREPS appointed as Budget Car Rental's India Rep

■ AVIAREPS has been appointed as the sales and marketing representative for Budget Car Rental in India. Under the agreement, AVIAREPS will run a self-drive information centre which will enable consumers to book budget for self-drive reservations outside of India. Speaking on the occasion, **Sandra Hutchinson**, International Commercial Manager, Avis Budget Group EMEA said, "We are thrilled to be working with AVIAREPS on the

launch of Budget Car Rental. It is an exciting time for Indian travellers and adding a Budget Car to European and worldwide travel itineraries will provide the flexibility and enjoyment for a trip to remember. With competitive leisure rates and more than 3,500 locations around the world, Budget is great value and an excellent choice for the international traveller." The company will work closely with the Indian travel trade to tap the fast-growing

outbound self-drive segment, informed, **Puneet Singh Pesricha**, Sales Manager, AVIAREPS India. Commenting on the partnership, **Joseph Fernandes**, General Manager, AVIAREPS India, explained, "Self-drive vacations have seen an upward swing in the recent years thanks to the growing inclination of Indian travellers who want to experience the freedom of renting a car when travelling overseas."



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*Opening Soon

Philippines woos Delhi travel trade

As part of a series of roadshows in India, Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippines, organised its business mission in New Delhi, which saw a 25-member delegation showcasing their products to the travel trade in the city.



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June 21 date for Medical & Wellness Policy



■ The country's first Medical and Wellness Policy will be launched on June 21, 2017, announced **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Union Minister – Tourism and Culture, Govt. of India at a press conference in New Delhi. The policy will be instrumental in streamlining the process for making India a preferred medical and wellness destination, owing to its affordability and quality of services. The Board had recently held its second meeting with various stakeholders to discuss the framework of the policy. As many as 201,333 foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India on Medical Visa were recorded in 2016, while there were 1,34,344 FTAs in 2015 and 75,688 FTAs in 2014.

Paramount tool for agents

Click Paramount empowers big and small travel agents with deals that can attract more clientele without the sluggishness of the e-mail system through its online travel agent only deals.



While helping to make the concept of travelling popular in India, online portals have also contributed to putting the industry through a flux with their heavy discounting on travel products. **Naveen Singh**, Director of Paramount Vacation

Planners, opines, "We have seen enormous growth in the past few years in the number of travellers, all thanks to the online travel agents who have converted a normal holiday dreamer into a traveller with their discount coupons and some great deals. But their lethal discounting

has seriously affected the business of the traditional travel agents."

To tide over the loss of business this has led to, Paramount Vacation Planners has tried to get to the root of the problem. It has developed a tool called 'Click Paramount'



Naveen Singh
*Director of Paramount
Vacation Planners*

We took a demo of their new interface 'Click Paramount' which resolves a lot of issues

which empowers a small and big travel agent with deals which attract their customers back and help fight the sluggishness of email system through its online travel agent only deals.

Singh adds, "Our industry never lacked deals, but it has lacked the medium by which one can grow their reach, as nowadays a customer doesn't have the time to wait for a final quotation. We took a demo of their new interface 'Click Paramount' which resolves a lot of issues." Some of them include setting margins in the back-end that remains hidden from the staff and tracking top-selling destinations for them.

These features will help garner potential lead. Once the tool was ready, the company decided to get some feedback from a few of its users. A spokesperson from Vishwakarma Tours in Surat said that company replies to its customers became more prompt with the tool as it no longer had to wait for vendors to check their queries and reply. Another user, WowGo in Delhi, which is a start-up felt that its TATs have improved leading to happier customers. 🍀

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The Chatwal, New York, to be represented by Premier Hotels in India

Premier Hotels of Asia has added another feather to its cap with its official appointment as the Sales and Marketing representative in India for The Chatwal, New York. **Karan Singh**, Joint Managing Director, Premier Hotels of Asia, says, "The hotel represents excellent value as a luxury hotel. Our close alliance with business partners in the travel industry and trade associations gives us the advantage of reaching out to affluent travellers and the ap-

propriate segment in the most focused way.” The Chatwal Hotel, situated between Rockefeller Center, Bryant Park and the Theatre District in the heart of Manhattan was originally built in 1905 by Stanford White and was restored and re-launched in 2010 with 76 rooms and suites, several of which feature spacious terraces. The landmark hotel is home to the Red Door Spa by Elizabeth Arden, and the famous Lambs Club Restaurant, while its bespoke



Karan Singh
*Joint Managing Director,
Premier Hotels of Asia*

services make it an ideal choice for both leisure and business travellers.

Indians shop till they drop

India is expected to figure in the top 10 markets this year for shopping at La Vallée Village in Paris, France, claims its Business Development Manager, **Patrick Allais**.



TT BUREAU

Q Have you witnessed growth among Indian tourists for shopping?

In the last three years there has been a significant growth amongst Indian tourists for shopping, which was amply borne out by the fact that in 2016, India was one of the very few markets which showed a surge in numbers

of tourists interested in shopping on their visit. Currently, India ranks as one of the top 15 markets for shopping at La Vallée Village, observing the current trend the India market is expected to rank in the top 10 markets for shopping at the venue in 2017.

QWhat is the USP of La Vallée Village?

Outdoor shopping



Patrick Allais
Business Development Manager
La Vallée Village

venue: A totally outdoor venue for shopping is one of the major USP of the place as it offers guests a totally unique experience as this is not housed within a mall but set outdoors which proves to be very enjoyable for its visitors. The array of 110 boutiques offering a wide range of the most popular products and brands, along with amenities such as free Wi-Fi, outdoor cafes as well as play area for children, makes it a completely memorable experience for the entire family.

Pricing: The huge discounts that are offered will also prove to be a major draw for visitors. At the outset you are being offered a 33 per cent discount which is the minimum slab, the same can go up to a stupendous discount of 70 per cent. Moreover, where there is spend of €175 or more, visitors will be offered a VAT deduction of 12-14 per cent at the airport on the total. Winter sales will also be introduced at the Village which will commence at the end of the Christmas season spanning end December to February and summer sales from mid-June to July.

Location: La Vallée Village is conveniently located in close proximity to Disneyland Paris.

QHow do you plan to promote it in India?

La Vallée Village is all set to concentrate on the India Market and on this, its first visit to India they plan to gauge expectations from the Indian market so that they can match any specific requirements. At this juncture they will cover Mumbai and Delhi where they will meet with travel trade to apprise them of the varied offerings of the venue as well as benefits of choosing to shop there. Later on additional visits would be scheduled to different cities like Bengaluru and others for similar promotions, Indian guests would enjoy an additional concession of 10 per cent on their purchases over and above the standard discounts being offered. 🇮🇳

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Attractions/Theme Parks	3%
Airlines	3%
Travel Tech Companies	3%
Transportation Services	1%
Others	8%

Hosted Buyers by region

Northeast Asia	25%
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Others	4%

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1st RARE showcase for the trade

RARE India took a drift away from its annual soiree and organised their first showcase in New Delhi for their hotel partners, which was attended by 45 properties and resulted in some very constructive meetings.



A total of 45 properties were part of the showcase, informed **Sowmya R Vijaymohan**, Partner, RARE India. She added, "There are properties divided into Rajasthan, Central India, South India, hill retreats, hideaways, and small properties. This is the first time we are doing a showcase like this and possibly the first time that so many boutique hotels

and some of the finest under the country are coming under one roof. When it comes to standalone individually owned hotels, a showcase like this is important because they come together as one community and reach out to agents – both domestic and inbound, as well as domestic travellers and corporates," she added.

Shoba Mohan, Founder Partner, RARE India, added

that for a very long time they have been largely B2B, but now they are reaching out to direct customers as well. "Our marketing strategy is telling the stories of these RARE hoteliers. They are not just about checking in, sitting by the pool and go away kind of properties. So, when we promote such properties, it becomes very important for us to keep improving upon the narrative and tell the traveller or the tour

operators exactly what they are looking for and what they will be offering when they will be selling a RARE hotel."

Sowmya added, "When we started, it was more inbound oriented and until a few years back we realised that the domestic market holds a lot of potential for us. We've been in the market and deal with inbound and domestic agents. It's been received very well

both by the hotel partners as well as with the buyers. I think the time is just right for travellers that have done the luxury bit and have realised that it's the experience that matters."

However, when it comes to pricing, RARE properties are in the higher bracket. Mohan clarifies saying, "Pricing is a very tricky thing for small hotels. One must remember that these properties are very price



Sowmya R Vijaymohan
Partner
RARE India

The time is just right for travellers that have done the luxury bit and have realised that it's the experience that matters

intensive because firstly they are off the beaten track, which means that operationally each property has higher cost than a normal city hotel. Secondly, there is a conservation ideology behind each one of them. Thus, that cost must be borne into the room cost as well. However, our hoteliers have been very efficient in the way they have priced themselves.



Shoba Mohan
Founder Partner
RARE India

The cost is consolidated, and the commission is on the entire package, which becomes an incentive for the tour operators

Some of them actually go the extra mile to keep them exclusive because RARE properties are something which not everybody would want to go to or everybody would understand."

On the commissions front, she said that they are in keeping with the industry norms. "RARE partner hotels offer packages with many experiences, activities, and most of them include meals as well. Thus, the cost is consolidated, and the commission is on the entire package, which becomes an incentive for the tour operators," claimed Mohan.

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Shanghai World Travel Fair 2017	Shanghai	20 - 23
GITB	Jaipur	23-25
Arabian Travel Market (ATM)	Dubai, UAE	24 - 27
Digital Travel Summit APAC	Singapore	25-27
Hospitality Investment World Indonesia	Jakarta	26-27
WTTC Global Summit	Bangkok	26-27
Annual Meetings & Events Industry Conference (AMEIC)	Sydney	April 30 - May 2

MAY 2017

South India Travel Awards	Kochi	2
3 rd UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism	Gipuzkoa, Spain	8
Rendez-vous Canada	Calgary, Canada	9-12
TRENZ 2017	Auckland, New Zealand	9-12
ITB China 2017	Shanghai, China	10-12
Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE)	Sydney, Australia	14-18
IMEX	Frankfurt, Germany	16-18
Phocuswright Europe	Amsterdam, Netherlands	16-18
INDABA	Durban, South Africa	16-18
WTM Connect Asia	Penang, Malaysia	17-19
PATA Annual Summit 2017	Negombo, Sri Lanka	18-21
Connections Luxury	Ireland	21-24
FICCI Wedding Tourism Summit	New Delhi	25-26
IATA Business Travel Summit	Geneva	30-31
CINZ Meetings 2017	Auckland New Zealand	31 May-1-June

JUNE 2017

Korea World Travel Fair (KOFTA)	Seoul	1-4
IATA AGM 2017	Cancun, Mexico	4- 6
ILTM Asia	Shanghai, China	5-8
The Meetings Show	Olympia Grand London, UK	13-15
International Travel Expo (ITE)	HKCEC, Hong Kong	15-18
Connections Meetings	Quito, Ecuador	18-21
Beijing international Tourism Expo (BITE)	China National Convention Centre Beijing, China	23-25
Digital Travel Summit	London	27-28

JULY 2017

Arabian Travel Awards	Dubai	4
Travel Wedding Show	New Delhi	8-9
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Ahmedabad	13-15
IITM	Chennai	14-16
GBTA Convention	Boston, USA	15-19
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Chandigarh	20-22
IITM	Bengaluru	21-23
India Travel Awards East	Guwahati	26
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Kolkata	27-29

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LUXE Hotels India

New Delhi

Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity has announced the appointment of **Tristan Beau de Lomenie** as Director of Operation LUXE Hotels India apart from his current role as General Manager Delegate – Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity. He has been associated with AccorHotels for almost 30 years now. With AccorHotels India, De Lomenie has been associated since 2013 and has successfully opened and launched 670 rooms combo property-Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity. In his extended role, De Lomenie will be responsible for the operations of all the luxury and upscale hotels in India.



Sabre Corporation

Singapore

Sabre Corporation has named **Rakesh Narayanan** as its Vice President of supplier commerce, Asia Pacific, for Sabre Travel Network, its B2B travel marketplace business. Narayanan brings a wealth of knowledge about the airline industry to his new role. During his 20 year career at Sabre he has worked with many airlines. He was most recently regional director for Sabre Airline Solutions in South East Asia and the Indian Sub-Continent. Narayanan has a B.Tech. degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Calicut in Kerala, India and a Master of Management Information Systems and a MBA from the University of Texas, Arlington.



Radisson Blu Resort & Spa

Alibaug

Vishal Jamuar has been appointed as General Manager at Radisson Blu Resort & Spa Alibaug, the region's first international upper upscale five star classified resort in Alibaug. He has graduated in commerce, acquired Post Graduate in Marketing Management from Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Pune. He is versatile with specialised Sales & Marketing skills, achievement-oriented professional with a career spanning over 25 years, with various renowned brands of hotels like Taj Group, ITC Hotels and Carlson Rezidor Managed Hotels with the Radisson Blu Brands.



Ramada Alleppey

Kerala

Saju Thomas has been appointed as the General Manager for Ramada Alleppey, Kerala. An ambitious, multi-skilled and commercially astute manager with 24 plus years of hospitality experience gained with internationally acclaimed hotels in India & Seychelles. Thomas has previously worked for Jaypee Hotels, The Taj Group of Hotels, Denis Luxury Island, Wyndham Hotel Group and Coral Strand Seychelles.



Travstarz Global Group

Mumbai

Hema Manghnani joins Travstarz Global Group as the Executive Director from April 2017. A seasoned travel professional with a vast industry experience of over 16 years having worked with companies like Travel Corporation of India, DDP Publications Ltd., and Merci Travels, Budapest. Before coming to Travstarz, Manghnani's Last assignment was as the Associate Director, Fairfest Media Ltd., organisers of OTM & TTF and BLTM, India's Leading Travel Trade Shows across India. She will be based out of Mumbai.



JW Marriott Pune

Pune

Ayesha Bhalla has been appointed as Market Director of Sales and Marketing for JW Marriott Pune and all other properties in Pune under the Marriott portfolio. A 19-year-veteran, Bhalla began her career at the Holiday Inn Worldwide and worked with brands like Oberoi Hotels & Resorts Mumbai, The Imperial New Delhi, Oberoi Hotels and Resorts Bangalore and JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar. Bhalla has completed her graduation from Sydenham College of Commerce & Economics, Mumbai and also holds a MBA from Amity Business School, Noida.



AccorHotels India

New Delhi

Amisha Gutgutia has been elevated to the post of Director, Communications & Loyalty for AccorHotels India. In her new role, Gutgutia will spearhead the Corporate Communications function for AccorHotels pan India and manage the Le Club AccorHotels loyalty programme. She is a seasoned communications professional with over a decade's industry experience. Gutgutia began her ongoing journey at AccorHotels in 2014. Prior to joining AccorHotels, she has worked with renowned hospitality brands such as The Park and The Suryaa. She holds a PG diploma in Public Relations and a bachelor's degree in Psychology.



Grand Mercure Bangalore

Bengaluru

Venkat Rao joins Grand Mercure Bangalore as a Food & Beverage. Rao brings with him 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He has studied Hotel Management from IITC Mumbai, and WSET LEVEL -2 (Wine and Spirit Education Trust Level -2). Prior to joining AccorHotels at Grand Mercure Bangalore in February 2017, Rao worked with The Orchid, Mumbai. A large part of his experience has been from Mumbai where he worked with noted hotel chains including InterContinental - Marine Drive, The Leela Hotels and Best Western Hotels in United Kingdom.



Harshad Nalawade has been appointed as the Food & Beverage Manager at the JW Marriott Pune. In his refurbished role, Nalawade will be responsible to execute key operations & planning across all the F&B outlets such as Alto Vino, Spice Kitchen, Shakahari, Mi-A-Mi, Pune Baking Company, Bar 101 & Pasha. He has been a JW Marriott protégé and began his career with JW Marriott. He gained 8 years of experience in JW Marriott, Mumbai and then moved to Pune where he opened the iconic nightclub Mi-A-Mi. He carries with him over 16+ years of cross-functional exposure across hospitality industry.



TALKing People

Glen Agustin, Chief Tourism Operations Officer – Market Development Division, Department of Tourism, Philippines, is a true-blue Filipino who is all about the laid-back beach life. Bohol is one of his go-to places to unwind and he raves about the mouth-watering food. On his most unforgettable travel memory he shares, "Scuba-diving in Coron was one of the eye-openers in my life. Seeing a different world altogether especially the coral, ship-wrecks and the little lakes between the limestone cliffs was overwhelming."



Dilpreet Singh Bindra, General Manager, JW Marriott Chandigarh, believes in staying happy and spreading the happiness. "I am inspired by everyone who make this world a better place with their positive contributions," he says. Bindra is passionate about driving and this has taken him to various excursions and road trips across India and, most recently, an from India to Bangkok last year. "I am now looking forward to my next cross-border drive from Delhi to London next month, which will take me through 18 countries in 55 days."



Ratna Chadha, Chief Executive, TIRUN Travel Marketing, is fond of golf and enjoys to practice the same in her free time. Talking about the driving force to work hard, Chadha says, "The strength of the company is its employees and my colleagues. Two-thirds of the planet is covered in water and our aspiration is to cater to all the aspiring Indians to help them experience the world differently, through cruises." Three destinations that feature in her bucket list are Iceland, Galapagos Islands and the Antarctic.





Convenient Connections

(India to Nairobi via Muscat) Starting 27th March, 2017

Nairobi is the capital and largest city of Kenya. The name "Nairobi" comes from the Maasai phrase Enkare Nairobi, which translates to "cool water". It is famous for having the Nairobi National Park, the world's only game reserve found within a major city.

Flight No.	Destination	Departure	Arrival
WY 721	Muscat - Nairobi	14:50	18:55
WY 722	Nairobi - Muscat	00:45	06:50

(India to Manchester via Muscat) Starting 1st May, 2017

Manchester is known throughout the world for two of the biggest names in sport: Manchester United and Manchester City football clubs. The trendy Northern Quarter is the creative hub of Manchester's shopping scene, and offers a unique experience with its mix of bars, cafes and eclectic one-off shops.

Flight No.	Destination	Departure	Arrival
WY 105	Muscat - Manchester	14:00	19:05
WY 106	Manchester - Muscat	20:45	07:20*

* Next Day Arrival

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AI looks to double profits

Pankaj Srivastava, Director-Commercial, Air India, says that while Air India is rapidly spreading its wings internationally, the national carrier is committed to the Indian government's National Civil Aviation Policy to increase regional connectivity. The airline has identified certain routes to boost this network.

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

Q*Air India has a strong presence at international trade events. How do such events help in promoting an already established brand like Air India?*

ITB is one of the biggest travel shows in the world much bigger than WTM, it's one of the biggest platforms in which all the stakeholders of the tourism and hospitality sector get together under one roof and exchange ways to do business in future and streamline the entire process and value chain of tourism and I'm so happy that Air India, which has a huge presence in Europe, today has as many as nine destinations in Europe which are connected directly with India. So it is a great opportunity for us to connect with tour operators in this region and provide them with all the necessary help with regards to various options of outbound from India into this part and inbound from this region to India.

Q*With the recent strengthening of the national carrier's international network, what else can we look forward to in 2017?*

We have witnessed rapid growth in our international network in the last three years. Most importantly, in the last one year we have added four new destinations – San Francisco (USA), Madrid (Spain), Vienna (Austria) and also a new flight from Ahmedabad to London (UK). In future, we will be commencing our services to Tel Aviv (Israel) from sometime in May; this will be a non-stop flight from Delhi to Tel Aviv. After that, in June we will be connecting the two capital cities of the largest democracies in the world (India and USA), a non-stop flight between New Delhi and Washington DC. After that, some time in August or September we will be connecting Scandinavia and India, for this we are looking at the two markets – Copenhagen and Stockholm, between the two we are going to pick the one that proves to be economically viable for us and start operations. A decision will soon be taken on whether we are going to Stockholm or Copenhagen.

Q*Which aircraft will you be flying on these new routes?*

The Tel Aviv-Delhi and the Scandinavia flight will be on a Dreamliner, whereas the New Delhi-Washington DC direct will be on board a 777.

Q*Unlike smaller airlines, Air India often has to combat a lot of bad press as well. Being the national carrier what kind of challenges does the airline encounter?*

Size does matter. As

long as you are a small and compact airline, you can have a very robust schedule and maintain on-time performance, the quality of service and the level of satisfaction of passengers. Because you are a small airline flying shorter routes it becomes easier to manage many things. Air India is a network carrier, we have non-stop flights going out of India to faraway places and those flights then come back to India and bring passengers who may not always be bound for India, so we also get a lot of connecting passengers. When we grow big and become a network carrier there are challenges as well as opportunities, so far Air India has been able to manage the challenges and we are conscious and taking steps to ensure that the connection traffic is as seamless as ever.

Q*How does Air India intend to contribute to the Regional Connectivity Scheme?*

As per the new National Civil Aviation Policy's focus on regional connectivity, we recognise the fact

future is. In many such places there might be people who may be able to fly but can't do so as there are no airports from which they can fly out. We will position one of the ATRs in every state capital, say for instance in Rajasthan we will place one ATR in Jaipur and then we will connect the city to places like Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Kota which have huge potential.

Once the fliers land in Jaipur they can always get connected to any other city in India and then fly abroad. Now, if someone wants to fly from Jaisalmer to Los Angeles that cannot be done as there's no potential, so the idea is to connect smaller towns through smaller aircraft, bring them to bigger airports and then connect them internationally.

Q*How important are travel agents for Air India and how is the airline engaging with them?*

Travel partners are important for every airline, and it is the same for Air India. We get a lot of business from our travel part-

“We will be commencing our services to Tel Aviv (Israel) from sometime in May, this will be a non-stop flight from Delhi to Tel Aviv. After that, in June we will be connecting the two capital cities of the largest democracies in the world (India and USA), a non-stop flight between New Delhi and Washington DC. After that, some time in August or September we will be connecting Scandinavia and India, for this we are looking at the two markets - Copenhagen and Stockholm.”

Pankaj Srivastava
Director-Commercial, Air India



that this area is getting open now. The Tier-II and Tier-III cities have not been tapped by many of the carriers, there are roughly about 40 airports in Tier-III cities where even though we may have the air strip nobody operates there and so the airport is not functional. The Government of India has decided to make those 40 airports functional in those Tier-III cities and we have identified certain routes and we have started smaller aircrafts like ATR 72 on lease and smaller aircrafts to connect these Tier-III cities with Tier-II cities and that's where the

ners. In fact I can say that currently, 85 per cent of our business comes from our travel partners. We are on our way to recovery and it is pertinent to note that we posted a 1 billion of profit last year on the operating cost. Things are moving in a positive direction for us and this year we would double up the profit.

Schedule 2017

New Delhi-Washington	Starting July 7
New Delhi- Tel Aviv	June 2017



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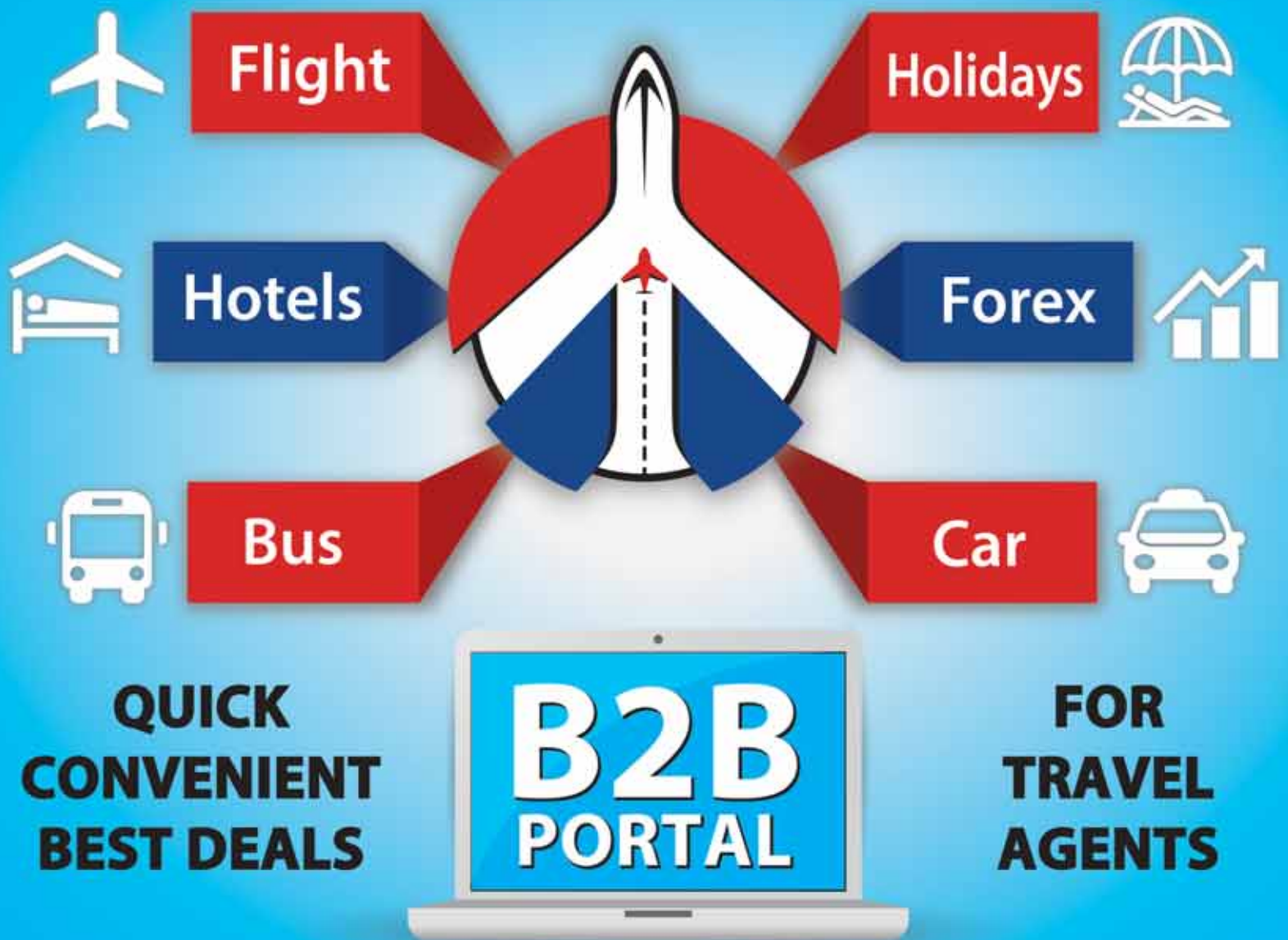
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