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How did the Budget fare?



TRAVTALK brought together five tourism and hospitality experts to highlight how the new reforms brought forward in the Union Budget 2017-18 would affect the industry. The discussion also brought about an opportunity to collectively determine the next step forward.

Little was announced for the growth of tourism in the Union Budget for the financial year 2017-18 on February 1, 2017, which unsettled the industry and left a lot to be desired. While the new budget is focused on developing road infrastructure to a great deal, there was hardly any mention of a revision or rebate on any tax, an issue that has been the talk of the town. We brought together **Pronab Sarkar**, President, IATO; **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, President, OTOAI; **Sarab Jit Singh**, Vice Chairman, FAITH; **Rajindera Kumar**, Former President FHRAI & HRANI, and **Rajan Sehgal**, Chairman- Northern Chapter, TAAI; for an insightful debate to assess the impact and deliberate the pros and cons of the Budget.



For details on the first of the Think TRAVTALK series, see page 30

Eastern Europe tops demand in 2017

Today's money-rich, time-poor generation travellers are increasingly looking at experiential holidays, not necessarily closer home but definitely of shorter durations. There're the obvious long-haul favourites too.



ANKITA SAXENA

Short haul: For short-haul destinations, apart from the Far East destinations the Eastern European region including Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Bulgaria have high potential to grow in the Indian market in 2017.

Long haul: In 2017 we are looking at newer destinations like South America growing in the Indian market. We are also promoting Canada as a long-haul destination this year.



Riaz Munshi
Managing Director
N.Chirag Travels, India
Travel Award winner

Short haul: In terms of short-haul destinations, there are Thailand, Singapore, Dubai which have always been popular but I feel destinations like Vienna and Milan will pick up in 2017. Almaty is also witnessing Indian traffic for the MICE segment.

Long haul: Last year a lot of direct connections were introduced from India which increased demand for many European destinations like Spain, Greece and Italy.



Shravan Bhalla
Chief Executive Officer
High Flyer

Short haul: There are many destinations close by which have been popular like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Dubai but in recent times, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos have been receiving increased number of queries from India.

Long haul: Indian travellers are no longer picky with destinations and are exploring far and wide. For some reason, Eastern European destinations like Hungary, Czech Republic and Croatia are paramount as the must-visit destinations.



C.P. Sharma
Managing Director
Neptune Travco



Sudhir Kaul
Director, Global Connect
Travels, India Travel Award
winner

Short haul: Most of the MICE trips are of maximum four nights and the corporate travellers who extend it for nearly seven nights usually take cruise holidays. The Philippines has been picking up for corporate travel from East India. Thailand, Singapore and Bali remain to be the popular destinations for MICE travel.

Long haul: Last year we conducted a corporate group to Jordan. Prague, Budapest, Lisbon are other destinations that are gaining popularity. Japan is also one destination that is receiving traction amongst the corporate travellers in India.



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

Short haul: I feel Central Asian countries, popularly called 'the stans', are the upcoming destinations in 2017. Bhutan, Myanmar, Lhasa in Tibet, Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia and Southern China; Taiwan and South Korea are destinations that one can see coming up this year. Travellers stay for a minimum of four days to maximum 10 days when they travel for short durations.

Long haul: Destinations like Cuba, Mexico, Chile and Argentina are receiving many queries from the India market but these are from a segment that is well travelled and is looking beyond the usual. Brazil and Peru have been popular already. In Eastern Europe, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania are gaining popularity. Beyond these, Iceland, Latvia, Botswana and Rwanda are the next big destinations for mature travellers.



Sunaina Chatterjee
CEO, Incentives and
Conference Planners,
India Travel Award winner

Short haul: Destinations in South East Asia and the Middle East still remain popular though Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan and Baku in Azerbaijan are gaining popularity in India. Ras Al Khaimah is also the new hot spot in the Middle East. Though Cambodia and Vietnam are also gaining demand but due to lack of vegetarian food, this area has limited takers.

Long haul: Though the US and Canada have always been popular, travellers are now visiting Canada for newer experiences. Many travellers have started clubbing destinations in Europe for a longer trip, for example, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and France is a popular combination. Scandinavian countries are also gaining popularity.

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Convention from Sep 7-10

The 33rd IATO Annual Convention will be held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, from September 7-10, 2017, and the formal announcement about it will be made, along with the announcement of 2018 convention, very soon.



TT BUREAU

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) held its Luncheon meeting recently at the Le Méridien, New Delhi, where they organised a joint session with Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), and invited **Bipin Sapra**, Partner, Tax & Regulatory Services, Ernst & Young for giving a presentation to its members on the recent abatement in service tax, Union Budget and GST. Sapra informed the members regarding the effect of all these laws and changes in taxation on both inbound and outbound tour operators. The members had also put forward their queries to Sapra, and sought a solution to their problems related to taxation.

Speaking at the event, **Pronab Sarkar**, President,

IATO, said that the association has taken up these issues with the Ministry of Tourism as well. “We had a meeting with the Secretary, Tourism, regarding the issues with service tax and other pending matters, and he has forwarded our request to the Ministry of Finance and other departments. We have been assured that our issues will be sorted.

“MOT has already revised the MDA guidelines, which will be shared with our members shortly. Apart from that they will take necessary actions regarding partial hospitality scheme as well as the new policy on guides, which is now under Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), instead of MOT. Another issue is regarding the e-visa website, where the new changes have not been implemented, and MOT is currently working on revising the soft-



Pronab Sarkar
President
IATO

ware, and the updated website should be active in February.”

Lally Matthews, Hony. Secretary, IATO, said that service tax is an important issue. “We had a good response and the house was full, which shows that the members wanted such a session.”

When asked about IATO Convention, Matthews in-



Lally Matthews
Hony. Secretary
IATO

formed, “We will have an official statement by IATO President regarding the convention. The dates for the same are fixed — September 7-10. In fact, we also have finalised our convention for 2018 and it will be for the first time that we will be announcing two conventions together.” IATO has already announced that their 2017 convention will be held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. 📌

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Sailing through rough waters

Breaking the cycle of monotonous back-to-back sightseeing itineraries, the present-day Indian has by and large, evolved from a tourist to a traveller. Curiosity, social media and an increasing disposable income have all contributed to the growing number of Indians who travel beyond the country but what is interesting is the choice of destination. Places like Croatia, Bulgaria and Hungary that were practically unheard of to the average Indian have become the talk of the town while Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia have figured as some of the popular short-haul destinations. The change in choice and mind-set has resulted in India becoming a sought-after market for outbound travel with new national tourism offices either setting up new branches or expanding their network. This goes hand-in-hand for air travel as several international airlines foray into the Indian skies. However, the recent policies are a blow for outbound and tour operators expect a dip in business. But with increasing FIT numbers and accessibility of information through technology, the segment might just hold its ground.

Another dampening Budget for Tourism?

Service Tax abatement from 4.5 to 9 per cent, followed by Union Budget 2017-18, which neither focused directly on tourism, nor it saw any relief from taxation for tour operators, has disappointed the industry once again. While the government has taken up infrastructure and employment generation in a big way, these do not result in any direct benefit to the stakeholders of the industry, at least not in immediate effect. However, the travel industry has not given up hope and while many are pinning their hopes on GST, there are others who are devising measures to deal with the situation and save their business. On the other hand, all associations are joining hands to educate their members. MOT is reportedly also taking up the issue with the Ministry of Finance, and solution might be in the offing. Meanwhile, another question is raised — Would the GST deliver the much-needed support to the industry? Only time can tell.

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

DOT TAKES UP QUESTION OF LEVIES ON TOURISM

Decisions Will Have to Await Budget

Here are the highlights:

- As per the recommendations by state tourism ministers, MOT in 1992 had taken up with the Ministry of Finance, the question of reviewing some of the major imports, seen as an obstacle to the development of tourism.
- The levies were Hotel Expenditure Tax (HET), expenditure tax on restaurants and import duty on tourist limousines and coaches.
- MOT made these requests on behalf of the travel trade.
- The talks with Finance Ministry could result in the lifting or reduction of some of these duties and taxes.
- The trade wanted the HET to apply only to room tariffs above ₹ 1200, which was at that time applicable to tariffs of ₹ 400.



130mn domestic flyers by FY2018

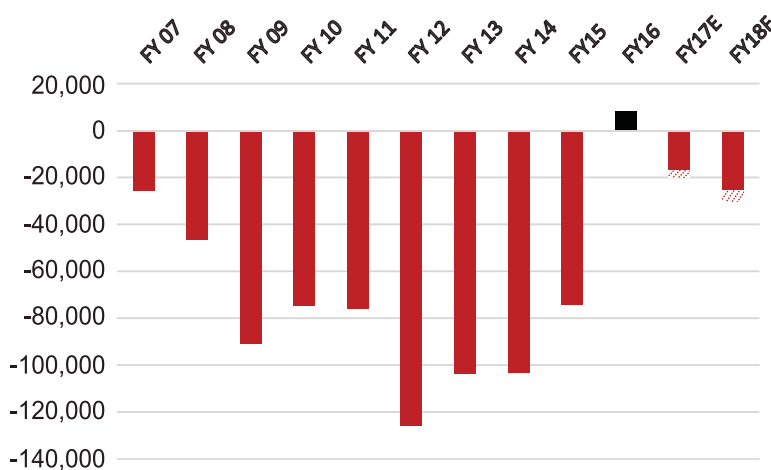
Domestic traffic could grow by close to 25 per cent in FY2018 and approach 130 million passengers. However, demonetisation and the uncertainty surrounding GST could temper the domestic traffic growth in the country by 3-5 per cent.

Traffic growth at Indian airports FY2016 to FY2018F

	Domestic	International
FY2016	21.2%	7.7
FY2017E	22.23%	9-10%
FY2018F	20-25%	10-12%

- Traffic growth remained strong in December 2016 suggesting that there is no visible impact as of yet. However, the purchase of air travel using some withdrawn denominations was permitted until the first half of December 2016 which may result in a delayed impact in the first half of FY2018.

Actual and projected combined net profitability of India's airlines FY2007 to FY 2018F



Source: CAPA Research

- Indian carriers are expected to seek to raise \$1 billion of capital next year, led by Jet Airways at \$300-400 million
- Jet Airways planned to raise \$300-400 million but its capital raising activities were delayed due to a change in strategy
- AirAsia India and Vistara are likely to require significant recapitalisation in FY2018 to provide for much larger war chests in the face of strong competition
- However, the Indian government's recent bold decision to permit 100% foreign direct investment in domestic carriers is unlikely to result in any transactions to that level in FY2018.

Source: Key Themes of CAPA India Aviation Outlook FY2018

S. Africa promises ‘wow’ moments

With 65 products on showcase at its annual roadshow this year, South African Tourism is all set to achieve double-digit growth from India with its new campaign, claims **Hanneli Slabber**, Country Manager — India, South African Tourism.

NISHA VERMA

South Africa recorded 27 per cent growth, with 81,429 arrivals from India by the end of third quarter, reveals Slabber. She insisted that the 4-city roadshow, which had 65 products and 120 delegates, had just the right ingredients for Indian agents and travellers. “We are getting a lot more than we expected from the Indian market. We want to sustain this growth and also attract

than that, we have a capacity issue in South Africa. We have only 53 million people with less than a thousand hotels. However, now with the quality guaranteed, and our star rating in place, we have spread the tourist traffic to B&Bs, guest houses, allowing people to have more options.

“November to February is peak season with our summer vacation, and winters in

Europe and North America, which are markets which book well in advance, and quite unlike India where booking happens less than a month in advance. Hence, we have worked on our capacity issue by dispersing people into smaller towns, still offering 200 activities. Fortunately for us, most of our business from India comes in our monsoon season, which is from end-April to mid-July, and it works

for both in terms of price as well as capacity,” she revealed. Their new campaign ‘Wow in every moment’ means that they can offer a different experience everywhere in South Africa, without the travellers wasting time in transit, Slabber says. “In fact, people now innovate in terms of packaging as well, by accommodating more activities and compromising on the level of accommodation,” she added.



Hanneli Slabber
Country Manager
South African Tourism - India

This time we have brought smaller destinations as well as small operators, while guaranteeing about the money and quality on offer, as we have done all checks

return travellers. The products we have on offer are specially designed for the Indian market based on the inputs given by our trade partners. Earlier in Bengaluru and Chennai, we used to have 70-75 buyers, but this year we had over 200 buyers in both the cities for the roadshow. In Delhi and Mumbai, the numbers have more than doubled from what it was last year. We like the fact that we are sold by small operators because they have got a very clear idea of what their clients want,” she said.

Slabber claimed that they have got 60,000 products in South Africa. “This time we have brought smaller destinations as well as small operators, while guaranteeing about the money and quality on offer, as we have done all checks regarding the balances on transactions, accommodation, experiences, MICE venues and ground handlers.”

However, there are still many challenges. Slabber elaborates, “We have no direct airlift, which could make a huge difference to us. Other

B2B itinerary to Iran

Minar Travels’ new itinerary will be targeted at Parsis in India.

TT BUREAU

Minar Travels (GSA of Mahan Air) has launched a new programme in India — Chalo Iran — an exclusive B2B itinerary directed towards pilgrimage and cultural destinations of Iran for Parsis living in India. There are various highlights under this programme, and exclusive itineraries like A Glimpse of Persia, Golden Triangle of Iran, Pilgrimage to Mecca of Iran; covering

visit to Yazd Sacred Fire Temple, Zoroastrian Fire Temple Exclusive, Tower of Silence, Isfahan, Shiraz, Mashhad and Kish Island.

Those passengers, who will be taking up these itineraries, would be given a choice to travel direct to Tehran or direct to Mashhad from New Delhi on Mahan Air. Mahan Air has direct flights to Iran 4 times a week from Delhi, on wide-bodied aircraft with great in-flight service.

100% TRANSPARENCY

With effect from 22nd January 2017, all companies selling tour components like accommodation, transfers, sightseeing, packages, etc. are required to apply a 9% Service Tax on the TOTAL booking amount.

roomsXML displays the booking price up-front and the 9% Service Tax levied by the Government is shown separately on the booking page and on the invoice as well. This transparency makes it straightforward for you to claim CENVAT credit.

Following is a typical illustration of how the Service Tax calculation process will work:

1. On search, roomsXML displays the accommodation price - let's say ₹10,000 (Service Tax not included)
2. On the booking page (before confirmation), roomsXML displays the Service Tax amount separately - ₹900 (9% of ₹10,000)
3. roomsXML will invoice you for ₹10,900 (₹10,000 + ₹900). The Service Tax of ₹900 will be shown clearly
4. You will apply a mark-up (let's say 10%) on the roomsXML accommodation price of ₹10,000. Thus, the price to the end customer will be ₹11,000 (₹10,000 + ₹1,000)
5. You will need to apply 9% Service Tax on your selling price of ₹11,000. Thus, the total cost to the end customer will be ₹11,990 (₹11,000 + ₹990)
6. Once CENVAT credit is claimed, the effective Service Tax for you is approx. ₹90

Don't fall prey to false practices

The tour operator / travel agent can claim CENVAT credit on the Service Tax payable! Therefore, in order to get this benefit, it is important for you to demand an invoice from your supplier which clearly shows the total booking amount and the 9% Service Tax separately.

Sadly, there are suppliers who dare to sell without applying appropriate Service Tax. It's best to avoid purchases that don't reflect full and legitimate Service Tax. Given the current vigilance regime, tax evaders are sure to come under the scanner. Not only are they committing a serious offence, but the buyers are also becoming a party in the crime.



4 new development authorities in J&K

Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department is adding four more development authorities for the integrated development of tourism circuits in the state, taking the total number of development authorities to 24.

TT BUREAU

The four new development authorities are Shopian and Peer ki Gali Development Authority; Basholi Bani Development Authority; Tosa Maidan Development Authority and Nubra Development Authority in Ladakh. Accord-

ing to **Farooq Shah**, Tourism Secretary & MD, Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation, the new development authorities will allow utilisation of the untapped potential of these places and this scheme will benefit the people of the respective areas socially and economically. The number of development authorities will be now 24, with the existing 20 in operation. "This will be a big boost for the integrated development of tourism sector. We are working in the direction of making Jammu and Kashmir as one of the best tourism destination in the world by de-



Dal Lake, Kashmir

veloping it with standard quality infrastructure for facilitating the visitors," says Shah.

Jammu and Kashmir is aggressively working to enhance its infrastructure to equip the state with world



Farooq Shah
Tourism Secretary & MD, Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation

This will be a big boost for the integrated development of tourism sector

class tourist facilities. A state-of-the-art, multi facility-traveler mart and budget accommodation complex is expected to begin operations by the end of February 2017. The traveler mart has all the facilities for the comfort of tourists and other travellers entering the state through this gateway; it has an art gallery which will display the famous Basholi paintings, handicrafts of J&K, which can be displayed in the kiosks as well, informed Shah.

"A master plan is being formed for a river front resort which is expected to harness the potential of unutilised 250 kanals of land facing the water of river Ravi. A complete DPR for beautification and landscaping of the said area is also initiated to make it a tourism attraction," adds Shah. The said resort will come up on modern lines with a children's park, ice ring and other tourist facilities. The Basholi area will be promoted to divert a larger chunk of Himachal bound tourists to Chenab valley via Chaman road. Water sports activities for tourism have also been proposed at Ranjeet Sagar Dam.

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Caper draws spotlight on niche program

The travel company will focus on unique segments such as women-only, differently abled and mature groups this year as well as introduce newer experiences and destinations, informs **Bharat Bhushan Atree**, Managing Director, Caper Travels.



Caper Travels has constantly been re-inventing their products to better suit the evolving clients and to keep up with the changing times. This year is no exception as the travel company has plans to launch innovative and offbeat programs for those with wanderlust.

Atree informs that the new offerings will revolve around the North East as well as unexplored parts of central India. He adds, "For the niche market, we are also focusing on neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Dubai which can be combined with India for long-haul tourists coming from far off places."

Caper will also concentrate on promoting special segment group programmes for women only, elderly 60+, and differently abled groups while scanning

newer destinations especially for adventure activities. The wellness segment has shown promising growth thanks to the increasing interest among Westerners towards holistic and traditional forms of wellbeing. "We are

An ongoing project, the online portal for travel aims to provide interactive end to end solutions for all processes and for all departments be it sales, operations or accounts and for any other travel related query. With its

confirmation vouchers. An extensive type of MIS with a log and history of all activities is being used and the portal can handle boundless number of users and a cosmic amount of bookings simultaneously.

benefit of other travel trade partners. This will not only eliminate human error and cost, but also save the operators time and cost. A handful of trained manpower can handle volumes of reservations and operations'. We handle about 6000 - 8000 passengers every week and get numerous bookings on a daily basis, it would not have been humanly possible to handle these large numbers without our automated system."

many as the law is yet obscure. "Handling of the same would be our first challenge as implementing the GST may alter the requirement. Secondly, working on shrinking profits to sustain oneself because of competition, the operating expenses are escalating as we have to keep our trained human resource stable," he elaborates.

Atree draws attention to one of the biggest challenges faced today which is the lack of skilled staff in the industry. Talent is scarce and those present are always on the lookout for more lucrative offers creating disruption and disturbance in the fraternity. "It is becoming the need of the hour to not just to strengthen but to be capable of adapting to the latest and newest that the contemporary times have to offer. It is important for the companies to provide and invest in their employees for better training and keeping them fresh with all the current trends globally."

As 2017 has begun with ambiguity with a clouded picture of changes in rules and regulations concerning service tax and the new GST regime, Atree opines that it may be challenging to understand and incorporate in the current constitution of business and says, "Outbound tourism can become expensive because of elevated tax structure which in turn will impact the demand."

He also mentions that the yet-to-be-introduced GST has caused anguish among



“It is becoming the need of the hour to not just to strengthen but to be capable of adapting to the latest and newest that the contemporary times have to offer. It is important for the companies to provide and invest in their employees for better training and keeping them fresh with all the current trends globally.”

Bharat Bhushan Atree
Managing Director
Caper Travels

also eagerly awaiting the launch of our new software which will assist the agents and clients both in making travel bookings hassle free," he adds.

use, the partner agents will be able to view all the travel products and inventory online while booking and generating flight tickets will get more convenient with instant

Giving an update on it, Atree reveals, "The program is in the trial stage and is being used and developed for in house requirements but I plan on launching it globally for the



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Budget ensues mixed response from trade

The Union Budget, announced on February 1, 2017, disappointed many in the trade, while others lauded the Ministry of Finance for creating avenues for employment and investment in the industry. Here's what the stakeholders from various verticals have to say:



TT BUREAU

“The Union Budget didn't directly focus on tourism, but was more directed at the rural sector, youth and infrastructure. However, there was a mention of the Global Incredible India campaign. Also, the proposal of developing India International Institutes for foreign languages would really benefit the tourism industry, and would offer employment to almost one lakh students every year. The dedication towards Clean India and Skill India would also result in a boost to tourism and create employment in this sector, as well as boost domestic tourism. Another positive is the waiving off of service charge on IRCTC bookings.”



P. P. Khanna
President
ADTOI

“Total investment for infrastructure in budget 2017 stands at a record ₹3,96,135 cr, some of which will be used to set up 3,500 km railway lines. The initiative where service charge on rail tickets booked through IRCTC will be withdrawn is appreciable. This will further increase the occupancy in hotels located in smaller cities where there is no air connectivity. The major fillip provided to the industry is via infrastructure development, which is imperative for travel and tourism, and will boost the macro economy. This would effectively trickle down to the industry.”



K. Syama Raju
President
FHRAI

“We welcome the budget, and the fact that the Finance Minister accepted that tourism is an employment generating industry, which is a good recognition. Proposal of five new special economic zones for tourism is such a good idea. However, the government should make sure that it is implemented in time. Even airport development in Tier-II cities is extremely appreciated as indirectly it will help in domestic as well as international travel. Apart from this, launching pilgrimage trains, special tourist trains and new circuits is also a positive step. However, keeping the service tax at 9 per cent for tour operators is a major setback for the tourism industry.”



E. M. Najeer
Gallery of Legends, India
Travel Awards 2015
& Chairman & MD,
ATE Group of Companies



Homa Mistry
India Travel Award winner &
CEO, Trail Blazer Tours India

“Tourism has been going through very tough times and we have realised that we are on our own. I did not have any expectations from the government and as always the Budget did not have anything for the tourism and hospitality industry. I am just not surprised. We are however looking forward to the Good and Services Tax (GST) Bill, which too would be more of a bomb dropped on us.”



Vikram Madhok
India Travel Award winner &
Managing Director,
Abercrombie & Kent India

“The Budget really has not taken tourism into much consideration as there are no major amendments in favour of it. Yes, a lot has been said about the railways in the Budget and we welcome any other infrastructure investment, but there is not much that is going to help the industry directly. This year's Budget has nothing much for the industry which is quite disheartening since tourism contributes to the economy in a big way.”



Albert Tjoeng
Assistant Director
Corporate Communications
Asia Pacific at IATA

“The Budget 2017 has added new provisions for the future introduction of submission of PNR data by airlines to the Indian Customs. IATA hopes that the established global standards for transmission of PNR data would be adhered to. We would also urge that stakeholder consultations precede the development of any regulations detailing the form and data elements for this information.”

Contd. on page 12 ►



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Another Budget session has little to offer

► Contd. from page 10



Mahesh Iyer
COO
Thomas Cook (India)

“This Budget has very little to offer to the tourism industry, but with plans to launch Incredible India 2.0 as the next phase of growth for domestic tourism with respect to India, there is something to look forward to. India has a vast railway network and the recently announced Railway Budget acknowledges the strength of this. One of the biggest announcements is the withdrawal of service charge on rail tickets booked through IRCTC. This will not only lead to more bookings but will enable the consolidation of a digital economy. Another significant development is the emphasis on safety and sanitation, by introducing bio-toilets, which will increase passenger comfort.”



Peter Kerkar
Director
Cox & Kings

“Infrastructure is a part of the 10 most important themes in Union Budget 2017 with allocation for infrastructure at a record ₹3,96,135 crore. Road and rail infrastructure are crucial in terms of boosting tourism as these are widely used mode of transport in India. In this context, stepping up the allocation for national highways to ₹64,000 crore, announcement to launch dedicated trains for pilgrimage/tourism and service charge withdrawal on booking of rail tickets are welcoming moves which will help to accelerate domestic and inbound travel. Provisions made for clean and safe rail travel and making 500 rail stations disabled-friendly are also encouraging.”



Ratna Chadha
Chief Executive, TIRUN,
exclusive India
representative of
Royal Caribbean Cruises

“We hope that the union budget will have a positive impact on the tourism industry, which is a great employment generator, resulting in a significant multiplier effect on the economy. We are happy to see infrastructure development at airports in Tier-II and Tier-III cities, as most of the aspirational India resides here. As Indian representative for Royal Caribbean Cruises, we want to cater to Indians who aspire to explore the world differently.”



“Further to the announcement for increase in railway connectivity to the remote areas and upgradation of airports in Tier-II cities, a huge number of people will be able to travel smoothly from Tier-II and Tier-III cities. The high speed Internet connectivity in rural areas will be the biggest advantage to them. We are expecting more travel coming ahead. Along with this, reducing the income tax to 5 per cent for the people having an earning bracket of ₹2.5-5 lakhs, will be a crucial factor in their saving. This will increase their budget to travel and will also motivate youngsters and young entrepreneurs to pay taxes.”



Gursahib Singh Sethi
Co-founder
Travkart.com

“The Union Budget bought in progressive outlook with due importance given to infrastructure development and tech development. The investment proposed in building National Highways along with developing road network is a welcome step especially for a player like us in bus industry. This infrastructural development will greatly benefit the travel and tourism industry. Focus on improving the Internet and broadband connection in rural areas will go a long way to digitalise cashless economy and connecting them to the main stream. The government's focus on inclusion and encouragement of the MSME sector along with start-ups is also visible.”



Aurvindh Lama
CEO
Travelyaari

“The launch of the Incredible India 2.0 campaign will result in greater tourist interest and inflow from overseas, creating a huge demand and opportunity for the Indian hospitality industry. The proposed creation of five special tourism zones in partnership with state governments will also provide excellent fillip to domestic tourism. It is encouraging to note the government's focus on infrastructure development as it forms the backbone of tourism and hospitality sector. Furthermore, reduction in tax rate for SME and the push towards digital economy by de-incentivising cash transactions will support new-age businesses and start-ups.”



Ritesh Agarwal
Founder & CEO
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Contd. on page 14 ►

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Budget boost to regional connectivity

► Contd. from page 12



Rakshit Desai
Managing Director
FCM Travel Solutions

"I believe the Union Budget provides a good perspective on building a stronger ecosystem by focusing on development of key aspects such as rural areas, infrastructure and poverty alleviation. With an objective to clearly give further impetus to both domestic and inbound tourism, we feel the strategic vision for the Incredible India 2.0 campaign announced by the finance ministry is a positive step. The budget this year focuses on building infrastructure with significant investments in roads, railways and airports in Tier-II cities to boost regional connectivity to far-flung areas. This we believe will encourage tourists to visit more places in their local vicinity or within India itself."



Jean-Michel Cassé
Chief Operating Officer –
India and South Asia
AccorHotels

"Regional connectivity is poised to improve as select airports in Tier-II cities will be developed or revamped for operations via the PPP mode. The introduction of more trains and launch of dedicated lines for pilgrimage and tourism purposes will further promote domestic travel, presenting growth opportunities for the economy and mid-market hotels, a segment we are strongly focused on. We look forward to more opportunities for development of hotels in Tier-II and Tier-III segments, benefitting from increased access and a higher number of untapped destinations realising their tourism potential. The push on infrastructure development is a catalyst for the emergence of a greater number of new industrial cities, thus creating new opportunities for hoteliers."



Anshu Sarin
CEO
Berggruen Hotels

"The Budget has induced positive sentiments at a macro level. The intention of setting up special tourism zones in partnership with states is a good step. Focus to build national highways is a welcome move for the deprived infrastructure, which is a major hindrance to the development of the hospitality and travel sector. The waiving of service charge on e-tickets will have a positive impact. Recommendations on tax benefits for MSME and start-ups will certainly boost their business and would indirectly help mid-market business hotels. Further strengthening of digital transaction is aligned with our focus on promoting hotel bookings through our brand website and call centre."

"We believe that the Union Budget for 2017 is a step in the right direction for the hospitality industry across the country. The cash transaction limit till ₹3 lakhs will normalise the cash flow after the effect of demonetisation. No change in the GST across platforms will benefit the hospitality sector. Direct tax rates reduced will give the entry-level customers a fair share of disposable income. These developments will benefit the premium hospitality chains immensely for the coming year."



Gaurav Singh
General Manager, Courtyard
by Marriott and Fairfield by
Marriott, Bengaluru

"We had very high expectations from this year's Union Budget for tourism and hospitality. Based on the Government's vision for tourism, our hopes were to receive the much-needed reduction in taxes, which would come into effect in the GST roll-out later this year. Also, we had hoped that the government would grant infrastructure status to hotels with a project cost of ₹25 crore as against the present ₹250 crore. Hospitality is a big contributor to the Tourism GDP, the biggest employer and also one of the biggest generators of Foreign Exchange to the country. It is very disheartening to know that the Union Budget has completely ignored tourism and hospitality."



Dilip Datwani
President, Hotel and
Restaurant Association of
Western India (HRAWI)

"The Finance Minister has outlined a very balanced Budget. In my view, there is enough for all sectors to look forward to. Although, there was not one major big announcement that was expected after the demonetisation process. Hospitality sector is expected to stay course with pointers in the budget that will marginally spur up the growth as well as the spend. The decrease of tax structures for the ₹2.5-5 lakhs segment is likely to increase spending power from this segment that will benefit mid-scale brands."



Krishna Kumar
GM, Radisson Hitec City
Hyderabad

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Skill development for IATO gen-next

IATO's Committee for Education and Skill Development recently organised a training seminar for the beginner staff of its member agencies to help them tackle the challenges of the tourism industry.



TT BUREAU

Kuku Kumar, Chairperson, Committee for Education and Skill Development, IATO, stressed that this programme will help the new entrants in the industry. "The two day programme had 26 participants, who will be imparted skills needed in this industry for the growth of tourism and which will help them not only in their

Kumar said that this would definitely help IATO members as they would get a better-trained staff. "It would be advantageous for the students to learn from experiences of people who have already been in the trade for several years," she claimed.

Naveen Chibber, General Manager – Tours, Orient Express Travel & Tours, also lectured students on one

of the days. "Every youngster getting into the tourism industry wants to earn big money. However, it's not easy. We have gained experience for 30-40 years in the industry and have overcome many problems and issues. A programme like this offers a great opportunity to learn about the industry and what kind of problems tour operators faced earlier. Today things are easy, we have the

support of NTOs in imparting knowledge to the agencies. Earlier information had to be collected. Students will learn from experience. We are focusing on that. Young minds are malleable, and this is the right time to impart this knowledge," he said.

Siddiqui said that apart from this, they will focus on teaching them time management, team building as well

as insights on hotel and tour operator relationship. He added that they are looking to organise such seminars for the middle level executives, as well as Directors and Vice Presidents of the member companies. "Also, this training will be organised every month, or even twice a month for one year. Not only in Delhi-NCR, but we are also thinking of taking it to South, West and even East

India, if we have a strength of around 20 students," he informed.

Back to School

The training will be organised every month, or even twice a month for a year, not only in Delhi-NCR, but also in South, West and East India, if the student strength is around 20



Zia Siddiqui
Member
Executive Committee, IATO

To face the competition and the digital boom, we have to start from the grass-root level and hence we started this programme

personal growth, but for the growth of the industry as well as the organisation where they are working."

Zia Siddiqui, Member, Executive Committee, IATO, said that the programme is the need of the hour. "We have discussed and decided that there is a lot of competition in various forms in the tour-



Kuku Kumar
Chairperson, Committee for Education and Skill Development, IATO

ism industry in India. So, we thought we would upgrade our man power and offer professional guidance to the entire trade fraternity. To face the competition and the digital boom, we have to start from the grass-root level and hence we started this programme."

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6.23% growth in FTAs to Kerala

■ A total of 14.2 million tourists visited Kerala in 2016, corresponding to a 5.71 per cent growth as compared to 2015. The provisional figures from the tourism department indicated that 14,210,954 tourists came to Kerala in 2016, out of which 13,172,535 were domes-




Dr. Venu V
Principal Secretary-Tourism
Government of Kerala

tic arrivals and 1,038,419 were foreign visitors, corresponding to an increase of 5.67 per cent and 6.23 per cent respectively as compared to 2015. An 8 per cent increase in tourist arrivals was expected in November, a peak tourist season for Kerala.

Dr. Venu V, Principal Secretary-Tourism, Government of Kerala, pointed out, "A setback to the tourism sector will have a significant impact on the economy. The continuous efforts by the government and private tourism partners helped Kerala Tourism withstand the demonetisation crisis."

Product diversification: Need of the hour?

While industry stakeholders believe that niche tourism products will increase foreign tourist arrivals to India, a section feels that it is necessary to reinvent and strengthen the existing offerings rather than venturing into too much diversification and losing focus.

Participants ▶	 <div>◀ Jatinder S. Taneja Hon. Secretary PATA India Chapter</div>	 <div>◀ Ajay Chabbria Most Trending Personality, India Travel Awards 2016, & Managing Director, In-time Travels</div>	 <div>◀ Harmandeep Singh Anand Face of Innovative Tourism, India Travel Awards 2016, & Man- aging Director, Jagsons Travels</div>
Should India focus on improving its existing tourism offerings or rather develop niche tourism products to boost inbound tourism?	<p>Infrastructure is the most important and a key ingredient that will aid the growth of inbound tourism in India. Heritage is our key attraction and many foreign tourists travel to India to experience the historic and cultural abundance in the country. We should continue to focus on our strengths and promote them better to offer exciting opportunities for more travellers to come in.</p> <p>However, I also feel that we should develop alternate and niche tourism products alongside but not get digressed and lose our existing target group.</p>	<p>I feel sad about the fact that though India already has so much to offer, most of it is yet unexplored. Most of our tourism products are underutilised because of a lack of infrastructure and proper tourist facilities. There is nature, heritage, culture, wildlife and a plethora of historical palaces in India. I feel we need to reinvent what we have. For example, in Europe various ancient palaces and castles have been converted into hotels. This can be done in India as well where a heritage hotel may charge ₹30,000 per night but this stay will be more exotic than just taking a tour of the heritage property. I don't think medical tourism is as cheap as we think in India but adventure activities can definitely be worked upon. Our focus should be to repackage and develop what we already have and present it to the world.</p>	<p>I think we should focus on developing the unexplored parts of India and look at niche tourism products. Tourists have already been coming in for the Golden Triangle tour but if we wish to increase repeat visits, we need to engage the tourist in more than one aspect of India. For example, if people visit the central region of India, I would rather prefer they visit Nagpur and not go to the usual Mumbai or Pune. They can also explore the region in Chhattisgarh, Vidarbha and Jharkhand. These new destinations need to be marketed properly. Infrastructure is not the only reason why someone would like to visit a destination. It is about the experience of the destination. Yes I agree basic facilities are needed to enhance that experience but it is not the sole necessity.</p> <p>As told to Ankita Saxena</p>



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SOTC gears up for a busy summer

While MICE was the strongest segment last year, **Amod Thatte**, Head Products and Innovation – Outbound division, SOTC, sums up 2016's highs and lows and reveals plans for the coming season.



AHANA GURUNG

The year 2016 was problematic for outbound travel. First, there were terror attacks in Europe, and then the rate of exchange took a hit as demonetisation came to the forefront. Despite these, SOTC has overcome the challenges through a strategic take.

"We sensed that it was going to be a difficult year and accordingly, scrutinised the things we need to control

Asia continues to be one of biggest markets for MICE as it is an entry-level destination for a lot of corporates. Overall, MICE is here to stay and we have looked at various other industries where we are present," he asserts.

However, the new year did not start off on an encouraging note for the travel industry with a hike on service tax that came into action

by the end of the first month. When asked for a forecast for the year ahead, Thatte says that while unfavourable, the situation would resume normalcy within a few months. "2017 does have some challenges on its hand already but my sense is it will settle down over time. People will notice the increase in price but somewhere down the line, it will become the new norm," he adds.

As for SOTC's plans, their first priority will be the summer season which begins from April and extends till October. The products for the season were introduced ahead in October 2016 itself as part of their strategy for group departures and FITs.

Elaborating on the markets that have seen a good response for leisure,

Thatte explains, "Winter destinations like New Zealand, Australia have been doing very well in the long-haul category.

"In the short-haul category, destinations like Singapore, Thailand, Mauritius have been in demand. Egypt has also been showing a sign of revival and has always been popular among Indians."

The summer season will see the travel provider's focus intensify on the West, since that's 'the best time of the year to travel to the US and Europe'. "But that doesn't mean we have a lesser focus on the other markets. We are a large mass player – for us, it's the customer's holiday requirement which is more important than a certain destination," he wraps up.



Amod Thatte
Head Products and Innovation
– Outbound division, SOTC

For MICE, we are completely focused on the corporates and in volumes, Asia continues to be one of biggest markets for MICE as it is an entry-level destination for a lot of corporates

better," says **Amod Thatte**, Head Products and Innovation – Outbound division, SOTC. "We managed our costs well, we had a margined focus and so it ended on a good year for us."

The MICE segment particularly, beat all odds and emerged as the star performer, informs Thatte while leisure fared equally well. Eastern European countries like Prague, Budapest and Austria were much sought after and the region has been gaining immense popularity among leisure travelers too. "For MICE, we are completely focused on the corporates and in volumes,

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IATA's new programmes: Boon or bane?

IATA's programmes NewGen ISS and NDC are set to roll out in India this year and the travel agents are already anticipating the marketplace to change. Would this result in a change in the business module or would it wipe off the existing travel agents? TRAVTALK finds out from industry experts.

Participants ▶	 <p>◀ Sunil Kumar DDP Game Changer, India Travel Awards 2014, and President, TAAI & President, UFTAA</p>	 <p>◀ Jay Bhatia Entrepreneur of the Year, India Travel Awards 2014, and Hon. Treasurer, TAAI</p>	 <p>◀ Yossef Fatael Vice President UFTAA</p>
All about IATA's NewGen ISS and NDC	NewGen ISS is a new initiative of IATA, which has come through a resolution which is not yet numbered. Any resolution in IATA has to be adopted at the PAC conference, which is held every year, where the airlines vote. However, it has to be a unanimous adoption.	NDC has been scheduled for India after first half of this year. It's not yet on the cards. However, NewGen ISS, as well as the BSP link service, is just around the corner and the new accreditations of IATA like EasyPay etc., and we need to capitalise how we are going to capitalise on it and ensure growth and work a way forward.	IATA and airlines would play the role of banks, and agents would be supervised on real time with credit management and credit risk. The new model of travel agent accreditation by IATA, would bring many more agents to the market, which could create a confusing market for existing agents.
Changes expected	It could be positive or negative. There is one element EasyPay, where the travel agents would be accredited differently, and they are not expected to give usual bank guarantees and insurances. In the new model, if you have money, pay to IATA and issue tickets. In India, this could result in mushrooming of many more agents.	There are both pros and cons, and we will discuss and work positively towards it. There will be many more individuals and companies who will be registering for EasyPay, and at the same time it's going to be negative as there will be more competition in the market.	We are in a position where we are struggling to survive as a travel agent accredited by IATA and now we might see a flood of agents, because whoever will use the passenger credit card or will upload funds in advance with EasyPay can become an accredited agent. Thus, we need to compete with direct marketing of airlines as well as new players.
Solutions	It requires travel agents to rise up and face a new environment. There are certain aspects of NewGen ISS, which we have objected to, and it has been well heard. We are looking forward to a very interesting debate at Geneva, where I will be representing travel agents.	On the flip side, apart from the bank guarantee, it will be a cash and carry module. This means that if a travel agent exhausts his limit, and wants to do trade further, it will be on a cash and carry basis or pre-deposit schemes.	We need to support each other because we cannot survive by ourselves. Collaboration, community, partnership and doing business amongst ourselves would help.

As told to Nisha Verma



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Frankfurt eyes travel trade

With an increased marketing budget for the India market, Frankfurt Tourist Congress Board is targeting the travel trade through trade shows and exhibitions.



TT BUREAU

In 2016, up to November, approximately 90,000 Indian overnights were recorded in Frankfurt while the destination also witnessed a fair share of day trippers, informed **Dr. Annette Biener**, Manager-China, India, South Korea, Austria, South-Eastern Europe, Russia and Turkey, Frankfurt Tourist Congress Board. "We would like to increase the number of Indians visiting Frankfurt as the dynamics of the market is very positive, almost 17+ per cent, which shows that there is high traffic that can be expected from the Indian market to Frankfurt," she says.

Biener further points out that the average duration of stay of an Indian guest in Frankfurt is 1.7 days which is usually a day trip or clubbed with other destinations. Last year, Frankfurt saw leisure and MICE travellers along with trade fair attendees. Out



Annette Biener
Manager-China, India, South Korea, Austria,
South-Eastern Europe, Russia and Turkey

By next year we will open doors to a German Romantic Museum which can be visited during the Valentine's week or otherwise

of these segments the percentage share of MICE and trade fair attendees was higher, adds Biener.

For 2017 and 2018, the tourist board is offering a variety of tourism products including

history, culture, nightlife, cruising and endless options for Indian cuisine. "We have restored the old city centre as it was like before World War II and this can be visited by the end of this year. By next year we will also open doors to a German Romantic Museum which can be visited by Indian travellers during the Valentine's week or otherwise," says Biener.

Speaking about their plans for the India market, Biener elaborates that they are closely working with various travel agencies, planning their fam trips to Frankfurt, attending many travel trade shows like OTM, conducting sales visits and also interacting with the wholesalers in the tourism industry. "We are increasing our marketing and promotional budgets in 2017 for the Indian market. We have partnered with a PR agency in hopes to tap into the market better. Frankfurt Tourist Congress Board also has a dedicated conventions department that caters to all MICE enquires," adds Biener.

23% jump in Indian arrivals

The country also recorded an increase of 30 per cent in overnights, reveals **Christine Mukharji**, Marketing Manager, Austrian National Tourism Office.



TT BUREAU

Tourism to Austria from India surpassed all previous numbers in 2016. An ecstatic Mukharji said, "Last year was our best year overall ever since we set up our office here in India. We had an increase of 30 per cent in overnights, and in arrivals we had 23 per cent jump. It was really a fantastic year for us."

Austrian National Tourism Office is leaving no stone unturned to promote the destination to boost the numbers further in 2017. Mukharji revealed, "We are doing our annual roadshow for the trade and our media event in February. There will also be a gala event in Mumbai. We have also done a new event recently for the Swarovski Crystal World, for which we tied up with designer Manish Arora. Swarovski has three big stores in Austria, and Manish Arora is going to do special installations at all three of them."



Christine Mukharji
Marketing Manager
Austrian National Tourism Office

We have 17 visa centres all over India, and people have opened up to Austria and have taken to everything there, including sports

While agreeing that travel agents are important for them, Christine said that today Austria is so well-known and popular that people club it with Budapest and Prague because of good flight connections. "Plus, we are very lenient in issuing

the visa. The visa-issuing process is going quite smoothly. We have 17 visa centres all over India, and people have opened up to Austria and have taken to everything there, including sports. Skiing is becoming very popular in Austria in summers. Thus, I have lots of requirements for skiing, cycling, as well as for hiking."

Mukharji claimed that MICE is important for them and hence they have a good understanding with the embassy for visa facilitation of such groups. "We are giving them priority. Vienna is a perfect MICE destination and most of the companies prefer to club their MICE visit with one night in Prague for the nightlife," she informed.

Summing up their strategy, Mukharji said, "We just want to showcase Austria as a whole, where people, in one week or 10 days can experience boats, culture and our hospitality, which is our USP and that's what we are going to focus on now."



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Powering Indian carriers

Dinesh Keskar, Senior Vice President, Sales, Asia Pacific and India, Boeing, claims that they are a dominant player in the wide-body aircraft market in India.

NISHA VERMA

Boeing has provided the 777s and the 787s, which are operating with Air India right now, and Jet Airways has been operating 777s for over a decade, said **Dinesh Keskar**, Senior Vice President, Sales, Asia Pacific and India, Boeing. "Air India Express flies the smaller aircraft, which is the 737. SpiceJet has also been flying these aircraft and has closed a big order with us. Even Jet Airways has bought 75 B737-8 MAX aircraft on order and they operate over 89 737s currently," he revealed.

Keskar recently closed one of the biggest deals in aviation history in India with SpiceJet. Speaking on the deal, he elaborated, "SpiceJet has added 100 new 737 MAX-8 airplanes to its existing order of 55. The new order of 100 airplanes is worth \$11 billion, which will be delivered between 2018-2024," he said. He revealed that the order included additional pur-



Dinesh Keskar
Senior Vice President
Sales, Asia Pacific and India, Boeing

The wide-bodied aircraft would not directly aid in the RCS scheme. However, the feed from smaller cities would further fly in these planes, and will have some implications

chase rights of 50 more aircraft. "This means that the order of 155 aircraft is firm, committed through signed contract and payment. The airline might buy the additional 50 aircraft depending on how the business and market are going, and this way the

airlines usually protect their future by having additional options," explained Keskar.

According to him, SpiceJet is securing its future till 2024, and Jet Airways will look at doing something similar. "We are expecting Jet Airways to order additional aircraft as well. Air India just took the delivery of its 23rd Dreamliner, and they have four more to go. They also have three 777s to be ordered, which have not yet been delivered. I am sure the national carrier would look at the MAX aircraft for future use," said Keskar.

When asked about if Boeing would be playing a part in the Regional Connectivity Scheme launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, he said, "The wide-bodied aircraft are meant for long-haul sectors, and hence would not directly aid in the RCS scheme. However, the feed from smaller cities to big cities would further fly in these planes, and will have some implications in RCS."

Tashkent-Mumbai direct soon

Uzbekistan Airways in collaboration with Mumbai International Airport (MIAL) is planning to introduce two direct flights from Tashkent to Mumbai.

TT BUREAU

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and India, Uzbekistan Embassy invited Indian travel trade and delegates to present the business and touristic potential of Uzbekistan. **Atabek Atabaev**, Country Manager, Uzbekistan Airways, said, "We are planning to start our direct flights from Tashkent to Mumbai and have come to the last stages of the project. In a few months' time we should be able to get permissions from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India, for this operation and once the permissions are granted, we will immediately start operations with two direct flights."

Atabaev feels that this connection will allow Uzbekistan to tap into the central Indian and southern Indian market. Currently, Uzbekistan Airways operates six weekly flights to Delhi and three weekly flights to Amritsar from Tashkent. "We are working in collaboration



Atabek Atabaev
Country Manager
Uzbekistan Airways

with Mumbai Airports for this project. We started focusing on tourism sector lately and our association with Indian travel agents and tour operators has resulted in an increase in demand for the destination. In 2016, we saw an increase of almost 20 per cent in terms of Indian tourist traffic to Uzbekistan and over 70 per cent of our load is from the Indian market," adds Atabaev. Family travellers constitute as many as 70 per cent of the tourists from India to Uzbekistan and this year the destination is also planning to target the FIT and MICE travellers from India.



Aslam Akbarav
Counselor (Political) Charge d' Affaires,
Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Aslam Akbarav, Counselor (Political) Charge d' Affaires, Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, informed, that in 2016, Uzbekistan received a total of 7720 Indian tourists and the destination is working to increase this number this year. "There are international hotel brands and new properties to offer all modern facilities to the guests. We are working with approximately 38 Indian travel agencies and tour operators and are looking forward to increase our partnership with the travel trade," said Akbarov.

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South Africa woos Delhi travel trade

South African Tourism conducted a four-city roadshow in India with 120 delegates and 65 products on offer for the travel trade. The Delhi leg of the roadshow saw a very strong presence with more than double the number of buyers in attendance compared to last year.





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Morocco catches India's fancy

In 2017, Tourism Enterprises is planning to add more DMCs to its network and offer Indian outbound tour operators a variety of newer destinations.



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Tourism Enterprises connects Indian outbound tour operators to its vast network of destination management companies. The company has witnessed two successful years and is looking forward to a robust 2017. It reaches out to its trade partners through personal visits, mailers, trade fairs and arranges local city-based seminars and ensures the quality, stability and reliability of the DMC which it promotes in the Indian market.

According to **Ravi Gosain**, Managing Director, Tourism Enterprises, the outbound industry is expected to be impacted due to sudden



Ravi Gosain
Managing Director
Tourism Enterprises

increase of service tax to 9 per cent from January 22, 2017. However, the company has observed steady number of queries, though the accurate figures of total number of Indians travelling abroad will be gauged post confirma-



Kumar Utkarsh
Sales Head-India
Tourism Enterprises

tions. In 2016, Tourism Enterprises sent approximately over 8000 tourists through Indian outbound tour operators to several countries; the most popular being Dubai, Central Europe, Sri Lanka and Greece, adds Gosain.

"With Central Europe gaining popularity in the India market, we are also offering trips to Prague, Vienna, Salzburg, Budapest and Munich through a DMC brand in Czech Republic," says **Kumar Utkarsh**, Sales Head-India, Tourism Enterprises. He further informs that the company is promoting Morocco as a new destination

for the last three years and has seen an increase in both enquiries and bookings.


Tourism Enterprises is working and planning investments in international DMCs to set up its own DMC or build partnerships with a few existing DMCs to give trust and value to its B2B network in India. The company is already working in partnership with Haryard


Tours-Dubai and TE Lanka-Sri Lanka, informs Utkarsh. "India is a good market for incentive travel to destinations like Dubai, Sri Lanka, Central Europe and Greece. We are focusing on the family segment of travel and catering to the emerging small family and friends group as this segment demands personalised, tailor-made programs in comparison to set departure tours," adds Gosain.

TBO celebrates a decade of success



TBO Group commemorated their 10th anniversary by organising a night of revelry at Circus, New Delhi where the crowd let their hair down over cocktails and canapes. Co-founders **Ankush Nijhawan** and **Gaurav Bhatnagar** shared fond memories of a long and fulfilling journey which started with the printing of its first e-ticket and now boasts of a presence in 62 countries.





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Domestic tourism remains front runner

With a mixed bag Budget for the tourism and hospitality sector, industry stakeholders are now awaiting the GST Bill. India Travel Award winners share their expectations from the performance of the industry this year.



IT BUREAU

► Ultimate Service Award in Hospitality (East 2014) - Swosti Group of Hotels and Resorts

Publicity support for Odisha

Odisha Tourism needs adequate publicity of its rich tourism potential both through electronic and print media, feels **J.K. Mohanty**, Chairman and Managing Director, Swosti Group of Hotels and Resorts. He says, "Odisha is the only state endowed with rich cultural heritage; beautiful mountainous landscaped areas; the largest brackish water lake of Asia with 64 varieties of rich tribal culture; mangrove forests; wildlife; famous silver filigree works; stone crafts; Patta Chitra paintings; handloom and handicraft. These are some of the assets of the state which are not well known in the tourism market." Mohanty also adds that MOT has been aggressively promoting the Incredible India campaign but unfortunately not much is said about Odisha and he points out that most of the India Tourism offices abroad hardly have any tourist literature on the state. "We expect the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, to give more support in terms of publicity in both electronic and print media," adds Mohanty.



► Best Luxury Camp (West 2015) - TUTC

Luxury camping to grow

According to **Rajnish Sabharwal**, Chief Operating Officer, The Ultimate Travelling Camp, with diverse destinations and products, India's tourism industry is flourishing into offering an array of luxurious experiences and in 2017 there is an opportunity to explore this further in an unconventional and preferred way. "The luxury market in India is at a nascent stage, but it has experienced 10-20 per cent growth year-on-year. Luxury travel segment in India is bound to grow rapidly gaining prominence from the experience hungry travellers and a growing middle class with higher disposable income where travellers are seeking exotic and unique holiday experiences. With personalisation and customised packages taking centre stage, luxury camping as travel trend will see a large growth in 2017," says Sabharwal. He further adds that the role of the government in the development of infrastructure in lesser developed areas including means transportation, air connectivity and hotel stays will give a boost to domestic tourism and inbound tourism.



► Gallery of Legends (East 2016) - Suresh Periwal

Promote lesser-known destinations

Suresh Periwal, Managing Director, Clubside Tours and Travels, points out that the tourism and hospitality industry witnessed some large scale acquisitions and consolidations last year and feels that the impact of these mergers will be visible in the year 2017. Periwal says, "Using their collective strength, we expect these companies to help grow the overall business in India either in terms of domestic or inbound." Commenting on the progress made in the tourism and hospitality industry, Periwal adds that the tourism infrastructure in India has been improving and the industry can expect this growth trend to continue along with additions in capacity. "I feel there is a need for greater emphasis on promotions of lesser-known destinations in India like the North East," adds Periwal.



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Courtesy: The Sun Siyam Inufushi, Maldives






Thailand MICE up by 89%

After recording great outbound numbers in 2016, TravelBullz is now focusing on offering ease of business to agents and their signature quality service.



TT BUREAU

Last year TravelBullz saw 170,000 travellers on their network. "Industry growth in Thailand from India is pegged at about 10-12 per cent and for Hong Kong it has shown a decline. Contrary to this, TravelBullz has shown 89 per cent growth in MICE for Thailand and 28 per cent on FIT numbers,

Package Module. Second would be INR payments to facilitate ease of transaction and thereby increasing the network of travel partners across India. We have grown incredibly on 5-star hotels sales from India and China to Thailand and Hong Kong. We would focus on luxury products and new 5-star products with competitive deals that would be exclu-

sively available on TBZ along value ads," Singh said.

TravelBullz is also investing in its sales force to reach remote towns and capture market share. Singh said that they are trying to keep it simple and do nothing fancy. Instead they are focusing on offering convenience in transaction to agents and offer high quality service on ground.



K.D. Singh
Founder & President
TravelBullz

whereas business to Hong Kong has grown over 37 percent vis-a-vis 2015. The growth on an already existing large base has not only given us confidence that we are on the right track, but have encouraged us to keep our projections for future growth ambitious," reveals K.D. Singh, Founder & President, TravelBullz.

The credit for this growth goes to their focused strategy. "We decided to focus on our strengths, which is Thailand, Hong Kong and Macao, and we had our own offices there. While we were still selling everything around the world on the system, we focused only on servicing our key destinations and the strategy paid off," asserts Singh.

Now, TravelBullz is eyeing an overall growth of 40 per cent this year. "We would attempt to cross 1,00,000 guests in 2017 with special focus on MICE. We also have amazing offerings coming up for FIT," he projected. Singh further stressed that as far as Hong Kong and Macau are concerned, they are the only company offering seamless package booking experience with guaranteed pricing and availability. "In Thailand, we shall come up with an exciting option for FIT business, which would be a trend setter," he informed.

There are many other products on the anvil as well. "One of the biggest offerings this year for travel partners would be the Dynamic

Red Carpet gets a new address



Red Carpet Travels, a Mumbai-based DMC for USA and Canada, recently celebrated the opening of a new office in Thane area of the city.

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Industry rues the missing



The get-together between five industry players took place a few hours after the Union Budget for 2017-18 was announced and went live on Facebook to reach a wider audience. The session paved the way for an informative hour of assessment and deliberation of the Budget’s details and its benefits for the tourism industry. While the few attempts for the growth of tourism were appreciated, the participants expressed their discontent over the negligence of the sector that barely found any mention in the budget, and the inattention to the industry’s tax reduction pleas.

Expectations	v/s	Reality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ One of the main concerns was the goods and services tax (GST). The industry anticipated a lower slab for tourism, preferably at 5 per cent so that the industry can prosper. ❖ Granting infrastructure status for hotel industry with investment up to ` 50 crore to enable availing of long-term credit facilities at more attractive rates has been a much-talked about matter. ❖ An income tax rebate on expenses up to ` 50,000 p.a. incurred on family holidays within India along with more benefits was identified as another need of the hour. ❖ The new 9 per cent service tax that came into action on January 22, 2017, was an aspect a majority of industry players expected to be reviewed. ❖ Many agreed that an increase in funds for promotion and market development assistance would be a good way to boost tourism. ❖ Another suggestion was the requirement of a corpus fund for the industry as well as international associations to aggressively bid for international conferences and exhibitions. ❖ The industry expected more arrangements for better regional connectivity by road and air as connectivity has proven to be a great factor in drawing tourists. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The Finance Minister announced the creation of five special tourism zones which will be formed in association with the states. These will be anchored as Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs). ❖ The second Incredible India campaign will be unveiled worldwide to boost the image of India in the international travel market in the coming financial year. ❖ Increased emphasis on infrastructure development particularly for railways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ 3500 km railway lines will be commissioned in 2017-28 across India as against 2,800 km in 2016-17 while dedicated trains for religious tourism will be introduced ➔ To give impetus to digital payments and encourage on-line transactions, service charge on rail tickets booked through IRCTC has been waived. ❖ Select airports in Tier-II cities will be taken up for operations which will be developed on PPP mode. ❖ Head Post Offices will now be used as the front office for passport services to assist people who live far away from passport offices. ❖ A total of `1,840.77 crore has been allocated to the Tourism Ministry in the Budget for fiscal year 2017-2018, a little over `650 crore more than the previous year. As much as `412 crore has been provided for promotion and marketing development.

T of Tourism in Union Budget



Pronab Sarkar
President
IATO

“In this Budget no encouragement has been given to the tourism industry. Nothing special has been given expect the five tourism zones and second phase of Incredible India campaign abroad. Despite tourism being a part of the Government’s five Ts, we are still awaiting visa reforms and execution of various schemes. The government needs to be sensitised about the benefits and prospects of this industry. We tried multiple times to meet with the Prime Minister but nothing can be seen for the industry. I feel with elections in mind, this is not a complete Budget. The taxes are irrational. The government is playing a game with this industry where on one hand it states that taxes should be paid where services are being used and thus inbound segment in India is taxed and taxes

have to be paid on foreign exchange earned. On the other hand, outbound tourism services are consumed outside India and in this case the clause of place of service providers is applied which brings in outbound segment under taxation despite the government's policy to not export taxes. We are talking about a new campaign but there is no head of promotion to carry it out. When the government introduced electronic visa, no direct marketing and promotional activities were done in any of the international zones. India is not creating any demand in its source markets. It is also important to note that the inbound tourists highlighted are not high spending tourists. These are mostly travellers who stay with friends, relatives, visit India for medical purposes etc. and the actual growth of high spending tourists is very minimal. ”

“There was no good news for the tourism industry. We are talking about the revised international branding abroad but we have to work on the ground before that. As of now we do not have any monument of international standards to present to the world. We have been selling Taj Mahal but that too is not very tourist friendly. Tourism is the face of the country which earns foreign exchange and employs maximum people and yet it does not feature in the Budget. The government cleverly identified that two crore Indians are travelling abroad and thus should feature in the tax bracket but nothing or the inbound market was mentioned. Tourism should be an easy industry with simplified tax structures like other countries, which are booming while we are still awaiting tax simplifications. As

As far as aviation is concerned, where Air India should be controlling the aviation policy, foreign airlines are controlling that for us. An airline ticket becomes expensive not because of the base fare or the tax but due to surcharges added and no one knows where that money goes. Earlier the surcharge was for high fuel price but now when the fuel prices have come down, we are still paying surcharges. I believe that our tourist offices abroad may be marketing and promoting India internationally but if one traveller visits any of these offices, say in Paris or Frankfurt, they do not receive good responses from the officers. To save cost on India tourist offices, we can accommodate the structures with Air India offices as aviation and tourism go hand in hand and this way we can market both India and its national carrier Air India."



Rajan Sehgal
Chairman- Northern Chapter
TAAI

“The Budget touched upon every industry except tourism and we are very disappointed as usual that tourism never found a place on the agenda of the Budget. Being part of the five Ts, we thought the Prime Minister is one dynamic that will promote this industry but we have been neglected. The hotel sector is highly disappointed with the budget because in today’s time, running a hotel or a restaurant is not a joy anymore. During demonetisation, the country was under severe cash crunch and many countries issued advisories to not visit India during that time. We had to bear those losses as well and the industry is standing up to it but the government is conveniently not looking into this issue at all. We have seen that a lot of money is spent on India Tourism offices abroad but a lot of windows are left vacant. There are not enough officers appointed. Rentals are being paid but this money is being used to move these tourist offices into the premises of the Indian High Commission in various countries. We can save a lot of this infrastructural expenditure on better marketing and promoting the country in various ways.”



Rajindera Kumar
Former President FHRAI & HRANI;
Working Director, Vivanta by Taj
Ambassador



Sarab Jit Singh
Tourism Ambassador, India Travel
Awards 2016, and Vice Chairman,
FAITH


“ The positive thing in this Budget was the acceptance by MOT to create five tourism zones which was FAITH's recommendation and it is a welcome step that Incredible India campaign abroad will be re-launched with a 35 per cent increase in allocation. If on one hand exports are going down then tourism is the way forward to earn foreign exchange. The cash incentives and financial aid for tourism was being provided by the Ministry of Commerce and the reduction in allocation of funds for MoC is counterproductive for tourism. In India the tourism products are highly taxed and we are losing internationally in the competition. Though the government's policy states that taxes cannot be exported, tourism is an exception as anything related


to this industry is taxable at 25 per cent. We have requested that under GST, any foreign exchange transaction by tourism agencies should be categorised as zero-rated in order to compete internationally. For the last three years there has hardly been any international branding for India which resulted in slowdown in business. The government figures show growth but this growth is from those countries which cannot be considered tourist generating countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The India tourism offices are vacant. The expenditure is being done but the officers posted in tourist offices are incompetent to address queries and this results in negative publicity for the country. We hope that a new thrust will be provided to cover the lost ground.”

“We were very disappointed with the Budget, especially when the government has been talking about tourism being a major pillar of growth. I don’t understand how it cannot be important when budget is concerned, except for the fact that the passports can now be applied in the GPOs. While this is a good move on one side, on the other hand taxing outbound tourism would make us less competitive than people sitting overseas. This will kill the industry, which is making 20 million people travelling outside India, which is not using infrastructure available across the country and still generating revenue. It is time now that we look at a wider perspective. We have put in our efforts to ensure the issues are addressed but there has to be someone listening. We have to now look at tourism collectively and think where the delivery happens.”




Guldeep Singh Sahni
DDP Trailblazer, India Travel Awards
2016 and President, OTOAI







was live 

February 1, 2017 at 16:27



<div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">4,514</div>	<div>People reached</div>
<div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">1,355</div>	<div>Video views</div>
<div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">203</div>	<div>Reactions, comments & shares</div>

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 5px;"> <div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">165</div> <div>Likes</div> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">75</div> <div>On post</div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">90</div> <div>On shares</div> </div>
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<div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">27</div> <div>Shares</div>	<div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">23</div> <div>On Post</div>	<div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">4</div> <div>On Shares</div>
<div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">764</div> <div>Post Clicks</div>		
<div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">191</div> <div>Clicks to Play</div>	<div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">0</div> <div>Link clicks</div>	<div style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: red;">573</div> <div>Other Clicks</div>

TCEB honours MICE movers & shakers

Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) along with Thai Airways International hosted an exclusive evening of networking earlier this month in Le Méridien which saw the presence of the who's who from the MICE industry.



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Tripvillas is agent friendly

In the holiday rental industry in India since 2013, Tripvillas is now actively looking for reputed travel agents to appoint as its General Selling Agents.



To push its two products – villas and homestays – in the Indian market, Tripvillas is looking to tap offline travel agents. **Roshan D'Silva**, CEO, Tripvillas, says, "We currently do not have a direct tie-up with offline agents and have chosen to work through aggregators. In India, a travel agent can have access to our product through Via.com and international travel agents can access our product through Tourico travels in Florida. However, we are actively looking for new reputed travel agents to appoint as our General Selling Agents and will continue to support both Via and Tourico in their efforts to broaden the base."



Roshan D'Silva
CEO
Tripvillas

It is looking for travel agents with a strong presence in the upper mid-market as well as specialised agents handling family travel, corporate groups, weddings, and celebrity travel. "We are open and supportive to any ideas and would be happy to engage with other companies for mutual benefit," he says. It has also tied up with a few OTAs such as MakeMyTrip, Goibibo, Yatra, Travelguru, Via.com as well as international online companies like Ctrip, Ostrovok, Booking.com, Agoda and Expedia. The company recently partnered with Homeexchange.com to reach out to more holiday-makers in India. D'Silva adds, "A majority of our portfolio comprises villas and homestays. Villas allow a group to stay together with exclusive access to the complete property along with a caretaker and cook."

Tripvillas is targeting upper-middle class families and people in the 25-50 age group. Its typical customer groups are single families, families who holiday together and joint families. In the pipeline are multiple training programs, materials and in-person seminars for the travel trade. "We offer special payment terms to travel agents who are IATA-certified and pass

our credit checks. By partnering with Tripvillas, travel agents get the only single source of over 200,000 verified holiday homes and homestays across the globe to offer their customers. Our policies are travel agent-friendly and gives them a good opportunity to generate additional revenue and provide a valuable service to their customers," he adds.



Mizar Conventions conducted its roadshow in New Delhi and Mumbai where they met key travel trade partners. **Maddalena Fumagalli**, Sales and Event Planner, Mizar Conventions, said, "We are promoting Lake Como and Milan in India as we believe that these are new destinations for the Indian market to organise weddings in Italy. We will also look at



Maddalena Fumagalli
Sales and Event Planner
Mizar Conventions

promoting the destination for MICE. Last year Indian

visitors to Italy grew in large numbers for all segments including MICE and high-end leisure and this year we can expect a growth of 10-20 per cent from the Indian market."

Fumagalli informed that the company organised one Indian wedding of 300 guests in Capri and one in Lake Como last year. "We offer villas that can accommodate 1000 pax for events and weddings," she added.

Viviane Stephan, Director, VS Luxe Promotion, who works with Castadiva Resort and Spa at Lake Como points out that they have been working with the Indian travel trade. "At this event we hope to inform our partners about what their clients can do at Lake Como in terms of special events, weddings and corporate travel," she said. Castadiva catered to Indian honeymooners and families in 2016 who contributed to 8 per cent of their total guests.

Weddings by the lake in Italy

Mizar Conventions from Lake Como, Italy, is promoting the region as an upcoming destination for weddings and MICE among the Indian travel trade.



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Adding value to medical travel

There is no such thing as ‘medical tourism’ in India yet, as most panelists at the Medical Tourism Conclave organised by Indian Merchants Chamber in Mumbai agreed. What India offers right now can only be termed as ‘Medical Value Travel.’

Participants ▶	 <p>◀ Valsa Nair Principal Secretary, Tourism and Culture, Govt. of Maharashtra</p>	 <p>◀ Deepak Premnarayan President, Indian Merchants Chamber (IMC)</p>	 <p>◀ Dr. Parag Rindani AVP & Head Wockhardt Hospital</p>	 <p>◀ Rajiv Duggal Best Marketing Professional, India Travel Awards 2016, and CEO, Lavasa Hospitality</p>
The good	We need to highlight the strengths that Maharashtra has in terms of facilities that we can offer to medical tourists. Medical tourism figures very prominently in our new tourism policy and we have done a lot of work in this regard.	Bangladesh and Afghanistan dominate the Indian Medical Value Travel with 34 per cent share. Africa, GCC and CIS regions present the maximum possible opportunity for the Indian healthcare sector. Medical tourists from these regions currently favour the South East Asian medical corridors. The state of Maharashtra itself presents several opportunities which the government can extend its support to.	India has the JCI (Joint Commission International) and National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH) both of which are benchmarks of safety and clinical quality. We should talk about this more rather than just talk about cost-effective care because India is more quality healthcare rather than being just about cost.	Medical tourism in India has been increasingly bringing over \$2 billion in revenue with a 30 per cent growth year on year. We can add to this growth by bringing in more medical tourists. The travel industry has been welcoming tourists into India for decades and understands how to take care of guests.
The bad	The Medical Tourism Council unfortunately is now defunct but it needs to be revived. We don't have seamless end-to-end services. We also need to look at differential pricing and lack of uniform pricing policy.	There are several challenges such as adequate insurance, complaint resolution mechanism, safety regulations, norms governing malpractices, etc.	The industry has made zero effort to get hospitality stakeholders in the fold. It's only patient by patient right now. There is a need to tie up with hotels.	None of the stakeholders are speaking with each other right now. There needs to be more communication between us. There is also a need for accreditation for travel agencies that bring in patients from other states and countries.
The Plan of Action	We will work with the National Wellness Board. There is a need to create wellness clusters in the state. We will have more conversation with stakeholders and request IMC to create a task force for this. We also need a state-authenticated website that lists accredited hospitals, hotels and tour operators.	The IMC Chamber of Commerce & Industry is looking at creating a task force which will put together its suggestions for drafting the necessary policies for the promotion of medical tourism in the state. We will also evaluate more engagement and associations with partner countries.	We are now in the process of talking to insurance companies in Africa so that we can get patients directly. We also need to showcase ourselves better and the amazing medical facilities that India already offers.	Travel industry needs to network with the hospitals and take their practice global. Tour operators should be marketing hospitals worldwide.

As told to Hazel Jain

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Where's the MICE & leisure crowd headed?

TRAVTALK asks a few select travel agents in Mumbai who conduct outbound tours about some of the new and exciting destinations that their clients are asking about for leisure and MICE.



HAZEL JAIN

“Some of the top destinations of 2017 are likely to be Croatia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Bali, Dubai, Japan, Tuscany, Scandinavia, South Africa, Cuba, Mexico and Azerbaijan. Vietnam is popular as a stress-free destination with visa on arrival for Indians and good connectivity. Scandinavian countries continue to attract Indians.”



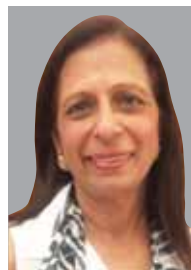
Vishal Suri
Managing Director
SOTC Travel

“We see a sharp rise for Japan this year, for both leisure and MICE. It is great for us as 2017 has been announced as Indo-Japan year. The main tourism draw is the Sakura in Japan which is a gorgeous time to visit. Also, we see an increase in the Australasia segment of Australia, New Zealand and Fiji. Our bets are on these destinations for the coming season for leisure and also MICE.”



Veneeta Rawat
Director
Amazing Vacations

“A lot of our clients are now asking for Croatia, Iceland and Cambodia beyond the regular Angkor Wat. We are also witnessing a lot of queries for the new and upcoming Ras Al Khaimah. It is a stone's throw away from Dubai and is known for outdoor activities like desert safari, sailing and go-karting.”



Madhuri Kanga
Owner
Ahura Travels

“We are getting a lot of inquiries for Madagascar, the land of King Julien from the movie of the same name. Madagascar is known for its tall Baobab trees, beaches and of course the lemurs. These queries are from honeymooners and couples only, and not families and groups. We were one of the first if not the first to start promoting Madagascar seven years ago. It seems to be picking up now.”



Shantanu Chand
CEO
Go Beyond



Rajat Bagaria
CEO, Shrishti Holidays

“This year we have seen demand for river cruising in Europe and Far East. Cherry Blossom season in Japan was in demand, though availabilities were a bit difficult. Israel has been in demand by the seasoned traveller. We have tourists travelling to all parts of the world now, and we cannot really call any destination as new. What is more important is the activity they want like cycling, trekking, self-drives and hot air balloon. So it's the old destinations with a difference.”



Rosita Haribal
Director
Travel Forte

“We have been getting a lot of queries for Japan. Most travellers have not been to this part of the world as it is an expensive destination. Another region that seems to be getting a lot of attention is Eastern Europe which is far less explored than the rest of the continent. These queries are mostly by doctors for holidays with their families. Even South American countries like Brazil and Argentina are getting queries.”



Dharmesh Advani
Director
Bombay Travels

“Since we have a lot of senior citizen clients, we get a lot of queries for destinations that are close to India. Vietnam is popular because of its good connectivity from India and option for flexible budgets. It is also very safe with easy visa process and friendly people, which fits perfectly with my clientele.”



Iqbal Mulla
Chairman
Treasure India

“Some of the new destinations outside India which our clients would like to explore are Zanzibar, Croatia, Georgia and Seychelles as these places are less explored, have great historic relics to see and are within their budget. Our clients are also asking about islands that are unexplored and can be included in the itinerary for at least a day trip during their cruise trips.”

Regal Hotels and Akquasun HK conduct training

Regal Hotels Hong Kong and Akquasun Hong Kong jointly conducted training, networking and cocktail with dinner for agents in New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru recently.

Regal Hotels have a variety of hotel chains in Hong Kong and provide a perfect match for the Indian market for FIT, MICE as well as leisure groups. It is considered as one of the most flexible and Indian-friendly hotels in Hong Kong. Akquasun Hong Kong has been their top producer since the last four years.

Indulge in art and culture @Basel

Switzerland Tourism presented the destination at India Art Fair held from Feb 2-5 in New Delhi to promote Basel.



TT BUREAU

Ritu Sharma, Deputy Director and Media Manager-India, Switzerland Tourism, feels that art happens to be a segment that Indians are ready to travel for and Switzerland is very closely connected with art and culture. A large number of people across the world travel for this segment. Sharma says, “Since last year we are participating in India Art Fair as we believe this is a platform where

India's best artists showcase their creations. Thus we are promoting Switzerland and Basel here to inform the visitors about what they can explore at the cultural capital of Switzerland. The travellers may not be coming in only for art and culture but we hope to include the city of Basel and cultural experiences in their itineraries.”

Ann Muller, Sales Manager India, Basel Tourismus, points out that almost 15,000

Indian tourists visit Basel every year for various purposes. “Basel is very popular for art and culture tourism with Art Basel being the key attraction. Apart from fairs, Basel offers a plethora of attractions and activities to engage the tourists,” says Muller. She further adds that Indians travel for business as well to Basel and the destination is witnessing a growth in leisure tourists. “We are using our budgets for India market to promote the niche segment of



Ritu Sharma
Deputy Director and Media
Manager-India, Switzerland Tourism



Ann Muller
Sales Manager India
Basel Tourismus

art and culture travel as we feel this segment has a growing demand and a high potential. Travellers usually visit Basel as a stop-over destination. We

hope to increase their stays in Basel and inform them about various leisure activities on offer to be involved in at the destination,” adds Muller.



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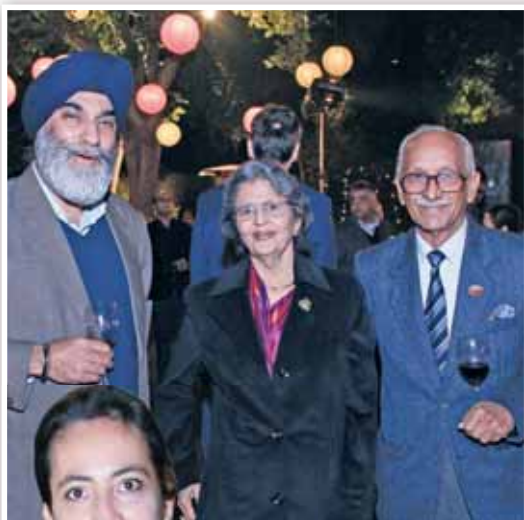
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Glitz and glam at Swarovski World

Swarovski Crystal World showcased its various tourism offerings specialised for Indian guests and also kicked off an exhibition- Life is Beautiful by Indian fashion designer Manish Arora. This exhibition is expected to draw Indian tourists to Wattens, Vienna and Innsbruck in 2017.



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Sarovar signs a 48-key hotel in Chattarpur, New Delhi

■ Sarovar Hotels has recently signed an agreement for a new hotel, KST Sarovar Portico, a 48 keys hotel located in Chattarpur. Ideally located in the major wedding hub of the city, KST Sarovar Portico features 45 rooms and 3 suites. Each room is well-appointed with modern amenities and elegant furnishings. Ensuring guests a seamless service and memorable occasion, the hotel offers remarkable and personalised service starting from 24 hours concierge and personal assistant service to a round the clock in room dining service offering



traditional Indian and Mediterranean cuisine. KST Sarovar Portico is located at convenient distance from main shopping & entertainment centres, religious spots as well as accessible to corporate hubs in South Delhi and Gurgaon. Nido, the bar and lounge facility, promises innovative food offerings.

Tokyo aims to boost Indian arrivals

As many as 123,000 Indians visited Tokyo in 2016, but India is the 17th source market for the capital of Japan. The city recently held its first promotional drive in India to improve these numbers.



AHANA GURUNG

In a bid to increase interest about Japan in the Indian tourism industry and encourage more Indians to travel to the country, Tokyo Metropolitan Government organised their first promotional activity in New Delhi called Tokyo Wonderland. The event showcased the capital and its different attractions under

five themes 'Unique Culture', 'Excellent Dining', 'Exciting Shopping', 'Delightful Stay' and 'Comfortable Nature' along with various ethnic performances and a Japanese tea ceremony.

With the relaxation of short-term visa requirements, the number of Indian tourists to Japan has been growing steadily, finally topping



100,000 in 2015. "In 2016, a total of 123,000 Indian visitors visited Japan," informed **Masahiko Sakamoto**, Senior Director, Tourism Division, Bureau of Industrial and Labour Affairs, Tokyo Metropolitan Government. He said, "We are focusing on improving the arrival numbers from India through such promotional activities to showcase the culture and tourism products of Tokyo. 2020 is the year we host the Olympics and Paralympic Games and are expecting a large inflow of tourists too."

India currently ranks at a dismal 17th position for tourism source markets and Sakamoto hopes such activities will be instrumental in changing this. He informed that places like Ginza and Shibuya are undergoing an infrastructure transformation and are some of the things to look forward to, apart from the cuisine, shopping, numerous nature parks and theme parks. Furthermore, a familiarisation trip will be held in the coming months for a first-hand experience of the city.

Ken Katayama, Deputy Director General, Bureau of Industrial and Labor Affairs, Tokyo Metropolitan Government, highlighted that India and Japan have always shared a healthy bond through movies, trade etc., and planned to strengthen ties through tourism. "With an increasing number of outbound travellers, we believe that it will be beneficial for us to promote tourism in India," he said. To counter the language barrier, more multilingual information centres across the city are being set up along with Wi-Fi at several important tourist points for travellers to access information with ease.

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Japan is host to 2020 Olympics and Paralympics games and are expecting large inflow of tourists

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Israel Tourism roadshow	Hyderabad	22
AIME 2017	Melbourne, Australia	21-22
OTM	Mumbai	21-23
ACE of M.I.C.E	Istanbul, Turkey	22-24
IAAPI Amusement Expo	Mumbai	22-24
Philippines roadshow	Ahmedabad	24
IITM	Kolkata	24-26
Mysore Travel Mart	Mysuru	24-26
Philippines roadshow	New Delhi	27
Mauritius Tourism roadshow	Chandigarh	27
TTF	New Delhi	27 Feb-1 Mar
ILTM Japan	Tokyo, Japan	27 Feb-1 Mar
Phocuswright India	Gurugram	28 Feb-2 Mar
Mauritius Tourism roadshow	Pune	28

MARCH 2017

Mauritius Tourism roadshow	Nagpur	1
International Confex 2017	Olympia, London	1-2
Mauritius Tourism roadshow	Hyderabad	3
ETAA Domestic Convention	Hyderabad	3-5
Mauritius Tourism roadshow	Kolkata	4
ITB Berlin	Berlin, Germany	8-12
India Travel Mart	Goa	12-14
MITT	Moscow, Russia	14-16
Routes Asia	Okinawa, Japan	19-21
IT&CM China 2017	Shanghai, China	21-23
Paris workshop	Mumbai	22
FICCI Digital Travel Hospitality & Innovation Summit	New Delhi	22-23
Experience Canada workshop	Bengaluru	23
Connections Luxury	Hyderabad	26-29
COTTM	Beijing, China	29-31
UITT	Kiev, Ukraine	29-31

APRIL 2017

BIT Milan	Milan, Italy	2-4
Hotel Operation Summit India	Mumbai	4
Best of Australia roadshow	Bengaluru	5
Hotel Investment Conference South Asia	Mumbai	5-6
Azerbaijan International Tourism Fair (AITF)	Baku, Azerbaijan	6-8
Travel Experiential Show	New Delhi	8-9
Ras Al Khaimah roadshow	Mumbai	10
Best of Australia roadshow	Chennai	11
Ras Al Khaimah roadshow	New Delhi	11
Great India Travel Bazaar 2017	Jaipur	23-25

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

ASSOCIATION TALK

ETAA to host second convention

ETAA will be hosting its second domestic convention at Leonia Resort which is one hour away from the Hyderabad airport.



TT BUREAU

As of now Tourism Fiji has confirmed to be the co-sponsors for the convention and other tourism boards may soon join in. The convention will host B2B sessions, presentations from the exhibitors and sponsors showcasing new products and destinations to its members. The third day will be an optional sightsee-

ing tour of Hyderabad which will be part of the package. Speaking on the occasion Jagat Mehta, President, ETAA, said, "We want to showcase new products to our members and maximise their business possibilities so we will be having exhibitors showcasing unique products at the convention. We may also plan to keep knowledge sessions on GST and its effect on the

travel industry once there is a clear picture by the government. We expect 200-plus members across the country to attend the convention." ETAA will also be hosting knowledge sessions in Kolkata on February 4 and Hyderabad on February 10, focusing on up-selling and cross selling where professionals from the travel and trade industry will be present.



Jagat Mehta
President
ETAA

TAFI plans symposium in Mumbai

TAFI is planning a day-long symposium in Mumbai in February which will focus on issues like e-visas for India, visa challenges for outbound, GST, etc.



HAZEL JAIN

The Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) is planning a day-long symposium in Mumbai in the third or fourth week of February 2017. The symposium will focus on issues like e-visas for inbound traffic, visa challenges for outbound traffic from India, GST and other topics that the Union Budget will touch upon.

Sharing more details, Pradip Lulla, Vice President, TAFI, said, "We will get experts to address our members who will be not from Mumbai but also from Pune and surrounding areas. We will also invite stakeholders like airlines

and consulates. Topics are yet to be firmed up." The association will at a later stage start a discussion on GST. "We have taken opinion from two to three big consultants and we have also formulated a white paper on it which we have presented to the Ministry through FAITH. Once it is implemented, we will have workshops for our members with the concerned authorities where people can ask their questions," Lulla added.

The Managing Committee of TAFI has also been scouting for a venue for its next convention that is likely to be held in August-September of 2017. Lulla adds, "We have



Pradip Lulla
Vice President
TAFI

visited a few destinations for a recce including Rwanda and recently Russia and continue to consider other places as well since we need to look into the logistics part of it. We hope to finalise the destination by February 2017."

Lulla joins many of his industry peers in expressing his disappointment with the Budget. "There is nothing positive for the travel industry in the budget with the exception of proposed 5 tourism zones in the country. In fact the Jan 22 amendment to the increased 9 per cent CENVET service tax charged on tour packages and hotels will kill the outbound tour industry as this will inflate the tour packages and no CENVAT adjustment," he says. Lulla did appreciate the direct reduction in income taxes. "The reduction in taxes on individual and companies will indirectly boost disposable income and help tourism," he adds.

India next stop for amusement parks

Ajay Sarin, President, Indian Association of Amusement Park & Industries (IAAPI), speaks with TRAVTALK about the upcoming expo.



TT BUREAU

QWhat will the next edition of IAAPI Amusement Expo hope to achieve?

The forthcoming IAAPI Amusement Expo will showcase new rides and attractions manufactured by leading ride manufacturers from around the globe. This year the expo is spread across 10,000 sqm with participation of over 120+ exhibitors from 21 countries like Bulgaria, Canada, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Malaysia, the Philippines, the UAE, the UK and USA along with India.

This year's expo will help Indian park operators source high-quality precision rides. As our industry is highly seasonal in nature, new attractions will help to increase footfalls. This show will also help Indian park



Ajay Sarin
President, Indian Association of Amusement Park & Industries (IAAPI)

operators to explore possibility of joint venture in setting up operation of parks/FECs in India and overseas and for manufacturers to get into technical tie-ups.

QHow has service tax impacted the industry?

Implementation of service tax in the Union Budget 2015-16 effective from June 1, 2015 is having a cascading

effect on the industry. The State Government is already charging entertainment tax and in addition to the state levy, the amusement sector had to take the burden of service tax of 15 per cent and unlike any other sector the input credit available to set off the service tax paid is negligible. Hence, our industry ends up paying a substantial amount of tax which leads to dual taxation.

QHow is this affecting the industry?

The high rate of taxation is dissuading new entrepreneurs from entering the industry with new formats and also preventing current industry players from adding both Capex and new centres. Entrepreneurs, thus, are seeking to explore other investment avenues. Globally, in markets where GST has been introduced, the tourism rate is half

of the GST rate and is under 10 per cent. Everyone recognises it as critical.

QWhat investment incentives is IAAPI expecting?

The Indian amusement industry has an annual revenue of approx. ₹ 17 billion and estimated to grow to at least ₹ 40 billion by 2020 growing at 17.5 per cent CAGR with capital investing of about ₹ 7,770 crore. An aggregate of 480 amusement parks, FECs and allied industries generate around 80,000 employment. With a capital investment of this magnitude, our industry generates a higher employment base as compared to other industries like manufacturing, pharmaceuticals etc. With the right support, with a lower capex spend, higher employment can be generated by us.

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InterContinental Hotels Group

Delhi

InterContinental Hotels Group has appointed **Sudeep Jain** as Vice President, Development, South West Asia. His immediate remit will be to further strengthen IHG's presence in the region encompassing India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. Jain brings more than 15 years' experience in the hospitality sector from roles based in the US and India. His most recent role was with Starwood Hotels & Resorts. He received his higher education at Ivy League colleges in the US, including a Bachelor's Degree from Dartmouth College and an MBA from Harvard Business School. He also completed the PDP course at Cornell Hotel School.



AccorHotels

Delhi

Jean-Michel Cassé has been promoted as AccorHotel's Chief Operating Officer-India and South Asia. In his most recent role as Senior Vice-President for AccorHotels, India, Jean-Michel has played a pivotal role in the Group's success in India. Under his leadership, AccorHotels now has a 46 hotels presence in the country. A seasoned hotelier, Jean-Michel brings over three decades of industry experience and deep understanding of varied cultures, having worked across multiple international markets in Europe, Asia, Middle East and Africa. He holds a Masters in Hotel & Tourism with a specialisation in Services & Management.



Travelport

Delhi

Rick Saggat joins Travelport in the role of Commercial Director for India and Sri Lanka. An innovative and seasoned airline and travel industry executive, Saggat joins Travelport from Flynas, having spent part of his early career in Travelport UK. Following the announcement that IndiGo signed its first ever GDS agreement with Travelport late last year, Saggat's primary focus will be working with Travelport's distributor in India, ITQ, to drive the Travelport business forward for this strategic sub-region.



Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield & Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park

Bengaluru

Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park has appointed **Faiz Alam Ansari** as Complex General Manager for Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Centre and Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park. He has over 20 years of experience with leading hospitality brands and has been associated with Starwood hotels & Resorts (now Marriott International Inc.), Raffles Hotel, Singapore, Le Méridien, Kuala Lumpur and Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi.



Singapore Tourism Board

Mumbai

Adrian Kong has been appointed as Area Director, South Asia (Mumbai) for Singapore Tourism Board. He will oversee STB's tourism promotion, marketing and developmental efforts in South & West India and Sri Lanka. Kong is well acquainted with the Indian markets having worked earlier in India between February 2012 and January 2014 as a Manager with Singapore Tourism Board in Mumbai. Prior to his appointment as an Area Director, he was overseeing STB's Philippines office for 2.5 years.



Double Tree by Hilton, Chinchwad

Pune

Double Tree by Hilton, Pune, Chinchwad has appointed **Amit Ghosh** as the Director of Sales. He has over 13 years of experience in sales and business development. Ghosh has earned his diploma in Hotel Management from IIAS, Kolkata. He started his career in sales with Amalgamated Bean Trading Company (Pune). He has managed several key accounts in hotels like Four Points by Sheraton (Pune), Oakwood Premier (Pune), Holiday Inn (Pune). Ghosh will be responsible for developing sales strategies through ideation and implementation of strategic sales plan.



Le Meridien Kochi

Kochi

Nilay Saran, with over 18 years of experience in Sales & Marketing, joins Le Méridien Kochi as Director of Sales & Marketing. He has worked across various brands like Crowne Plaza Delhi, Ramada Kochi, Four Points by Sheraton Jaipur, Holiday Inn Cochin & Jaipur. His last assignment was with The Chancery Hotels, Bangalore as DOSM. Nilay brings valuable experience in launching new brands, repositioning and ramping up hotels and resorts.



Reunion Island Tourism Board

Delhi

Rasika Mathur has been appointed as Senior Sales Manager-India, Marketing and Promotion for Reunion Island Tourism Board. Mathur comes with 15 years of comprehensive experience, mixed with remarkable stability in travel and aviation industry. She is proficient in managing a wide range of travel operation. She holds an expertise in customer relationship management, product promotion, sales and marketing and key account management.



Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa

Goa

Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa has appointed **Chef Francisco Domingo Canzano** as the Executive Chef. Franco brings more than 14 years of expertise in the hospitality industry. He holds a Diploma in Culinary from Gato Duma's School, Argentina, and started his career with Restaurant Katrine in Buenos Aires. He joined the Hyatt family in 2003 at Park Hyatt Paris Vendome and has also worked with Park Hyatt Milan and Park Hyatt Palacio Duhau Buenos Aires. His previous assignment was with Grand Hyatt Doha, where he held the position of Executive Sous Chef.



TALKing People

Jai Singh, Co-founder, Polofactory, believes that consistency leads to brilliance. His inspiration in life comes from writer Earnest Hemingway, even though his favourite book remains *Franny & Zooey* by JD Salinger.



Singh is trained in Business Management and has also worked as a banker and a communication consultant, until he started Polofactory in 2012. Apart from the love for horses, he also enjoys traveling. Among his favourite destinations are Paris, Stockholm, Sweden & Ladakh.

Ashrafi Matcheswala, General Manager, Vivanta by Taj – President, is a fitness enthusiast. "I follow a strict regime of running and participate in marathons trying to outdo my own records. Running is a form of meditation for me. I am passionate about a healthy work-life balance. I like to sum up the office chores within the designated hours, and this practice has helped me inculcate the same in my team giving them a healthy and a relaxed atmosphere at work," she says. She also likes to indulge in city and food exploration, dining in new places and destinations that allow her to connect with the culture.



Darryl Erasmus, Chief Quality Assurance Officer, South African Tourism: Tourism Grading Council of South Africa, goes by his father's motto: 'Fortune favours the brave'. He has travelled extensively. "I have travelled to the Netherlands, and found a strong connection there as South Africa has a Dutch history. Apart from that Poland was very good, even the Far East as well as India," he said. His favourite city is India is Bengaluru, as he finds it technologically advanced, beautiful and clean. He also likes Mumbai.



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Vistara soars from Indian runway

The airline has grown to connect 20 destinations within 24 months and is gearing up to fly overseas after the delivery of its 20th aircraft in 2018. **Phee Teik Yeoh**, CEO, Vistara, informs that they are working on a global network through interline and code-share agreements for maximum visibility.



AHANA GURUNG

What have been the highlights in the past year?

Our efforts in 2016 continued to revolve around delighting our customers by driving innovation in our value proposition and the expansion of our operations. Vistara launched six new destinations in 2016, namely Jammu, Srinagar, Kochi, Chandigarh, Kolkata and Port Blair. And, as soon as the New Year began, we announced two new destinations, Amritsar and Leh, taking the total count of destinations served to 20 with over 500 weekly flights. There isn't a bigger testament to this success than winning the trust of close to 4 million customers in just 24 months. The year 2016 also witnessed the launch of our first ever multi-media brand campaign, 'Fly the New Feeling' with Bollywood's most loved actor, Deepika Padukone, as our brand ambassador. Helping us maintain our consistency in delivering operational excellence, we received the Category III Bravo (CAT III-B) certification from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). Passenger Load Factor in 2016 was highest at 85 per cent in December while the BOM-DEL route was the highest revenue earner for the same month.

What are your plans for expansion of networks?

Vistara has always believed that growth must be measured and sustainable, which forms a combination of customers' demand, commercial viability and mandatory obligations. We have grown to connect 20 destinations across the country in only 24 months, and we are gearing up further to add five Airbus A320 neos to our fleet in the next financial year. We have recently announced the addition of two new and exciting destinations — Amritsar and Leh, along with an increase in frequency in some of our existing routes.

When will we see Vistara serve international destinations?

Our 20th aircraft is expected to arrive by June 2018, which would make us eligible to fly overseas, a dream that we have been very vocal about since Vistara's inception. We are working on our plans and strategies to prepare ourselves for the complexities that flying overseas would bring along and the

magnitude of work this would require. We're also simultaneously working on building a network of global partners with interline and code-share agreements, which is helping us a great deal in spreading awareness about our unique products and services outside the Indian borders. Our international plans are being developed in full swing and being refined to be presented to the board for their advocacy. We will be getting more clarity once the plans are finalised.

Since the airline is yet to break even, what strategy are you banking on?

With so many unique customer value propositions, and as the list continues to grow, it is evident that we're approaching the market very differently. It may be right to say that we're not chasing the

better handling of more flights/increasing number of flights. We also need to identify and address other choke points, such as parking bays and check-in counters. The airport infrastructure in India needs a long-term vision, backed by adequate central assistance, which will fasten its development. Moreover, the shortage of slots at several Indian airports and hoarding them by some airlines to prevent new airlines to grow is another big challenge. An equitable distribution of slots amongst all airlines based on genuine demand in order to provide all players a level-playing field would be for the greater good of the industry.

Furthermore, the cost of doing business in India has also continued to rise. Jet fuel prices and airport charges have recently increased, while state taxes on

“Helping us maintain our consistency in delivering operational excellence, we received the Category III Bravo (CAT III-B) certification from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). Passenger Load Factor in 2016 was highest at 85 per cent in December while the BOM-DEL route was the highest revenue earner for the same month.”



Phee Teik Yeoh
CEO, Vistara

competition, but creating a unique space for ourselves. Our unflinching commitment to the sector and air travellers is clearly based on a long-term vision. As a new entrant in the aviation sector, we believe in challenging the status-quo in the market to disrupt and bring the 'new feeling of flying' to our customers, which would eventually help us get where we want to reach (in terms of gaining market share).

What are some of the challenges that need to be addressed?

A major challenge plaguing the growth of the Indian aviation sector is the lack of better infrastructure. India's existing aviation infrastructure is soon reaching a saturation point. We would like to see a growth in airport capacity and deployment of new technologies for

ATF have not been reduced in several states. Having said that, we are glad that the government has taken note of these significant challenges and introducing measures to harness the growth potential of the sector. The National Civil Aviation Policy has acknowledged some of these issues and is a right step in the right direction. We're hopeful that some of these issues will be addressed soon, as India gears up to surpass Japan to become the world's third largest domestic aviation market.

Growth Story

Vistara has recently announced the addition of Amritsar and Leh, Ladakh services to its network

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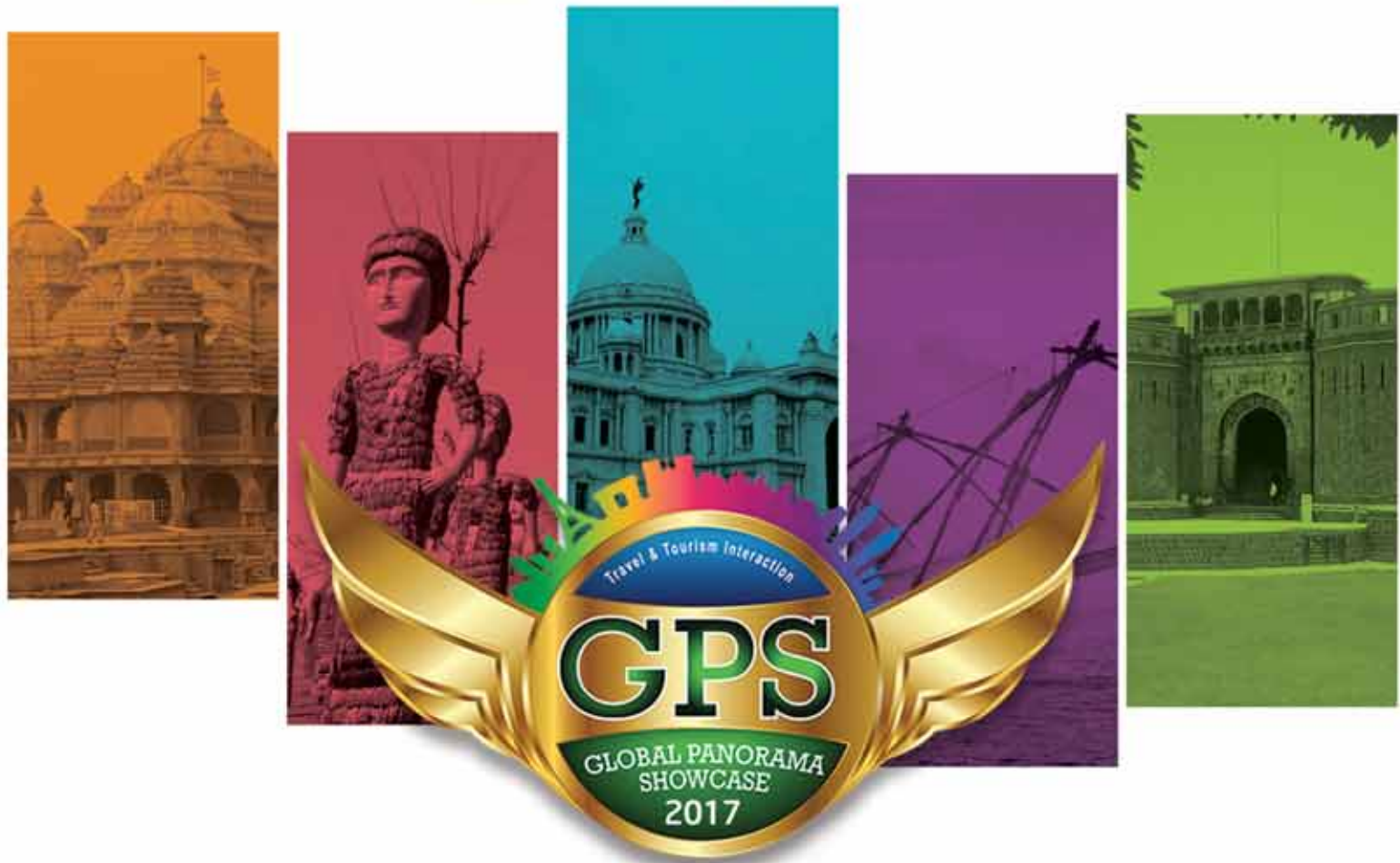
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GPS 2017

Paves the way for digital future

Nagpur marked the beginning of the fifth edition of Global Panorama Showcase in 2017 from January 19-21. The six-city show this year will travel to Ahmedabad (July 13-15), Chandigarh (July 20-22), Kolkata (July 27-29), Kochi (Aug 3-5) and conclude in Pune (Aug 10-12).



ANKITA SAXENA

GPS Nagpur was inaugurated in the presence of **Satinder S. Ahuja**, Honorary Consul, Consulate of Georgia, **Marzban Antia**, Vice President, TAAI, **Raju Akolkar**, Chief Executive Officer, GPS, **Ankush Nijhawan**, Managing Director, Nijhawan Group of

108 exhibitors, both domestic and international, showcased various tourism products at the show. The exhibitors included hotel chains, cruises, Destination Management Companies, airlines, technology providers, tourism boards and auxiliary service providers. "We saw around 1100 registrations on the GPS App which does not mean that 1100

cards, make notes, schedule meetings, message their clients, upload company profiles and also promote their products. "We witnessed 99 per cent success in terms of exchange of e-cards through the GPS App. The application is undergoing constant upgrades. To facilitate live feed and news, TravTalk and TravelTv.News will be integrated in the application. Users can call abroad at cheap rates with BrilVoice integrated in the App.

a platform to Tier-II and Tier-III markets to meet suppliers from all verticals of tourism and hospitality under one roof; to educate and empower them and inform them about changing market trends."

Detailed FAQs on service tax for the travel industry were also made available on the GPS App. The service tax ready-reckoner was succeeded by a session on service tax and its impact on the industry presented by **Manish Gadia**, Partner, GMJ & Co. and a Chartered Accountant. "We want each and every travel agent to understand and know about service tax, how it has to be applied and implemented in the day to day travel business," said Anand.

Five per cent of the profit from GPS this year will be contributed to Dr. Amit Samarth, a doctor by profession but a sports and fitness promoter in India, in order to fund his endeavour to compete in race across America challenge in 2017, informed Anand. Dr. Vinay Nangia, an expert from the medical industry and owner of Surya Eye Institute, was also honoured for his contribution to the welfare of visually impaired citizens in India.

“The GPS App enabled attendees to exchange business cards, make notes, schedule meetings, message their clients, upload company profiles and also promote their products.”

Companies and Executive Director, GPS, and **Sanjeet**, Vice Chairman, PATA India and Managing Director, DDP Group, among other dignitaries. The three-day exhibition included one day of educational seminars and product presentations on issues like service tax and its impact, two days of B2B meetings and networking dinners to bring together the who's who of the travel and hospitality industry.

Harmandeep Singh Anand, Founder, GPS and Managing Director, Jagsons Travels, informed that

buyers attended the show but it means that a multiplier effect can result in over 100,000 meetings both virtual and face-to-face. This has become by far the largest marketplace for business. The educational sessions saw an average attendance of 250 delegates while the session on service tax saw about 450 attendees. For the B2B meetings, around 800 buyers attended the show," said Anand.

The GPS App launched for the show aided the attempt to be India's first paperless exhibition. The App enabled attendees to exchange business

"The facility of video conferencing shall also be incorporated in the App in the subsequent shows to enable buyer-seller interaction in case a physical meeting has been missed," added Anand. The data uploaded on the App will be available throughout the year to bring together the big and small service providers and travel agents in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Vidarbha region even after the event has ended.

Rishiraj Singh Anand, Co-founder, GPS, explained that Tier-II and Tier-III markets need to cope up with digital trends and electronic media and the GPS App will be helpful for them in getting accustomed to the use of technology. "GPS provides



HARMANDEEP SINGH ANAND

Founder, GPS

“GPS was conceived in 2006; its first edition was held in Nagpur in 2013 and this year we have evolved into a six city exhibition. We saw over 1000 registrations through the e-event created on the App which does not mean that 1000 buyers attended the show on a particular day, but it means that this much interest has been shown in the event. On the first day of the show, the educational sessions saw an average attendance of 250 people while the session on service tax saw around 450 travel agents attending the seminar to discuss their issues regarding service tax and forthcoming GST. The show this year saw participation from 108 exhibitors and over 800 buyers who interacted in B2B meetings and transacted business. The attendees are still getting accustomed to the new digital system and we hope in the upcoming shows the industry will adapt to the same.

All options are integrated in the App. People can exchange business cards, make notes, schedule meetings and even message each other. Those travelling abroad can make use of BrilVoice, also integrated in the App to make phone calls at cheap rates. The App is being upgraded everyday with new features being added like TravelTv.news and TravTalk live feed will be added to keep the industry abreast with travel news; video conferencing will allow agents to block their time slot with exhibitors and have meetings through audio-visual mode in case they cannot make it etc. According to me, GPS does not end on its last day; it begins then. The data is live throughout the year and all attendees can continue to do business and interact with each other through the App, pay sales visit to each other, post product promotions, deals and packages which makes it an active market place for everybody.”



RAJU AKOLKAR

CEO, GPS

“Till the last edition of GPS at Nagpur, that is 2016, people thought we were local tour operators who were organising a local show in Nagpur since it was limited to a single city exhibition. However, last year we forayed out of Nagpur into other four cities namely, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Kolkata and Coimbatore and it was only then that travel and industry players focused on the importance of GPS and have started taking us seriously. This has shown in this fifth edition of GPS where we have received over 800 buyers and 108 exhibitors present at the show. There has not only been an increase in the number of buyers coming to this show but also an increased interest amongst exhibitors to showcase their products at this platform. We received excellent response from the exhibitors vis-a-vis the quality of buyers who attended the show.

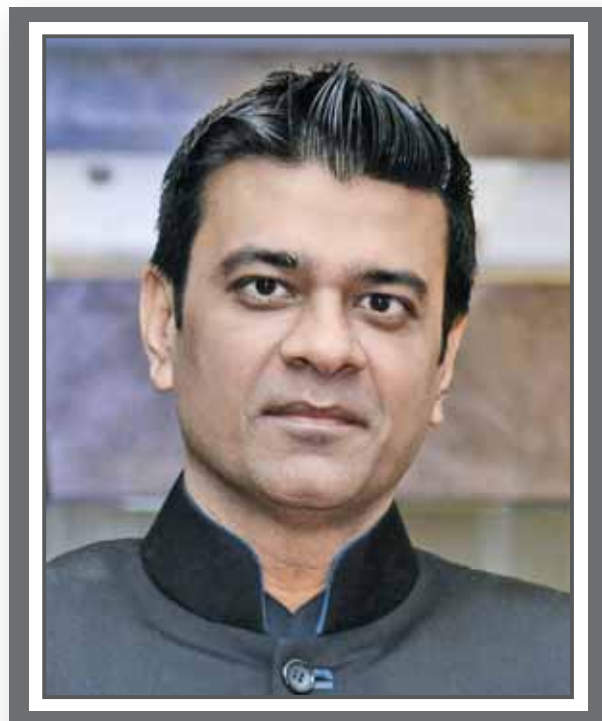
The buyers too gave us positive feedback regarding the productive sessions they attended with the exhibitors. The combination of products present at the show would help them with real business. The buyers from Tier-II and Tier-III cities of the likes of Indore, Raipur, Nashik, Aurangabad, Jalgaon, Pune, need to build connections with various suppliers and GPS is helping them in that endeavour. The star attraction of GPS 2017 is the GPS App as a lot of money has been invested into technology this year to introduce this App and make the show paperless. The App will remain live even after the show ends and will allow the industry to stay connected with each other, promote their products and avail deals through this system. In the coming shows at the other five cities, we will also add some niche products and upgrade some features to offer better user experience.”



RISHIRAJ SINGH ANAND**Co-founder, GPS**

“In the fifth edition of GPS Nagpur this year we have attempted to add new exhibitors to offer a wider variety of tourism and hospitality products to the travel agents and tour operators from Tier-II and Tier-III markets. In line with the latest trends and following the path of technology, we have invested heavily to make this show completely digital. The GPS App is the highlight of the exhibition as it is a one-stop shop for all information about the show; exhibitors; buyers; company profiles; deals and packages available from various suppliers and also has social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp integrated into the App. The App saw over 1000 registrations even before the show began which shows the interest generated by GPS amongst attendees.

The product presentations, educational seminars also saw a houseful of travel agents and tour operators. The reason GPS is gaining so much importance is because this is one platform where Tier-II and Tier-III market players can directly interact with the suppliers in a conducive environment for business. When the travel agents from smaller cities visit big and crowded shows in the metros they usually feel neglected and are also shy. The exhibitors tend to connect with bigger players and connect with their own business partners and as these smaller players are not as aware about the products they miss the business opportunities. Shows like GPS allow suppliers to come down to educate and empower the small city tourism and hospitality stakeholders where they can inform them about more number of destinations and tourism products available for their travellers.”

**ANKUSH NIJHAWAN****Executive Director, GPS**

“I have been a part of GPS for the last three years and I am happy to be on board with GPS as the Executive Director. In my role, I am trying to contribute to the show by bringing in more quality buyers and exhibitors. With collaborative work with the team, we wish to further strengthen GPS to establish it as India's only B2B travel show for the secondary markets of recognition. There is a new generation of travellers in Tier-II and III cities and educating and reaching out to travel trade in these markets has become important. I feel Central India has some of the high GDP-generating states and cities like Indore, Bhopal, Raipur, Nagpur and Pune are amongst the fastest growing cities in India. Spending money is never a big issue in this part of the world as the travellers are willing to travel to exotic destinations, explore the luxury segment of travel amongst all other segments.

The challenge in these markets is the lack of exposure for the travel agents who may not get opportunities to attend big networking events to learn and educate themselves about the latest market trends and new emerging products. GPS is that important bridging platform which brings together key suppliers and buyers under one roof to interact comfortably in a one-on-one format and the business generated from GPS is very helpful for the tour operators and travel agents of the Tier-II and Tier-III markets.”

MADHU SALIANKAR**Executive Director, GPS**

“GPS Nagpur 2017 has seen an overwhelming response. We had over 900 registrations before the event began which was beyond our expectations. In terms of footfalls, the product presentations, educational seminars were full house with an average attendance of 250. B2B session's first day saw 350 unique attendees checking in on the App. The aim of GPS is to reach out to the secondary market and as Golden Holidays Bali we are not just offering products for the destination but also educating the market and building relationships with the clients from Tier-II and Tier-III cities.

Even though Bali may be a frequented destination for travellers from metros, the smaller cities are still warming up to this destination and it is important that a platform like GPS empowers them with information and knowledge about the destination and at the same time understand the market requirement. Our focus is on FITs, MICE and series departures for Bali.”



GPS Nagpur

108 exhibitors, 800+ buyers in attendance

The first Global Panorama Showcase for 2017 saw an overwhelming response from the travel and tourism industry stakeholders. Exhibitors, buyers and participants talk about their main takeaway from the show.

Buyers



Sham Nijhawan
Chairman
Nijhawan Group

“This is my first visit to Nagpur and also GPS. I'm pleasantly surprised at the number of exhibitors and buyers that this show has managed to attract in a day. Most of the big shows and main events take place in the metros but one has to understand that Tier-II and Tier-III cities too need to be exposed and focused upon, given their potential. The GPS App is an innovative and new concept. I forgot to carry my cards to the show but the fact that all my details are saved and integrated on the App, networking has become more convenient and seamless.”



Marzban Antia
Vice President
TAAI

not only important for the Tier-II and Tier-III markets to learn about various products but is also very useful for networking with a number of stakeholders which can result in business opportunities.”

“GPS Nagpur does not need any introduction. It is synonymous with Nagpur but relevant pan-India. The number of exhibitors has increased tenfold and the number of visitors attending this edition is phenomenal. It just goes on to show how far GPS has come. GPS team is doing a great job in promoting tourism. This show is



Ajay Chhabria
Managing Director
In-time Travels

about Thailand and Dubai as people are looking at off-beat destinations. GPS also gives more quality time and one-on-one interaction opportunity for the buyers to learn about new products and then sell them better.”

“This is my first time at GPS and I am very surprised at the quality of business that I have been able to gather from Nagpur. I met some big B2B players along with some unusual players from all over the world. I am also surprised to see the spending capacity of the Tier-II and Tier-III markets and the choice of destinations. It is no more

“There are more number of exhibitors and participants at the show this year. It is a very good platform to network. Not only the business sessions but even the gala dinner and parties are a very good opportunity to meet fellow travel agents and tour operators in a seamless environment. GPS is very relevant for the industry in today's time as not just Nagpur but other five cities will provide a platform to connect with suppliers from the regional tourism and hospitality industry.”



Manoj Phulphagar
Owner
Highfly Travels

“This is my first time at GPS and I feel its completely worth attending this show. It's a platform to network and meet new people, know about newer destinations and hotels that are entering the market and understand what is happening both domestically and internationally in the tourism and hospitality industry. This platform helped me to get more business for my company as we are into the hotel business and the suppliers present here were of great help.”



Jugal Ray
Founder-Director
JassNow Hospitality Services

“I think GPS is a unique concept as it is bringing Tier-II and Tier-III cities to the fore. There is an increased opportunity for buyers to have more time with suppliers in one-on-one interactions here. This is my second time at GPS as it is very useful in terms of actual business received from the show last year. There is an increase in demand for experiential travel from smaller cities and shows like GPS give us an opportunity to learn about the finer aspects of selling new destinations and experience.”



Parminder Sahni
Director
TravelwithSmile.com



Bishwajit Chakraborty
Owner
Krishna Holidays

“GPS is doing a fine job in giving Tier-II and Tier-III markets its due focus and exposure. This exhibition is not only helpful in bringing together international and domestic suppliers but is also a platform to network with local travel agents. GPS offers filtered exhibitors and buyers which results in actual business. Also, the trust factor is higher with GPS. It gives us a platform to educate and inform ourselves about newer trends and tourism products in the market.”



Sanjay Mehta
Chief Executive Officer
Trans Globe Travels

ing and is looking for closer destinations. Dubai, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Abu Dhabi and Russia are popular but there is a thirst to explore more in terms of adventure and experiential travel.”

“This is my first time at GPS Nagpur. Trans Globe Travels specialises in offering packages to outbound destinations. At GPS, I met a lot of exhibitors. It is a good learning opportunity to know about new destinations and products in the market. After demonetisation, the Tier-II and Tier-III market has slowed down on spending



Sunil Bijlani
CEO
Vacation World

ly surprised to see a good mix of both domestic and international suppliers from various verticals of tourism and hospitality like cruises, hotels, airlines, foreign exchange, jungle safaris, technology, etc.”

“GPS offers a fresh perspective on the existing market trends and has been doing a great job in bringing sellers and buyers to a market which is not as exposed as the metro cities. It is very heartening to see that Tier-II and Tier-III cities are getting exposure to new travel products, destinations and travel services. I am pleasantly

Exhibitors



Anjum Lokhandwala
Director
Outbound Konnections

“This year’s edition of GPS has evolved and come up very well as compared to the last two years. The quality of buyers that have come in this edition has also improved. The increase in the number of buyers kept us busy with meetings during the business sessions. We got an opportunity to interact with some travel agents with very

good potential to grow the business from Tier-II and Tier-III markets. At GPS Nagpur, we are showcasing a plethora of products and destinations including Canada, USA, Tahiti, Bora Bora, IMG World of Adventures, Panorama Destinations for Indonesia-Bali along with SriLankan Holidays. We got good leads from the regional markets this time and soon we will also be starting with Fam trips for all our products from March. We will also be showcasing our products at all major travel trade show this year.”



Nida Kapadia
Senior Manager
Destination Canada

Canada. Canada is a long haul destination for the Indian market and Tier-II and Tier-III cities have shown interest in the destination. GPS has been very useful for Destination Canada to reach out to the Tier-II and Tier-III markets. This is an opportunity for us to explain to the travel agents and tour operators that winter in Canada is as exciting as summer. Canada, called the winter wonderland has a plethora of tourist products on offer for the winter season as well that a traveller can experience.”

“We have been attending GPS for the last two years and by far this edition of GPS has been most rewarding for us. The increased number and quality of the buyers during these two days have helped us expand our reach. It has also enabled us to share knowledge on product and handle enquiries about suppliers in Can-



Dhananjay Saliankar
Regional Director of Sales and
Marketing- South Asia
Starwood Hotels and Resorts

“GPS is growing by leaps and bounds. Not just customers from Nagpur, but one can see that the secondary markets around Nagpur and Central India are exploring new products and a show like GPS has provided them with the platform to interact with suppliers directly. GPS is visiting five other cities which is a great initiative to not only

focus on primary markets and metros but also open up the Tier-II and Tier-III cities. The existing market has cash-rich, experienced travellers, business travellers and hotels, airlines, cruise companies along with ancillary travel service providers should consider the smaller cities for business opportunities.”

“I am exhibiting The Lux Hotels for the first time at GPS and I have to say that the business leads and contacts built over two days of networking and business sessions are useful for future collaborations. The Tier-II and Tier-III markets are increasingly looking at affordable luxury. Though the number of people seeking ultra-luxurious products may be less but the trend is shifting from budget and reasonable products to spending more for experiential travel given the rise in disposable incomes. A platform like GPS brings together a host of service providers under one roof and that is the reason why such a large number of buyers were witnessed at the show to do business.”



Bhupesh Kumar
Director
The Lux Hotels

“GPS 2017 has been better than its previous edition. This year the educational sessions saw good attendance and the short B2B sessions also give an opportunity to network in order to strengthen business relations. I feel the Tier-II and Tier-III markets are more receptive to education and new products. They are more open to listening and learn as compared to their counterparts in Tier-I cities where the tour operators and travel agents feel they know everything. At GPS we have our whole portfolio to offer and our strategy is to filter out buyers based on a few questions and its only post that we take the business forward.”



Nitin Sachdeva
Managing Director
Venture Marketing

“I have been associated with GPS since its beginning and the exhibition has grown Year-on-Year with more number of exhibitors and buyers coming in each year. Nagpur has been a very important market for us as we have seen our numbers to Reunion Island grow from this region. The functioning of the GPS App is very smooth and commendable. For the last few years, the Tier-II and Tier-III market is demanding for new outbound destinations for various segments. We have received a very good response for Reunion Island and it has been a productive show where we interacted with nearly 60 buyers, educated them and helped them with information on the destination.”



Vineet Gopal
Director-India
Tourism Board of Reunion Island



Gaurav Agarwala
Director
Tathastu Resorts

“GPS is a very useful show for us as we tend to meet travel agents from all over the country. A lot of Fam tours take place pre and post GPS Nagpur which helps us to showcase our property and also generate business. GPS is important for us because while travellers from metro cities tend to travel abroad more often, the

travellers from Tier-II and Tier-III markets tend to travel nearby and have high spending capacity as well. This year’s GPS is far more organised and has seen a tremendous increase in the number of footfalls. Also, the application that has been introduced is very user friendly and a seamless platform to maintain business relations even after the show is over.”



Sujit Nair
Founder and Group Director
Akquasun Group

session on service tax very useful. It is an imperative topic and the session allowed most of us to get an understanding of how the new bill may affect our businesses. We have taken Seychelles, Maldives and Mauritius online this year and we are showcasing these products for the Tier-II and Tier-III markets at GPS Nagpur.”

“This year I think GPS Nagpur has grown bigger with more number of exhibitors as well as more number of buyers. The buyers who came in showed good potential and were eager to do business. The product presentations and educational seminars have been very informative and a lot of travel agents found the session



Melicia Correa
Manager-Sales, InterGlobe Air
Transport (GSA for APT)

on service tax very useful. It is an imperative topic and the session allowed most of us to get an understanding of how the new bill may affect our businesses. We have taken Seychelles, Maldives and Mauritius online this year and we are showcasing these products for the Tier-II and Tier-III markets at GPS Nagpur.”

“Australian Pacific Tours (APT) cruises is a river cruise company based in Australia and InterGlobe acquired the GSA for APT Cruises effective January 2017. It is for the first time we are representing at GPS as we feel that it is important for us to touch Tier-II and Tier-III markets. There is a niche market for

cruises especially in Central India which should not be ignored. Some of the buyers enquiring with us have done cruises before, maybe not river cruises but we feel they will get there too. GPS provides that platform to meet potential clients. We hope that this product will do well in the smaller cities as well as in the metros.”

Snapshots from



GPS NAGPUR





Shashank Rana
Chief Enabler-Indian Subcontinent,
DDP Wetu

“GPS Nagpur has been a fruitful and amazing experience for us. This is the first time we are exhibiting at GPS and it has been very helpful to understand the needs of the market from the Tier-II and Tier-III cities. Being based in the metros, most of the technology companies limit their reach to the

primary markets but after attending GPS Nagpur and witnessing the quality of buyers attending this show, it has been a learning experience for us as well. The GPS App is a very exciting and innovative concept and it allows us to interact with exhibitors and buyers even before the event began. DDP Wetu is a digital itinerary building platform where we enable travel agents and tour operators to evolve from paper-based itineraries to more engaging content.”



Khaild Gori
Chief Operating Officer
Ark Travels

“This year at GPS Nagpur we saw an increase in the buyers coming in and newer travel agents seeking new products. The overall experience and business leads received from this market are quite fruitful. We have just launched Dream Cruises and are also showcasing products like Norwegian Cruise Line, ClubMed, and Oceania etc. Star Cruises has always been a star in the smaller cities but we have seen Dream Cruises pick up. The Tier-II and Tier-III cities have warmed up to the idea of cruising and at shows like GPS we get an opportunity to educate and inform travel agents who take it further down the line to convert the queries into bookings using that knowledge about various products.”



Manoj Singh
Country Manager-India
Norwegian Cruise Line

“GPS has been very good for us as we met a good number of buyers who have the potential to promote our luxury cruises in the Tier-II and Tier-III markets. The smaller cities are our primary markets to sell the high-end cabins. This is not a mass market for us but the premium market as the travellers from the

smaller cities tend to stay in best accommodations thus in terms of revenue generation, the smaller cities are better performing for us. GPS Nagpur is the perfect platform to engage with the travel agents of central India, introduce and update the travel partners about various new products and offers and also teach them how to convert various queries into actual cruise bookings and increase business.”

“We have been visiting trade fairs very frequently in the last two years and this is the first time when we have come to a Tier-II city and are trying to explore the market here. It is very surprising to see that a so-called smaller city like Nagpur has been able to attract some real and serious buyers who intend to do serious business and have high buying potential. I believe there is lot of demand for the B2B players in these smaller markets and as service providers and aggregators, we hope to partner with the travel agents in the Tier-II and Tier-III cities to do better business.”



Abdul Hadi Sheikh
Chief Executive Officer and
Co-founder, FxKart

“I have attended four continuous editions of GPS and though the last edition was good, this year the show is many shades better. We have received many queries from neighbouring states and cities like Raipur, Indore, Rajkot etc. and the responses from Tier-II and Tier-III markets is overwhelming. We have been focusing on this market for quite some time now. Last year we participated in some key cities with GPS but this year, after looking at the reach and the business leads this platform provides, we are participating at all six city exhibitions. Our Novotel Nagpur is expected to open soon this year and official announcement will be made sometime in June.”



Rajan Kalra
Director of Global Sales
AccorHotels

“We participated in GPS last year and saw very high potential from the Tier-II and Tier-III markets. Thus, we are exhibiting again in this edition of GPS to explore the market further. We had the opportunity to meet some very serious business-minded travel agents who are willing to push the Philippines aggressively as a top destination for the secondary and tertiary cities. The travel agents and tour operators enquired about various segments like FIT, MICE, leisure and group travellers and the business sessions were very fruitful for us as we got to explain the various destinations that a travellers can visit in the Philippines.”



Pooja Jain
Account Director, Philippines
Tourism Marketing Office, India



Sonia Prakash
Senior Manager,
NBTC Holland Marketing

“This is the first time NBTC Holland Marketing has participated in GPS. We are overwhelmed to see the turnout from the Tier-II and Tier-III cities at the show. It is encouraging to see large number of quality buyers approaching us to know more about Holland. The market is already aware of the destination but they have not really explored it to the extent that Holland absolutely requires. GPS is a platform that allowed us to connect with these potential buyers and inform them about the varied tourist activities and attractions available in Holland for a holistic experience. The segment which we see growing most from these secondary and tertiary markets is the FIT and leisure travel as many travellers from this region have been visiting other parts of Europe. Though Holland has been a part of their itinerary, they wish to now increase their days in Holland and explore beyond Amsterdam. We are hopeful that progressive growth will come from the Tier-II and Tier-III markets.”



Arish Khan
Vice President-Sales (India)
Travel Boutique Online

“GPS Nagpur has evolved into a very good and educational show for the entire travel and hospitality fraternity. We have received very good response for all our products be it hotels, airlines or even foreign exchange that we are offering this year. We have seen a Year-on-Year growth from the Tier-II and Tier-III cities and these markets have boosted our business. Earlier, the outbound market from Tier-II and Tier-III cities was concentrated more to the Far East destinations but in the last few years we have witnessed a trend that travellers are experimenting with newer destinations and looking beyond the ordinary. There has been an increase in interest for European destinations, traffic moving to Africa and CIS countries as well. We are presenting our new products - FxKart.com which is an online, seamless way of acquiring foreign exchange for the agent's clients and Indifi, which is working capital loan for the tour operators.”

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Praveen Nair
Chief Operating Officer
Cosmo Travel World

“Earlier we were not present in Tier-II and Tier-III cities but with GPS, we are now entering this high demand market. We met a lot of buyers and tour operators which was the key focus for the show. We have seen a huge demand being generated from the smaller cities but apparently the operators and agents are not

aware about many companies which provide various services. GPS brings all stakeholders together. We have also launched our new division called Global Visas which caters to the visa requirements of smaller cities. I understood the importance of targeting Tier-II and Tier-III cities after this show and this has also given an edge to my business.”



Abhishek Verma
Chief Executive Officer
European Tours

“This is the second time we are exhibiting with GPS and this edition has been better than last year. The number of buyers and clients we interacted with this year was beyond our expectations. We are promoting our chauffeur driven products in Europe and the UK for the Indian market. We are already working

with travel partners in cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata but we have also seen an increase in demand from Tier-II and Tier-III cities for private tours. Hence, we feel it is the right time to explore this market and introduce our fleet of vehicles. We are participating in all six cities with GPS and are hopeful that this exhibition will generate a lot of business for us.”



Sunil Pal
Sales Manager-Mumbai and Western
Region, Kuwait Airways

“As compared to the last edition of GPS, this year's show is better organised and has also been able to grow in terms of new exhibitors. The number of buyers has also increased and I must say that the quality of buyers is better this year. I am very impressed with the GPS application and its primary

feature of e-exchange of cards which allows me to keep in touch with almost 1000 buyers digitally in Nagpur alone even after the show. I feel Tier-II and Tier-III markets are feeder markets where a lot of buyers exist and GPS as a platform helps us to connect with those potential travel agents and tour operators.”

“This is my first visit to GPS. The good reviews about the event last year encouraged us to experience the show for ourselves. Since we offer predominantly an international service, it was heartening to see the variety of service providers from travel agents, hotels, airlines, ancillary travel service providers to cruise



Karan Punjabi
CEO
Briltime Corp

companies exhibiting at the show. It is great to see a city like Nagpur receive such good traction and the credit goes to the GPS team which has worked so hard to network with not just one segment but the entire fraternity of travel and hospitality industry. For the last one and a half years we have been entering into partnerships across the country to provide a distribution network for the service providers who then take the product forward to their clients.”

“Cvent is the world's largest software event management company and this is our first edition with GPS and we have partnered with Jagsons Travel. GPS is using our technology to run the whole event and the response has been incredible. A whole lot of travel companies, tour operators, desti-



Gokul Bajaj
Manager, Strategic Partnerships,
Cvent

nation management companies and hotels are representing at GPS, which as a platform elevated the Tier-II and Tier-III cities. It gives them some form of celluloid where they can come in and get great exposure to what big events look like. This lays the foundation for the tourism and hospitality industry to step up the curve. We have got some incredible leads to work upon as well and the business sessions have been quite fruitful.”

“Global Panorama Showcase as a show is shaping up well. As its fifth edition, there has been an increase in the number of exhibitors as well as an increase in the quality of buyers who attended the show. We saw all types of buyers from small to mid-sized tour operators to even the good players from



Amar Attawala
Regional Manager-Western India
Travel Boutique Online

Central Indian market. Madhya Pradesh, Nagpur and Vidarbha are already high inbound markets but they are also popular amongst Indian travellers as domestic travel destinations. Global Panorama Showcase is doing a fine job in connecting this market and bringing together a host of exhibitors closer to the buyers and it is great that agents are getting a chance to visit such shows.”



Jilesh Babla
Director, Zanzibar Tourism
Promotion Centre

“Zanzibar Tourism Board is being represented at GPS for the first time and we have been warmly received by the market here. It is very encouraging to see the interest in the buyers for a new destination and all those who approached us are genuine players and know what they are selling to their clients.

However, we found out here that there is a lack of knowledge and information which we hope to provide them. Tanzania as a whole received 32,000 Indian visitors in the last two years and Zanzibar in particular saw a small percentage of that share. We are associating with GPS for all its shows as it is important to target the secondary and tertiary markets apart from the metros.”



Satish Singh
Founder and CEO
TTW Holdings

partnerships. GPS also provided us a platform to connect with B2B aggregators apart from quality buyers. We are expecting nearly 5000-8000 users to start using our platform in the coming week post the show. The biggest advantage for travel agents through Hive is that they can build their own networks at a closed platform and only the users can access the information, publish and ask for deals, etc.”

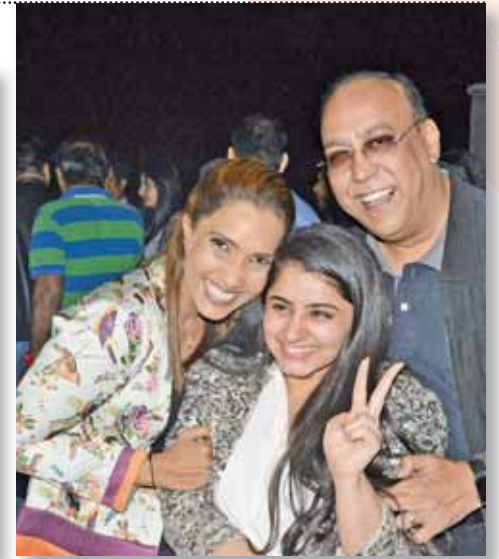
“We launched our product - Hive at GPS which saw an overwhelming response. We met over 300 travel agents who showed interest in the product and I must say the group of buyers present at GPS Nagpur this year are serious businessmen and are looking for good opportunity to grow



Sandeep Raghav
Complex Account Director - Business
Development, W Retreat & Spa-
Maldives and Sheraton Maldives Full
Moon Resort & Spa

“This is our first time at GPS Nagpur and the response we received has been overwhelming. The networking dinners were brilliant opportunities to meet luxury travel agents and we got many business leads to work with from this platform. I interacted with a lot of travel agents from Tier-II and Tier-III markets and have received queries for both our

properties. There is a knowledge gap amongst the agents which we hope to bridge during the B2B sessions. We will be coming up with exclusive promotions and customised offers as per the requirement of this market. Our leisure market is very scattered and most of the business comes from Tier-II and Tier-III cities.”



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Gopesh Sharma
CEO, Discover Gujarat (Part of India B2B Holiday Consortium)

“This is our first time at GPS where we are offering a bouquet of nine destinations under one platform. The Tier-II and Tier-III markets are looking for standard and value services along with reliable partners and the response we got at GPS is tremendous. The event is well organised and very professionally handled. We are looking forward to the potential business from this region as the quality of buyers is testament to the fact that the agents are looking at serious business.”



Nikhil Khandekar
Director
Prevoyance Cyber Forensics

“We are the organisation which deals with cyber security and provides various services to the industries to ensure all data is exchanged securely. We are presenting at GPS because we feel that not just metros but even the smaller cities need to be made aware of the threats existing and have to be educated in ways to deal with them. It is an excellent platform and we saw many buyers showing interest in our products. We offer seamless, secure products to run businesses without loss or theft of valuable data.”



Iva Dikova
Chief Executive Officer, Five Directions Group of Companies

“GPS is a very innovative exhibition and the GPS App is very useful in contacting existing and potential clients. We do not need to get any literature with us as everything is available on the App. The buyers who visited us are very educated and came purposefully to meet us, asked us their queries, which in my opinion will bring in meaningful business from the show. We are the DMC for Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia. Here at GPS we are offering various tourism products for Indian FIT and MICE groups.”

“GPS is the right platform to engage with travel agents and tour operators from Tier-II and Tier-III markets. It allows us to take our products to the interiors of the country and educate the travel agents these markets. The travellers from these markets are demanding new destinations but travel agents lack proper knowledge and awareness where GPS plays a key role to bridge the gap between suppliers and buyers. We are now exploring offbeat destinations and niche tourism products.”



Adil Karim
Director
Creative Tours and Travels

“We have been attending GPS for the last five years. I can say that over the years as GPS has evolved, the market it caters to has also evolved with it. We have seen GPS grow in terms of turnover of people, the number of travel agents who are exposed to new products and updated about the various trends in the market. GPS is evolving to be the perfect platform to connect with Tier-II and Tier-III markets.”



Virendra Dhar
Vice President-Sales
Travcare

“GPS is instrumental in creating a communication channel between the service providers and various buyers in the Tier-II and Tier-III cities in an engaging environment. As we are upgrading our visa portal and updating the online visa processing, it is important to reach out to the clients in smaller cities to inform them about the changes and GPS plays a key part in that process. Here we are able to understand the challenges of these clients in order to create seamless channels to provide services directly.”



Ankur Nath
Director
Murugan Travels



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