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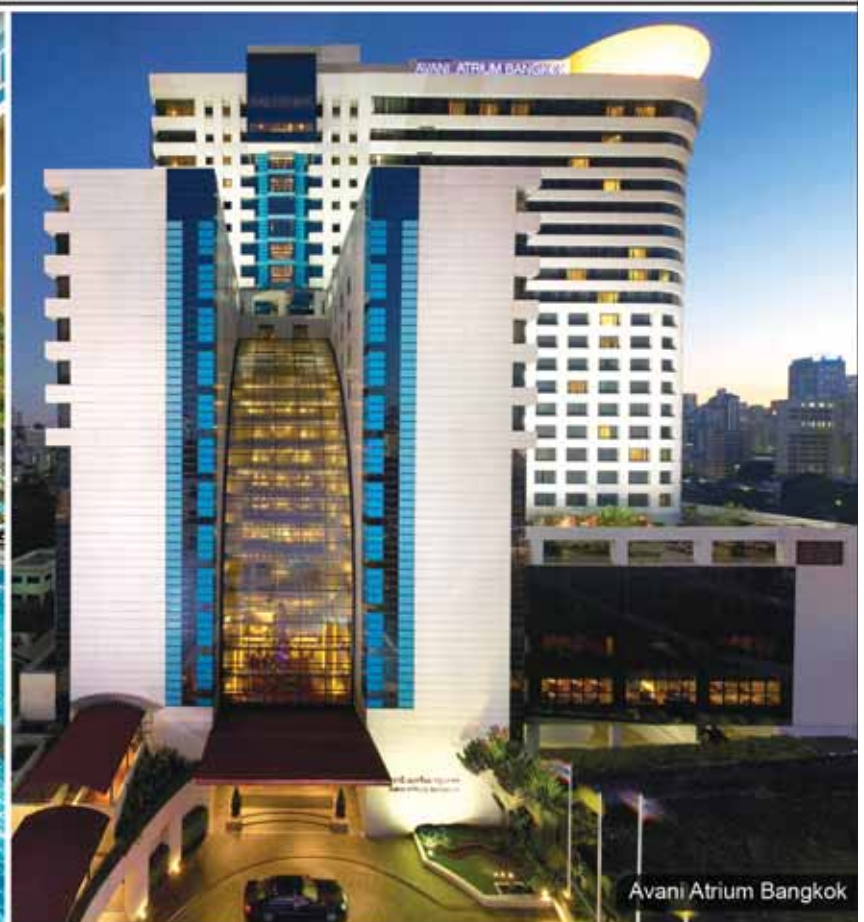
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Mobile to fuel online growth

While India's emerging digital market is expected to see a 35 per cent increase in 2017, mobile adoption can be key in driving business in the industry, says **Simon Lehmann**, President, Phocuswright.

AHANA GURUNG

Travel research company Phocuswright's Indian edition drew to a close with over 400 attendees in the gathering. The two-day event held from February 28-March 2, 2017, focused on Asia Pacific as the fastest growing region for travel and brought together the biggest names and disruptors in the industry.



Simon Lehmann
President
Phocuswright

The conference relies heavily on the relevance of

the content and brings forth detailed information on the

latest drifts and inclinations in travel, reiterating the fact that content is indeed king. On this, Lehmann comments, "Phocuswright has so much content to share and this is what all the guests take in. All the different topics we bring to the industry and our research topics cover the most relevant and ongoing topics in today's world. We are creating a good value for the attendants but what we need to work on more is driving awareness and reaching out to a larger audience."

He hopes to double the attendee numbers in the next couple of years and aims to achieve the target by making a few tweaks in the next edition. "If we want to grow, we're going to have to make some changes. From an overall perspective, there is not much we will really change in the programme but there will probably be a different venue. We just need to make sure that the pertinent developments in travel are

Contd. on page 15 ▶

N.K. Sinha takes additional charge as Tourism Secretary



N.K. Sinha, Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, has been given the assignment of additional charge of the post of Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, with immediate effect and until further orders. He is an IAS officer of Bihar cadre, 1980 batch. This announcement came after the superannuation of former Secretary-Tourism, **Vinod Zutshi**.

Emirates' commission cut gets

Another large international airline has decided to cut its distribution expenses by revising its travel agent commission from the current 3 per cent to 1 per cent. Is it a sign of the things to come?

TT BUREAU

"Travel agents have always supported Emirates in a big way. With this move, Emirates will lose its edge as agents will now move to other airlines. After all, why would anyone want to push a product that doesn't give them any benefit? The airline has also timed it badly as agents had already committed to a price structure for future bookings beyond April 2017. This abrupt announcement will hurt the agents a lot as the main season starts from April. We are just about recovering from demonetisation. TAAI will write to Emirates on this."



Sunil Kumar
DDP Game Changer 2014
and President, TAAI



Biji Eapen
National President, IATA
Agents Association of India

"Needless to say, this has come as a rude shock to the accredited travel agents fraternity in India as it is solely their market support that has placed Emirates above the national carrier in the Indian skies. The matter is being discussed with our National Management Committee and a formal request will be sent to Emirates to retract its decision."

Emirates' Take

"Our trade channel will continue to be our prime strategic distribution channel. However, volatility has become the new normal in global aviation. Market, industry and customer dynamics add to complexities of our business. So, as the world economy and industry changes so are we."



Essa Sulaiman Ahmad
Vice President - India and
Nepal, Emirates



Pradip Lulla
Vice President, Travel
Agents Federation of India
(TAFI)

"It is unfortunate that Emirates is reducing its commission to agents. We also have RwandAir flying their introductory flights from April to Kigali and beyond and offering agents 8 per cent commission. An adequate commission to agents helps the airlines spread their business and motivates the agent to sell more. Commissions should not only be used to get a foothold in the market but also to maintain and enhance their market share."

"Most of the tour operators and outbound agents have been working with Emirates as it has great connectivity. On top of it, the 3 per cent commission was a great attraction. However, now after the commission has gone down, the cost of the package would go up and tour operators would tend to pick up other airlines for their clients. I find it difficult to understand that when most of the airline tickets are sold by ticketing agents and tour operators, why do the airlines do not think that it's justified in rewarding them with commission?"



Guldeep Singh Sahni
DDP Trailblazer 2016 and
President, OTOAI



M.P. Joy
South India Chapter Chairman,
Enterprising Travel
Agents Association (ETAA)

"In the process of distributing air tickets of various airlines, agents incur overheads of managing office, staff, etc. which are increasing every day. In any business, the facilitator/agent must benefit so that the system works smoothly. Why are the airlines reducing commissions when they are the ones to benefit from the travel agents? Any effort in any business should be appreciated with adequate compensation to take care of the expenses as well as margins. Airlines should extend at least five per cent commission to authorised travel agents who support them."

Contd. on page 9 ▶

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Promoting peace through tourism

Held from March 3-5, 2017, ETAA convention kept the delegates engaged in B2B meetings with exhibitors and presented ample networking opportunities.



AHANA GURUNG FROM HYDERABAD

In a bid to foster a sense of camaraderie among the travel fraternity, Enterprising Travel Agent's Association (ETAA) organised their second domestic convention at Leonia Holistic Destination, Hyderabad. The convention attracted participants from all over the country and gathered more than 200 attendees who engaged in networking and B2B sessions between sellers and buyers.

Jagat Mehta, President, ETAA, added that the edition saw a pan-India participation from different states of the country such as Karnataka, Maharashtra, New Delhi, West Bengal, to name a few.

He elaborated, "We were very satisfied with the turnout and the response. While there were a few last-minute cancellations, it did nothing to deter the spirit. Our first do-

mestic convention was held back in 2011 with 180 members from Mumbai, Pune



and a few from Gujarat so in comparison to that, we've managed to bring together a diverse crowd. Yes, business is the main aim but so is forging and strengthening bonds."

Carl Dantas, Chairman Emeritus, ETAA, also took the opportunity to announce their partnership with UN-WTO, Incredible India and

the Institute of International Peace through Tourism (IIPT) as affiliate members of IIPT. "This gives every ETAA member the privilege of be-

ing an affiliate member of IIPT and an advocate of peace through tourism. During such times, I think promoting peace is extremely necessary and the need of the hour and it is a huge milestone for the Indian industry and ETAA as well." Mehta further proceeded to sign the MoU, sealing the partnership on paper.

Exhibitors such as Telangana Tourism, TrawelTag Cover-more, Fiji Tourism, ICS Travels, VFS Global, Tsogo Sun, to name a few, engaged

with potential buyers and had one-on-one interactions giving details of their products.

The inauguration was graced by Sunil Kumar, President, TAAI and Biji Eapen, President, IAAI, who drew focus to harmony among travel trade associations, and were felicitated on the occasion.

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Come(ission) and gone!

It is slowly slipping away from the agents' hands, and like sand, the tighter they try to hold on to it, the faster it slips away. Clearly, the future of agency commissions paid by airlines is blurred and as of today, one can see it dying a natural death.

It is because the old ways are being quickly replaced by the new. So quick is the transition that they aren't giving a lot of us time to acclimatise. It is like the case of Baby Boomers trying their hands at technology and often failing when a Millennial baby is born with a Digital Thumb. The changing times are forcing human beings to evolve and this is true even for the travel industry. Airlines are now taking the risk of being more or less independent of the traditional travel agents simply because they can. Online is where the party's at and the travel agents are missing out on the fun. Don't forget to BYOB though!


Mobile first

Gone are the days when owning a mobile was deemed a luxury, where one had to pay a bomb even for incoming calls! That was the scenario in the mid to late 90s. Fast forward to present day, the number of households possessing a mobile (5.7 per cent) till 2016 in India has seen a CAGR of 44.6 per cent, beating devices like laptops and tablets and by 2020, 24.3 per cent of households are expected to own smartphones, according to a report by Criteo. Now you have mobile-compatible websites or apps for almost every platform, be it payments, shopping, travel, you name it.

The unlocked potential of mobiles is opening more avenues for digital players especially in travel where smartphones are the preferred device for booking amongst Millennials and Baby Boomers, thanks to its convenience. The prospects are so huge that Criteo predicts a high growth of mobile travel sales of 67.1 per cent CAGR from 2017 to 2020. Traditional players who are yet to reap the benefits of the digital world should without further ado, cash in on this aspect by adopting a mobile-first strategy that could propel their business by leaps and bounds. After all, it only makes sense to adapt and evolve along with the fast-changing tides in a world where there is no room for the dated.


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

Then



Mukesh Goel
Founder President, Indian Tourist Transporters Association

Now



Mukesh Goel
Director, Oriental Travels

Mukesh Goel, Director, Oriental Travels, was the Founder President, Indian Tourist Transporters Association (ITTA) in 1992. At that time, he was of the opinion that ITTA members keep getting neglected despite having important contribution in the tourism industry. His travel agency is still a name to reckon with in the industry, whether, its transport or tours.

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Currency	Units	Terms	Mkt.
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US Dollar	1	25.40	28.45
Deutsche Mark	1	15.00	16.25
Swiss Franc	1	16.25	17.75
Australian Dollar	1	18.60	20.40
Singapore Dollar	1	15.00	16.10
Hongkong Dollar	1	3.20	3.45

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I have been regularly reading your esteemed tabloid since its inception five months ago and have found that you have been bold in your criticism on certain matters dealing with travel and tourism. Your independent views on the happenings should be taken note of by all concerned.

Any criticism is welcome provided it is constructive and well studied and not criticism just before only the man biting dog makes good story. I hope that while continuing with your useful coverage of the Indian travel and tourism scene, you will attempt to ensure that the material published in your journal is thoroughly researched and written on the basis of indepth knowledge of the subjects dealt with.

Yours etc.,
G. Naqshband Managing Director
SITA World Travel (India) Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi.

Sheraton Plans For Indian Investment

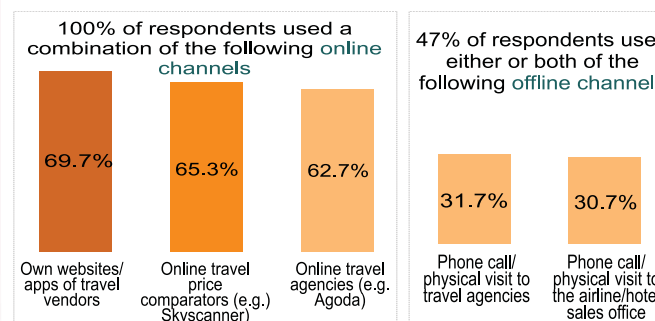


Sheraton, in 1992, was amongst the first international hospitality chains to enter India. Earlier it had a franchise affiliation with ITC, but they finally planned to invest in India 25 years ago, in a joint venture with the WelcomGroup for the same.

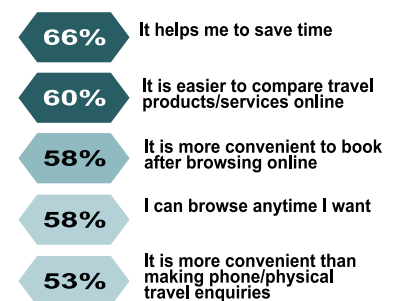
Online booking more convenient?

Travel bookings have seen a substantial shift from offline to online modes, considering millennials and urban travellers use websites, travel Apps, and price comparators.

Channels used to search for travel prices and products in the past 12 months N=300



Top 5 Reasons for Online Travel Browsing N=300



Source: The Indian Digital Traveller by Criteo

Amadeus expands portfolio with hotel IT

The technology provider has diversified its offerings with its foray into hospitality and is aiding future investments through its latest white paper 'Online Travel 2020'.



The industry nears a new age of online travel with rapid evolution and innovation taking place in every sector. Newer business models have come into play and digital payments are getting increasingly popular indicating that the country is certainly on the path to a digital revolution, and Amadeus intends to empower travel players with the latest in technology leveraging for success.



Albert Pozo
President
Amadeus Asia Pacific

The spotlight is currently on APAC which has come to be known as the fastest growing region for travel where a number of developments and consolidations have been in play in recent times. **Albert Pozo**, President, Amadeus Asia Pacific, says that APAC has been the growth region for Amadeus where the highest growth has been observed in air transactions.

He says, "It is also the region where innovations are being adopted quickly; where the young generation is embracing



Sebastien Gibergues
Head of Leisure & Online Travel
Amadeus IT Group

change at a faster rate than the rest of the world. Particularly in India, there has been a lot of development in domestic travel which has been fostered by the LCCs and domestic carriers. The incremental capacity that has been brought into the market with aircrafts coming in, airport evolution, as well as the digital transformation is what makes the country one to watch out for."

Active investments

Last year, the travel technology provider incorporated Navitaire as a low-cost carrier

platform into its IT solutions portfolio while already boasting of a formidable presence in the airlines sector. Pozo informs that Amadeus has also been investing in airport IT and is actively building platforms, property management systems to be precise, for hotels as well, which is one of its latest ventures. InterContinental Hospitality Group is currently one of the biggest hospitality play-

ers that Amadeus has gotten on board. He comments, "We see opportunities to invest and grow not only from our own basis but also to acquire companies which are already well positioned. These elements definitely help us continue to connect the travel ecosystem by providing efficient technology." Amadeus Next, a programme that supports tech start-ups is also something the

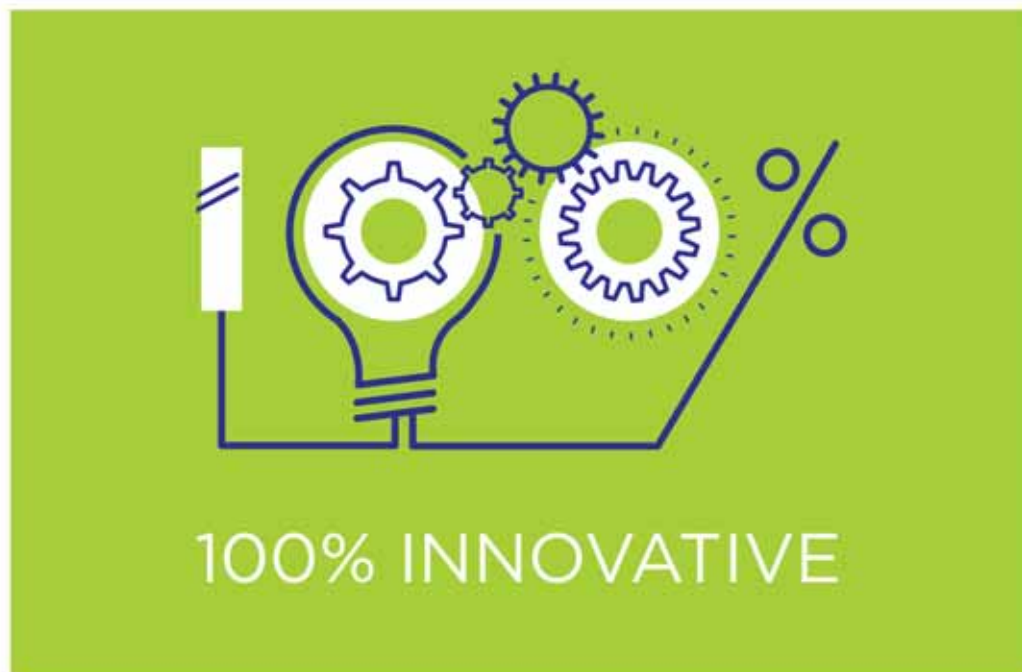
company sees big potential in, he adds.

Aiding future strategies

To aid future investments in a rapidly changing sector, Amadeus has released a white paper termed Online Travel 2020 that maps trends based on scenario planning and paints a picture of what the future may hold for OTA customers. It highlights four trends – mega online

travel retailers, mobile travel retailers, travel marketplace and digital tour operators. With India containing a large number of traditional tour operators, digital tour operators — a merger of traditional tour operators and OTAs to form the ultimate travel seller, is perhaps the most relevant trend the industry will see down the line. **Sebastien Gibergues**, Head of Leisure & Online Travel,

Amadeus IT Group, says, "Digital tour operators will be an influential aspect in travel selling because it provides a good mix of both human and digital interaction. This will, in turn, lead to more personalised services as well as the emergence of unconventional travel stores to enable travel agents by combining physical, digital and human aspects."



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China visa application centre in Delhi



The VFS Chinese Visa Application Centre was inaugurated at Shivaji Stadium Metro Station, Connaught Place, New Delhi by H.E. Lua Zhaohui, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to India; Wei Xiaodong, Vice Director-General, Service Bureau for the Foreign Ministry and its Overseas Missions of China; and Zubin Karkaria, Chief Executive Officer, VFS Global Group. On the occasion, the very first 'China in Luxury' outlet was also launched in the centre where travellers can avail of premium packages on exclusive travel experiences.

Singapore tugs at heartstrings

One of the things that Singapore wants to focus on is the emotional connect that it offers Indians, whether it is celebrating family occasions, events, or festivals.

HAZEL JAIN

How can a destination continue to promote itself to a market that knows it well – well enough to have a few favourite spots in the city? You keep adding to these old-time favourites to keep the magic alive. This is what Singapore is doing to keep its fourth-largest international source market interested. **G.B. Srithar**, Regional Di-

rector (SAMEA), International Group, Singapore Tourism Board (STB), explains, "The familiar products for our Indian visitors have also become a bit unfamiliar to them because of new attractions and experiences that are being added there. For instance, the zoo has a new exhibit called 'The Reptilian Exhibition' and Madame Tussaud's has the new Augmented Reality/Virtual Re-

ality Bollywood interactive platform. These additions allow Indian visitors to revisit these familiar attractions."

To promote this and much more, Singapore wants to focus on the emotional connect that it offers to Indians, whether it is through celebrating family occasions, events, or festivals. "Indian travellers are getting more and more evolved in the kind of experi-



G.B. Srithar
Regional Director (SAMEA), International Group,
Singapore Tourism Board (STB)

ences they want to have. They want to do things like walking tours and exploring neighbourhoods to have more in-depth experiences and feel the pulse of the destination. That's the face of the future for Indian outbound," Srithar adds.

2017 will see STB's trade activities increase. After recently completing a four-city roadshow, STB is busy preparing for another one, this time in Tier-II cities by mid-2017. "We are looking at Ahmedabad and Lucknow. The idea is to go deeper into the markets to engage a lot more with the trade," he reveals.

Srithar underlines two Ps that will form its strategy for 2017: Partnerships and Promotions. It will form strategic partnerships with big tour operators that have pan-India presence for joint activities and marketing products, packaging, and promoting new experiences such as ethnic tours, culinary tours, World War II tours, etc. "We will also look at localised partnerships with travel agents who are strong in markets like Hyderabad, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Amritsar, basically cities that have connectivity to Singapore," Srithar adds.

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Numbers add up

Singapore crossed the one-million mark for the second year running by November 2016. Visitor arrivals make India its fourth-largest international source market after Indonesia, China and Malaysia

Industry denounces commission cuts

► Contd. from page 3

“The decision by Emirates to cut commissions for travel agents from 3 per cent to 1 per cent does not affect us at all. This is to say that when they were offering commissions and incentives, the agents had to do certain amount of business with the airline and meet targets in order to avail the PLB incentives. However, if one goes on to their website and books directly, then as a client too the airline offers a similar percentage of discount. Thus, the cut in commission does not make a difference to the industry.”



Riaz Munshi
Vice President
OTOAI

“Emirates is expanding its network fast and already has the largest number of flights, among all international carriers, flying to and from India. All this is because of the support of the travel agents. Agents in India have been marketing, selling, bringing customers and giving credit to them and paying the airline in time. Emirates does not understand that this could negatively impact the business. Three per cent commission on the basic fare is peanuts for Emirates and they will soon realise that travel agents are important for their business. The Indian travel industry, unlike in other nations, gets no support from the government.”



Rajan Sehgal
Chairman
Northern Region, TAAI

“It is extremely unfortunate and sad. There is hardly any margin in the travel agent business, and cutting the commission reduces the profitability further. I don't think it would make any difference to Emirates, because travel is growing and their load factor is increasing from India. In fact, this goes for most of the airlines. However, it would affect the revenue for travel agents, as margins and profitability is going down, and there is not much they can do.”



Rajat Sawhney
Vice President
ADTOI



Rajat Bagaria
Committee Member
Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI)

“Airlines should be encouraging their travel agency sales force rather than disarming them. Agents always considered EK as an agent-friendly airline, and we rewarded the airline with load factors from all cities. However, this move brings them on a par with other airlines. This comes at a time when the summer season is about to begin, and when we are already reeling under the Service Tax amendment impact. Coupled with the reduced commission, the web disparity, and direct promotions to the frequent flyers and corporates, the margins of the agents will be drastically hit. I hope they have call centres well-equipped to handle customer calls and complaints.”



M.P. Khanna
Managing Director
Diplomatic Travel

“We have been working very closely with Emirates for many years. However, reducing its commission from 3 per cent to 1 per cent would affect its business as it would now go to other airlines. However, while reducing the commission of agents, Emirates will be offering reduced fares online, which creates a difference from the prices on the GDS, and would affect our business too. When the customers will go online, they would go for cheaper fares. If we won't get as much commission as we used to get earlier, we would divert our clients to airlines that offer us decent commission. When Emirates took the decision, they did not consult their trade partners who promoted them for years. Now, there would certainly be a loss of business to them.”

“The fact that Emirates has decided to cut agents' commission is very strange as we had been giving them a lot of business. We don't quite know or understand why they took such a drastic step – maybe it was due to some internal policies, but anyway it's not like they were doing us a favour by giving a larger percentage of commission. Yes, Emirates was in general our preferred airline because their commission was more compared to the others but we still did business with all of them. Our business will not be hampered because our options still remain the same.”



Vijay K. Gupta
Managing Director
Golden Phoenix Travel

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Travel techies let their hair down

The Bird Group's late night party witnessed the digital travel community from across the globe revelling at the Roseate House, Aerocity, post intensive knowledge gathering sessions and workshops at Phocuswright India 2017.



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Travelrezone 2.0 now live

With new software upgrade, flight consolidation, and even visa for the UAE, Travstarz has quite a lot in the offing, reveals **Pankaj Nagpal**, Managing Director, Travstarz Global Group.



A year since travelrezone.com was launched, Nagpal has now unveiled its upgraded version. "This latest version 2.0 has been developed by our own IT team. Other than the system, we are now also providing travel technology solutions to travel companies. We are trying to move the business more to online model," he informed.

Revealing more plans on the cards, Nagpal said, "We started our flight consolidation business in 2016, which is also going to get a fillip now. Our major focus will be there, and we have identified the countries that we are going to do destination management for. We are not adding any new countries right now. The only new thing for us is the opening of our UAE office, which should happen within the next 3-4 months. The UAE office is going to focus on inbound into UAE, and

it is going to take care of the marketing of travelrezone for the GCC countries and the Gulf area."

With ancillary services being the buzzword these days, Nagpal is not far behind in offering clients everything under one roof. "We have developed a unique product online. We are a travel company, experienced in the travel business and have got the technology in house. Thus, by combining the two, we have the best of both worlds and we've got transfers, sightseeing, as well dynamic packages, which is a very important feature of the portal. The entire package can be customised, designed and booked instantly online, including flights," said Nagpal.

Amongst other ancillary services, they are also focusing on visas. "We are starting with the UAE visa, which can be applied online through our system. Gradually, we would



Pankaj Nagpal
Entrepreneur of the Year, India Travel Awards 2015 and MD, Travstarz Global Group

We have developed a unique product online. We are a travel company, experienced in the travel business and have got the technology in house

be adding all the e-visas available for other countries as well," he says, adding that they are in talks for more funding for the company.

BLS targets 4 mn visas by 2018

BLS International Services aims at processing nearly 4 million visa applications by 2018. The company currently works with nine client governments.



Outsourcing and technology services provider, BLS International Services caters to various government agencies and claims to be the only Indian player and second largest in the world which deals with visa and passport application processing or consular and attestation services for client governments. Its Executive Director **Karan Aggarwal** believes that the company's USP lies in its endeavour to facilitate affordable services to its customers while creating value for the stakeholders and investment in human capital.

The company recently acquired a five-year contract from Spain MAEC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation-Spain) worth €175 million (₹ 1,300 crore). "Under this contract, we will open an estimated 129 Spanish visa application centres in 43 countries at 129 locations to support the Spanish Embassies and Consulates of Spain MAEC globally," comments Aggarwal.



Karan Aggarwal
Executive Director
BLS International Services

We provide round the clock customer service. Our dedicated team for customer grievances makes sure to conduct various audit and surveys to ensure the same

Out of the total 100 Spanish VACs, approximately 70 are already operational currently and the remaining are expected to be operational in FY 16-17. Altogether the company expects to process approximately

four million applications annually in FY 17-18 with the existing contracts. "Our business has expanded to 48 countries worldwide. To name a few are present in Canada, Russia, China, the UAE, Austria, Hong Kong, Kenya, Lithuania, Malaysia, Norway, Oman, the Philippines, Poland, Singapore and Azerbaijan," adds Aggarwal. BLS International also announced the renewal order for four years from Russia and Singapore.

The vision of BLS International is to partner with governments around the world and also align with Digital India objective through e-Governance and service delivery through *Seva Kendras*. Commenting on the grievance redressal procedure, Aggarwal points out that the company addresses any issues that may come up. "We provide round the clock customer service helpline for any grievances or lapse in service. Our dedicated team for customer grievances makes sure to conduct various audit and surveys to ensure the same," he adds.



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Unparalleled service is key

For Hahn Air, last year was excellent in terms of product offerings and trade support, informs **Bharat Kapoor**, Director, Global Account Management, Southern India.



NISHA VERMA

In 2016, Hahn Air added 44 new partners, out of which 22 were interline agreements, reveals Bharat Kapoor. "This means that these airlines can now be sold through our own document under their respective two letter IATA code. These include the Jetstar Group, as well as CityJet, with which we have interline agreement. Apart from this, we have also got 21 new H1-Air partners. These are the airlines that are basically not available or have limited availability on GDS, and they could be sold through us under the reservation code H1. We have got SpiceJet, which is one of the airlines that travel agencies in India and worldwide can sell through us. There are also a few more," he adds.

H1-Air offers a win-win situation for all. "Travel agencies and airlines get additional revenue, and the traveller gets additional options and destinations. It's an add-on service, and the payment in this case is by a BSP," Kapoor informs.



Bharat Kapoor
Director, Global Account Management
Southern India, Hahn Air

The company also acts as a platform for rail and shuttle bookings. "Our service 5W-Rail & Shuttle has now added Buquebus to it and the same has been updated in the major GDSs in the world. Right now, its services shuttle between Buenos Aires and Montevideo, which would be sold under the code 5W on major GDSs."

Giving credit to their growth to travel agencies, Kapoor said, "As India is amongst our top 5 markets, we try our best in being number one in distribution business with our unparalleled services. We know that for travel trade in India, it's a difficult time. To overcome this we have been developing more

software and tools to help our travel agencies to get more business, and with business comes revenue. In the near future, we are planning to add more airlines and enhance our website, which is the most important tool for us. Also, we will keep adding more content on the 5W-Rail & Shuttle."

Another strong product by Hahn Air is Securix, one of the complementary services that they have for travel agencies worldwide, informs Kapoor. "In case any service that's being sold under Hahn Air or with any airline goes insolvent, there is no need to worry. We would compensate everybody. For stranded passengers, who started their trip, we would give the refund and pay a certain amount for the hotel expenses for the unused portion of the ticket. It's an unparalleled service in the aviation trade, which no other airline is offering currently. In fact, there are around 100,000 agencies who have issued around 27 million insolvent tickets of Hahn Air since 2010. This is the level of service that we have."

Leisure travel on the rise

Air Arabia has seen a change in traffic mix from Tier-II and Tier-III cities travelling to leisure destinations rather than for religious tours.



Sachin Nene, Regional General Manager-India, Air Arabia, believes that the airline has seen an increase in MICE business, leisure travellers, FITs and even religious tours to places. Nene attributed the increase in MICE travel to logistic ease. He says, "All our flights from India arrive almost at the same

has been recorded from Tier-I cities and new segments of travellers have also emerged, but at the same time we have seen a complete shift in the traffic mix from Tier-II and Tier-III cities. Earlier this demographic was considered as religious travel segment or labour force travel where people travelled for work in the Gulf and Middle East. But times



Sachin Nene
Regional General Manager-India
Air Arabia



time into Sharjah which makes it easy for the MICE operators to coordinate groups and even if the passengers have to fly to Dubai or anywhere else beyond Sharjah, then also the logistics can be easily handled."

Nene informs that Air Arabia currently operates 112 flights a week from 13 key destinations in India to Sharjah and beyond. "A steady growth

have changed and a large segment is travelling for leisure," observes Nene.

He further adds that Indian outbound numbers have grown drastically and diversified over segments as compared to earlier times when people travelled only to visit friends and relatives (VFR). Indians are now spending more time in taking shorter holidays

A steady growth has been recorded from Tier-I cities and new segments of travellers have emerged, but we have seen a complete shift in the traffic mix from Tier-II and Tier-III cities

to destinations like Sharjah and beyond to Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Russia. According to Nene, visa on arrival also plays a major role like for destinations like Jordan and Kenya.

IndiGo-es to Punjab

IndiGo recently concluded a roadshow for trade partners of Amritsar and Jalandhar city to announce new flights in and out of the Holy city. From March 16, 2017, IndiGo will connect Amritsar to New Delhi and Mumbai through daily non-stop flights.



International OTAs may cause disruptions

► Contd. from page 3

brought out in the spotlight," he explains.

Evolving online landscape

This year, disruptors based in India with the likes of Paytm, Yatra, MakeMyTrip and ibibo Group, to name a few, were on Centre Stage where they elaborated on their plans to make their presence even stronger, but with the online market still at a nascent stage in India, it's going to take more than a handful of players for the country to be a front-runner.

In agreement to this, Lehmann adds, "First of all, the market is very fragmented. Secondly, it is still very traditional when it comes to distribution. The opportuni-

seen that adoption yet and we see voice as a new customer interface for booking as a huge potential. This is a very complex technology especially with all the accents, which is an issue that has to be resolved." Other such disruptors are in the spotlight is artificial intelligence and the ways it can be applied to improve the search result as well as customer personalisation. "The whole self-driving issue where Uber and Google plans to push into will potentially impact travel as well," he adds. ↴

Melia's growth plans for India

Melia Hotels International wants to first create awareness about the brand before opening a hotel in India, reveals **Bernardo Cabot**, Senior VP, Asia Pacific.



Started six decades ago in a small island in Spain, Melia Hotels International today boasts of 400 hotels around the world. "We started with one hotel in Bali 30 years ago and six years ago the company assigned me to Asia Pacific and we opened our regional office in Shanghai. However, I have realised that China, Indonesia, and India are key players not only for the



Bernardo Cabot
Senior Vice President
Asia Pacific, Melia Hotels International

current market but also for the future. Thus, we designed a

three-step strategy for India," claimed Cabot.

The first step of this strategy, according to Cabot, was opening an office in India, which they did last year. "We have our representatives and they take care of basically two objectives – connect us to the local market and implement marketing plan in order to increase the brand awareness in the country, which is quite low," he revealed.

In phase two, he insists, "In our 60 years of experience, we have learned that opening our business in different countries depends a lot on local partners. Thus, we have started with MakeMyTrip and are integrating our reservation system with them. Probably in stage three, once our company is better known, the natural step would be to implement our brand. Thus, based on this strategy, we hope to have our presence soon in the country." ↴

One more opportunity in terms of travel tech and distribution is the mobile penetration. The more smartphones are out there, the easier it becomes to reach to the customers

Simon Lehmann
President
Phocuswright

ties here are huge and the market will probably be under more pressure by the international OTAs and not just the local ones. One more opportunity in terms of travel tech and distribution is the mobile penetration. The more smartphones are out there, the easier it becomes to reach to the customers." A 35 per cent growth in the Indian online market for this year has been projected and is still an emerging market for mobile, with China leading mobile adoption in the APAC region.

Trend takeaways

The talk at Phocuswright India was the entry of the voice interface in the travel industry not just as a search option, but as apps and a customer interface that is expected to be the next big disruptor. However, it has not seen a high adoption rate indicating more complex work to be completed in the area. Lehmann says, "Voice has a huge potential but that technology is not really where people think it is. They want to apply voice, but it hasn't



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Tourism and growth under spotlight

■ Visitors to the MENA region will total 195 million by 2030, growing at a rate higher than the world average, according to figures by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). The rapid development of the sector will form part of the discussion at the UNWTO & ATM Ministerial Forum at the Arabian Travel Market, which is being held from April 24-27 at the Dubai World Trade Centre. The Forum returns to the show repertoire this year, with a particular focus on the contribution of tourism to sustainable economic growth and diversification in the MENA region.

"Tourism has become a key economic activity across the region, particularly in the GCC countries, where it is establishing itself as a pillar



and key driver of the modern 'post-oil' economies of those countries," said UNWTO Secretary-General, **Taleb Rifai**.

"In addition to generating foreign exchange earnings and creating jobs, tourism promotes trade and investment and significantly contributes to the development of other sectors of the economy — such as construction, manufacture, retail and financial services — and it also contributes significantly to the socio-economic integration of countries of the MENA region," he added.

Simon Press, Senior Exhibition Director, ATM, said: "Future job creation and entrepreneurship in the regional industry will be a priority for the Forum. The MENA-OECD Investment Programme estimates that, in order to maintain current employment levels, between 25 million and 50 million new jobs will be required over the next decade, requiring an average annual growth rate of 5.5 per cent."

Taking place on April 24 from 3.30 PM, at the Al Mullaqa Ballroom, the Forum will be held under the patronage of H.E. Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri, Minister of Economy of the United Arab Emirates. This will follow the 42nd meeting of the UNWTO Commission for the Middle East.

Boosting flights to Sri Lanka

SriLankan Airlines is looking to expand its operations from south Indian destinations to the island nation and increase its frequency from Mumbai and Delhi as well.



ANKITA SAXENA

Udeni Perera, Manager-Western India, SriLankan Airlines, informs that the airline currently operates 107 flights a week from 11 Indian cities and is looking at adding new destinations like Hyderabad, Vishakhapatnam, and Coimbatore to its network. He says, "We are awaiting

approval of another aircraft to our fleet in June this year after which we shall soon be able to start operations from these destinations and increase frequencies from Mumbai and Delhi as well."

Perera further adds that as of now the airline is operating two narrow body and one wide body aircraft in the market. The narrow



Udeni Perera
Manager-Western India
SriLankan Airlines

We are awaiting addition of another aircraft to our fleet in June this year after which we shall increase frequencies

body aircraft-A320s offer 12 Business Class seats and 138 Economy Class seats while the wide body aircraft-A321 has the capacity of 16 Business Class and 153 Economy Class seats.

According to **Chinthaka Weerasinghe**, Manager-Northern India, SriLankan Airlines, the airline is focusing on consolidated operations and increasing frequencies in the India market. "We have seen a huge increase in passenger load factor given



Chinthaka Weerasinghe
Manager-Northern India
SriLankan Airlines

We are mainly targeting the sun and sand travellers; people who are looking for surfing holidays, beach vacations and enjoy nature

the fact that the number of Indian tourists to Sri Lanka has also increased in last year. We are mainly targeting the sun and sand travellers; people who are looking for surfing holidays, beach vacations and enjoy nature," says Weerasinghe. Apart from this, MICE, destination weddings and pilgrim tourism from India are also focus points for the destination.

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SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

Trade gets a taste of the Philippines

Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippines recently held its business mission for travel trade partners in Ahmedabad with an aim of achieving the 100,000-visitor mark in 2017. A 25-member delegation, led by **Glen Agustin**, Chief Tourism Operations Officer, Market Development Division, DOT, Philippines, interacted with over 100 key travel and tour operators through B2B meetings.



Germany revels in 8.1% growth

Germany recorded 748,737 Indian visitor overnights in 2016 over 2015. The destination is targeting 3-5 per cent growth in 2017, and is focusing on promoting its 'Palaces, Parks and Gardens' this year.



ANKITA SAXENA

Buoyed by the steady growth, the destination is expecting to see a 3-5 per cent growth in Indian visitor overnights in 2017, informs **Romit Theophilus**, Director-India, German National Tourist Office (GNTO), India. The destination's vision for 2030 is to attract two million visitor overnights from India.



GNTO will also be promoting its theme parks, smart luxury, barrier free travel and active holidays in Germany.

Germany is also eyeing Bollywood projects at the destination and is beginning to target the honeymoon market from India apart from its core focus on leisure and incentive travel from India, Theophilus adds.

Méridien's license revoked, Taj may go under the hammer

■ The Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi, might go under the hammer if the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has its way. NDMC has called for open auction of the property and cancel Le Méridien Hotel's licence in Delhi. Both five-star properties are built on land owned by the NDMC and are on lease by the owners of the properties. This was announced in a tweet by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, also a member of the NDMC.

Taj Mahal Hotel, which was set up in 1978, had a 33-

year lease to the operator. However, NDMC, has reportedly for the last five years, wanting to call for an auction, while Indian Hotels Company (IHC) has been asking for a new lease. The matter has been in court for a long while. Le Méridien, on the other hand, might lose its license over non-payment of ₹523 crore in fees.

Delhi Chief Minister **Arvind Kejriwal** tweeted on March 2: "More imp decisions today's NDMC meeting - Open auction of Taj Mansingh, cancel Le Meridien Hotel license."

Germany witnessed 80.7 million overnight stays by international visitors in 2016 which was an increase of 1.4 per cent over 2015 while the Indian overnight stays amounted to 748,737 travellers, registering 8.1 per cent growth over 2015. Elucidating the trends amongst Indians visiting Germany, Theophilus says, "The average spending per trip abroad by Indian travellers in Europe is approximately €1,852 while in Germany alone, travellers spend approximately €2,375. Also, 53 per cent of Indian visitors preferred to stay in first class hotels. A whopping 48 per cent of Indian travellers are newcomers, 46 per cent are repeat visitors while 5 per cent are regulars to Germany."

Affordability was a contributing factor for the increasing popularity of Germany as it is a cost-effective destination as compared to the rest of Western European destinations. Theophilus informs that the net room prices for Europe (average of 58 towns and cities) in 2015 was €119.1 which was an increase of 3.3 per cent over 2014 while net room prices in Germany (average of 11 towns and cities) in 2015 was recorded at €102.8, corresponding to an increase of 1.0 per cent over 2014.

On the trade front, he says that the destination is all set to roll out its online training module in 2017 aimed to educate and update the travel trade to become German Specialists. This will be coupled with regular online webinars for operators in Tier-II and Tier-III cities. Germany will also focus on social media promotions through its GNTO India Facebook Page. Continuing its destination promotions through theme based marketing, Germany is promoting 'Palaces, Parks and Gardens' in India while it will focus on 'Luther 2017-500 years since the Reformation', as its global marketing theme. In addition to this core theme

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*Opening Soon

U&I Holidays brings Bali to India

After successfully completing its six-city roadshow devoted to Bali recently, U&I Holidays is already planning for next year where it will make inroads into Tier-II cities. It expanded its annual roadshow from five cities to six this year: Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Delhi, Ahmedabad, and Mumbai. The roadshow had 32 participants from Bali of which 31 were hotels plus one caterer.



2nd Grand Emporio hotel in Goa in 2018

The group is using social networking to promote the brand and glean customer feedback and referrals.



One of the recent entrants in the hospitality circle, Grand Emporio Hotels & Resorts, ventured into the market with a single goal — to provide guest with comfortable stay, friendly service and honest value. **Deepak Bhandari**, Group Sr. Manager Sales & Branding, Grand Emporio Hotels & Resorts, says, "We are focused on creating a hotel system known for customer service and satisfaction. Our agenda is based on four prime factors — team, location, customer service and value," he revealed.



Deepak Bhandari
Group Sr. Manager Sales & Branding
Grand Emporio Hotels & Resorts

Our agenda is based on four prime factors- team, location, customer service and value

The company's first property Gajraj Trails Resort in Jim Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand, sprawls over four acres, comprises 10 luxury cottages, 16 premium rooms, luxurious spa, gym, swimming pool, conference hall and alfresco private dining areas.

In today's digital age, they are focusing on social networking to promote the brand along with existing customer feedback and referral. "This practice of ours has built confidence and trust, not only within customers but also have increased popularity among travel agents and trade partners. We are proud to have the maximum repeat turn up ratio of our customers, which are growing," he insisted.

Bhandari believes in striking strong bonds with travel agents and tour operators, saying that the support and trust here is far greater than online portals. "This has helped our company to capture the market share and

build a strong reputation in the travel fraternity," he said.

Despite being a new entrant in the Indian hospitality sector, they plan to grow with properties at many other locations. "The company is currently working on the second property in Goa, which will be revealed in 2018," disclosed Bhandari.

JA Resorts to tap North & South India

JA Resorts & Hotels, a familiar name among the Indian trade thanks to Avant Garde Consulting, plans to further tap into the cities in North and South India.



A diverse offering from JA Resorts & Hotels' portfolio means that it has something for every segment. This allows Mumbai-based Avant Garde Consulting — promoters in India — the opportunity to tap various segments within the luxury outbound travel gamut.

Pooja Wadhwa, Partner, Avant Garde Consulting, says they have tapped Mumbai,

Delhi and Bengaluru so far but intend to explore the north and south of India further, as well as Gujarat. "We've seen increased interest, heartening feedback and encouraging results from Mumbai and Delhi for JA's Maldives, Dubai and Seychelles properties, across segments," she adds.

Speaking about trade engagements, Wadhwa says, "We strongly believe in building relationships between our



Pooja Wadhwa
Partner, Avant Garde Consulting

partners and the travel trade community in India by way of

one-on-one interactions and experiences. Our endeavour over the last few months has been to personally engage with as many of our partners from the trade with at least one of JA's properties across Dubai, the Maldives and Seychelles. This apart, we work closely with the respective tourism boards, DMCs, consolidators and B2C players by way of roadshows, trainings, brochure support, rate contracts and customised market specific offers."

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- Daily breakfast at the hotel.
- SIC Hong Kong city tour (Peak Tram to Victoria Peak, Aberdeen Fishing Village, Stanley Market, Jewellery Factory)
- Ferry tickets (Hong Kong - Macao)

Macao Inclusions

- Two nights accommodation for two guests
- Breakfast or Lunch with a selection of restaurants, or MOP400 Dining Credit (exclusive for 2nd night stay)
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BTW Visas expands its HO in Pune

BTW Visa Service, Journey Cart Holidays and PEC attestation and apostille services will now operate from the same premises in Pune. The new space has 10 visa counters, five air ticketing desks, five dedicated counters for Holiday Division Journey cart, 10 documentation and visa processing counters, team of visa runners and documentation co-ordinators.



New features on Riya connect

Riya Travels has always tried to come up with new features and developments for its agents, reveals **Manoj Samuel**, Director, Riya Group.



QWhat kind of added benefits are you offering your agents this year?

Riya has always tried to come up with new features and developments for our agents. We have recently added travel insurance on our online portal which was otherwise only available offline. We also have Queue Ticketing, a transactional

module where travel partners can queue their PNRs to us, retrieve the PNR on this module and issue the ticket through our IATA-accredited website. This benefits the travel partners to retain their segments and earn commission on these tickets. There is no dependency of sending email and calls for ticket



Manoj Samuel
Director
Riya Group

issuance, or any other manual interference. Refunds and cancellations will also be accepted in the near future from this module.

QHow has Riya connect performed so far?

Riya connect started as a lone flight seller and today we offer a bouquet of travel products under one roof. We are not stopping here; we are constantly trying to come up with new things to make everything easy for our agents. We have recently added travel insurance to Riya connect and are working on few other things that will be added soon. We also offer a range of ancillary services like real-time ticketing status with the convenience of seat and meal selection.

QWhat are your plans for 2017?

We will soon be coming up with new trade activities. We also have plans to add new features to Riya connect and promote Riya Business Travel. We have also decided to try a lot of new things this year. For one, we have recently started to expand ourselves at B2C level too even though we have always been more of a B2B company. We'll have to see how that works out for us in the long run.



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Speedwings Aviation Academy recently honored the first batch of IATA's PGDASM (Post Graduate Diploma in Airport Station Management) and AvMP (Aviation Management Professional) title holders in a ceremony in Kochi. AvMP is the highest title in the aviation industry higher than even any Aviation MBA issued through academia. This is the first in aviation industry that IATA has honored the AvMP title for freshers through an aviation institute for ground handling services.

Greece offers value for money

Promoting this 'value for money' destination is **Elena Kountoura**, Minister of Tourism, Greece, who was in India recently to boost tourist footfalls.



HAZEL JAIN

Q*Greece recently made its debut into the India market. Why now?*

So far, travel agents and tour operators from Greece have been tapping the India market but it was an individual effort. This is the first time that the tourism ministry has entered India in a bid to have a dynamic presence here. We did this by participating in OTM in Mumbai where we

met a lot of travel trade and got a taste of India. We have a new tourism policy for opening up new markets and that's why we are visiting India. Our budget is €1 million for all new markets and India has the biggest share.

Q*What will be the focus in the initial months?*

First, we want to spread awareness about Greece and what it has to offer. We want to introduce different destina-

tions of Greece. One of the main aims is also to extend our touristic season to make it a year-round destination. We are also keen on inviting touristic investments. Under the EU, business or any kind of minimum investment of €2,50,000 can get the individual along with their family residency for five years in Greece. This would also allow them to travel freely to 40 other EU members. The residency can be renewed



Elena Kountoura
Minister of Tourism, Greece

every five years. This is the lowest threshold offered by an EU country.

Q*But connectivity is a problem.*

Yes, we do need direct flights. The joint economic committee that took place in November 2016 in India where the Deputy Minister of Greece discussed this issue and an agreement was signed between Greece and India for the airlines services. Our government is exploring the possibility of a direct flight. The two governments have already signed bilateral agreements.

Q*What kind of arrivals does Greece currently get from India?*

In 2016, our embassy issued more than 25,000 visas but the actual number of visitors is at least three times this considering the multiple ports of entry into Greece and the multiple-entry visa that Greece issues that is valid for three to five years. We are conducting a pilot programme for electronic visas which could eventually speed up time.

Q*What activities can agents look forward to?*

We plan to take agents to Greece as well as do workshops for them in India. Of course, roadshows are an important way to bring the suppliers from Greece and buyers from India together. At OTM, we had a huge Greek delegation with 10 regions, hotels, DMCs as well as association of Greek tour operators who met their Indian counterparts here.

Q*What segments are you targeting?*

We want to invite individuals but also families as well as groups whether it is for MICE or weddings. We have religious tourism, culture, wellness, yachting, water sports and gastronomy. Greece offers value for money. It also has 'family hotels' or B&Bs for budget family travel. ↴

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Paris workshop	Mumbai	22
FICCI Digital Travel Hospitality & Innovation Summit	New Delhi	22-23
Connections Luxury	Hyderabad	26-29
Korea Tourism MICE roadshow	New Delhi	29
COTTM	Beijing, China	29-31
UITT	Kiev, Ukraine	29-31

APRIL 2017

PATA Adventure Travel Conference and Mart 2017	Henan, China	1 - 4
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	12
SITT	Novosibirsk, Russia	13 - 15
Kazakhstan International Tourism Fair (KITF)	Almaty, Kazakhstan	19 - 21
Shanghai World Travel Fair 2017	Shanghai	20 - 23
GITB	Jaipur	23-25
Arabian Travel Market 2017 (ATM)	Dubai, UAE	24 - 27
Digital Travel Summit APAC	Singapore	25-27
Hospitality Investment World Indonesia 2017	Jakarta	26-27
WTTC Global Summit 2017	Bangkok	26-27
Annual Meetings & Events Industry Conference (AMEIC)	Sydney	April 30 - May 2

MAY 2017

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

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

OTOAI gears up for elections

Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) will also be organising workshops in cities like Delhi, Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Chennai.



NISHA VERMA

Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) recently organised a trade workshop with the Chinese province Yunnan for its members. **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, President, OTOAI, said, "We collaborated with Yunnan to bring information about the province to our members. We had earlier announced that we will now be focusing on provinces of various countries, so that the members come to know about different locations that they can sell. Yunnan has a lot of natural beauty and is a great destination for families, honeymooners as well as MICE. There is also a direct flight of four hours from Delhi to Kunming. Kunming has many good hotels with good MICE facilities, and is a gateway to Asia, with great con-



Guldeep Singh Sahni
DDP Trail Blazer 2016 and
President, OTOAI

We are preparing for our next election and the announcement for the dates will be coming soon

nections to Burma and Laos. Packages can be designed involving different countries,

which could be attractive for Indian customers. Today, Indian travellers want to see new places. Hence, after Yunnan, we also organised another workshop with Nanjing province in China on March 9, 2017."

Apart from that OTOAI will also be organising educational workshops around the country, revealed Sahni. "We will be doing educational workshops in Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Chennai," he said. Speaking on the Turkey educon, which was previously scheduled for March and was later postponed, he said, "We are planning to revive the educon and are looking at possible dates for the same."

When asked about the convention, Sahni said, "We are working on the final details of planning our

next convention. We will be making a formal announcement once the venue and dates are decided."

Another agenda on their cards is election. "We are preparing for our next election and the announcement for the dates will be coming soon," he revealed.

However, after the Service Tax amendment and Budget, the association has been trying hard to present their case in front of the government. "We are in talks with the Finance Ministry regarding Service Tax and we will be following up on the same. We are reaching out to the GST committee as well, and are requesting them to look at outbound tourism separately when it comes to taxation, as we don't even get CENVAT credit," he said.

ICTT to be held from June 8-10

The International Conference on Tourism Technology (ICTT), to be held in New Delhi, will feature lectures by a line-up of noted technology speakers.



TT BUREAU

An impressive line-up of technology industry experts from across the globe will attend the upcoming International Conference on Tourism Technology (ICTT) to deliberate on the paramount role of technology in giving a fillip to the travel and tourism industry through interactive engagements with customers and providing excellent products and services.

Association of Tourism Trade Organisation (ATTOI), with the support of Kerala Tourism, will organise the three-day event at Le Meridien Hotel in

Kochi from June 8 to 10. The seven experts who will be attending the brainstorming meet this year to share their insights are Andre Chow (Singapore), Billy Taylor (New Zealand), Christopher Tock (Malaysia), Donna Mortiz (Australia), Lauren Cleland (USA), Nicky Kriel (the UK) and Pierre Marechal (Belgium).

"Technology is all around us and the world of travel and tourism is no exception. Through technology, such as social media, tour operators could engage their customers. So it is high time to get updated and be adaptable and fluid to the changes in the sec-



Anish Kumar P.K.
President, ATTOI

tor," says **Anish Kumar P.K.**, President, ATTOI.

The speakers will share insights on topics such as 'Content and Search Engine Strategy', 'Digital tools - The way

forward', 'Online Destination Marketing', 'Travel Technology Trends in Future', 'Consumer Behaviour and Online Reputation', and 'Social Media for Tourism'. ICTT 2017 aims at helping the tourism industry to stay abreast with the latest technology through effective usage of the digital platform.

"It is for the industry players to be able to understand the current tourism trend. They can anticipate future directions, and respond appropriately by walking the extra mile to fulfill tourist expectations. And these international speakers are capable of shedding light on these issues," Kumar added.

Form - IV

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Mapping digital travel

The second edition of Digital Travel, Hospitality and Innovation Summit is being organised by FICCI from March 22-23, 2017, at New Delhi to address the technological advancement in the field of travel and hospitality.

It is aimed at facilitating communication and exchange of ideas and knowledge between key industry stakeholders, conglomerates, influencers and policymakers. The event will bring together global leaders, upstart innovators from the field of travel, hospitality, technology and marketing to secure new business opportunities, increase brand

awareness and to network with key stakeholders.

The knowledge forum will discuss various topics like including automation, revenue management, distribution, marketing, data analytics, innovation and more. FICCI along with Avalon Global Research will also launch a knowledge Report 'Travel 2.0 - The Next Generation of Travel' at the event. Travel Tech Launchpad will also be launched as an opportunity for travel start-ups to learn from experts in the field of travel, exhibit their business ideas and display their products and services.




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JW Marriott Chandigarh

Chandigarh

Dilpreet Singh Bindra has taken over as the General Manager of JW Marriott Chandigarh. He comes with an experience spanning over 20 years with previous stints as Director of Operations at JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity, General Manager, The Gateway Resort, Damdama Lake and Director of Catering, Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi, where he handled the convention centre. He is from IHM Aurangabad. In his current role at JW Marriott Chandigarh, Bindra will oversee the hotel operations, including guest and associate satisfaction, human resources, financial performance, sales and revenue generation and strategy execution.



Holiday Inn Amritsar

Amritsar

Holiday Inn Amritsar has appointed **Amit Rana** as the General Manager. He has over 15 years of experience with InterContinental Hotels Group. His last assignment was with Holiday Inn Chandigarh conversion project as General Manager. He has completed his higher education from Blue Mountains Hotel Management School Australia. Worked in various country including the US, Australia and the Middle East. Rana brings valuable experience in Revenue Management, opening new hotels and conversion hotel projects.



Explora

Mumbai

Sunny Katara has joined Explora as its Managing Partner. With over 15 years of experience in the tourism industry, Katara began his career working with the Hilton in London and has worked with brands like Taj, Marriott, and The Leading Hotels of the World in India. In his last tenure with THRS (Director - Global Sales), he was responsible for brands like Six Senses, Soneva, Relais & Chateaux, Palazzo Versace Dubai & Resplendent Ceylon in India. With his entry in Explora as Managing Partner, he brings in-depth knowledge and experience in sales and a better understanding of the Indian travel trade.



Sarovar Hotels

New Delhi

Sarovar Hotels has appointed **S. Karthikeyan** as Vice President-Sales. An IIM Lucknow alumnus, he brings with him an experience of over nine years in Hospitality Sales and Marketing. At Sarovar, he will be responsible for conceptualising and implement sales strategies, both at corporate and regional level, and will contribute in further strengthening the group's efforts in driving more business from existing as well as new markets. Karthikeyan's previous stint includes experience with ITC Hotels as Director of Sales and Marketing. Prior to joining ITC Hotels, Karthikeyan was a management consultant with Technopak advisors and has worked on numerous consulting projects.



Radisson Blu Hotel

Indore

Nikhil Singh Rajpurohit has joined Radisson Blu Hotel Indore as Director of Sales. With over a decade of experience in the hospitality industry, Rajpurohit will head hotel sales with plans to excel and taking it a notch higher. He has previously been associated with leading brands including Hilton Worldwide, Fairmont Hotels, Lalit Group of Hotels, Louvre Group of Hotels and Wyndham Worldwide. His expertise lies in direct and indirect sales, budgeting and revenue management and introducing different marketing and promotion planning. He holds a degree in Business Management from Oxford Business College, United Kingdom.



ibis Styles Goa Calangute

Goa

Sheryl de Sa is the Director of Sales at ibis Styles Goa Calangute. In this role, she is responsible for strategising and implementing sales and marketing related activities to drive the property's success. A seasoned hotelier, De Sa brings over a decade of domain expertise in hospitality industry and a deep understanding of the Goa market. She started her career with the Goa Marriott Resort & Spa. Sheryl firmly believes that 'Sales may fluctuate; but service stays forever - the customer's perception is your reality'. She holds a degree in Dietetics, and enjoys travelling, reading, and listening to music.



JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu

Mumbai

Bharat Ratanpal is the new Director of Sales and Marketing at JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu. With over 13 years of experience in the hospitality industry, his primary expertise lie in sales and marketing along with customer servicing, strategic planning and people management. He began his career in 2003 at JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu itself. He then moved to Grand Hyatt Mumbai where he started working as Sales Co-ordinator in 2004. In 2007, he was promoted to Associate Director of Sales of MICE and Travel/Trade. His last assignment was with Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa as a Director of Sales & Marketing.



Foodlink Service India

Mumbai

Foodlink Banquet and Catering has appointed **Harinder Jeet Singh** as COO. His current roles include business leadership with hands-on experience across Hospitality, F&B retail and airline industries. Singh brings with him over 25 years of experience in the hospitality sector. He began his career with the Hyatt International's Skill Development Programs in 1994. He then moved on to Marriott International's Skill Development Programs and after a short stint outside the hospitality industry, Singh moved to Jet Airways. He later on took charge at Courtyard by Marriott Pune City Centre. Then he moved on to Mahindra Holidays and Resorts India.



Hyatt Pune Kalyani Nagar

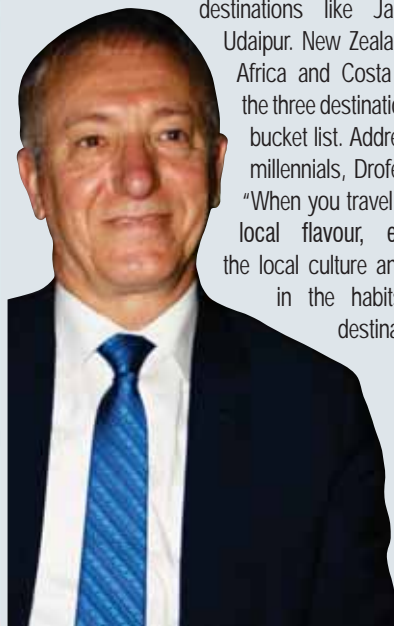
Pune

Hyatt Pune Kalyani Nagar has appointed **Yamini Bhakri** as Human Resources Manager. She is an ISTD diploma holder in Training & Development in addition to a Post-Graduate diploma in Human Resources. She is also a commerce graduate from the University of Delhi. She has worked with The Leela Hotels & Resorts and FoodHall India by Future Group in her previous assignments. Her journey with the Hyatt family began at Hyatt Place Gurgaon/Udyog Vihar in August, 2015 which also was her last assignment.



TALKing People

Jozef Drogenik, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia, spends whatever little free time he has travelling. He loves the Himalayan countryside. He is also fond of Kashmir and enjoys heritage and culture destinations like Jaipur and Udaipur. New Zealand, South Africa and Costa Rica are the three destinations on his bucket list. Addressing the millennials, Drogenik says, "When you travel, taste the local flavour, experience the local culture and indulge in the habits of the destinations."



For **Nejmeddine Lakhel**, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Tunisia, the greatest satisfaction comes from spreading happiness. "The best things to give sense to your life is to do good things, help people and make others happy," he says. Being very new to India, Lakhel has not travelled much around the country. However, he likes Andhra Pradesh, as well as Chennai. Internationally he wants to travel to South Africa, Kenya, Seychelles, Mauritius and other countries in Africa.



Sankalp Agarwal, Co-founder and CEO, TravelTriangle, is a huge fan of Japan, especially the ancient temples of Nara which has made it to his list of most memorable destinations. He explains, "It is a unique experience to view country's best temples and shrines in a quaint town after the fast-paced Kyoto." Apart from Kyoto, Tokyo is also one of his ultimate travel spots. When asked about three things that he definitely carries on his travels, "A Swiss knife, backpack and my smartphone!" he quips.



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Caper gears up to go public

Bharat Bhushan Atree, Managing Director, Caper Travel Company (CTC), shares his company's growth projection which include nurturing SBUs, a feat that has been in practice and has successfully honed talent through the years.



Q What was the demand like last year in the inbound segment for Caper?

Caper benefitted with a growth of more than 25 per cent in all our markets and verticals compared to last season. All our markets were energetic and buoyant and Caper has had a significant proliferation in contrast to our previous season. An added advantage of summer markets is that we operate in the hot, humid and rainy months of June, July and August which is a subdued time in India. This suits well for all stakeholders as well as it keeps us busy around the year. Hotels are engaged and utilised during these lean months and the tourists get to enjoy advantageous pricing for their travel itineraries. The CIS markets have begun to respond well giving us an indication of a fruitful season ahead. Next year we are planning to double our numbers and launch newly explored markets.

Q Which were some of the most popular destinations?

Apart from the Golden Triangle, tourists were also interested in the temples of the religious cities of Khajuraho and Varanasi. The colourful, vibrant, cultural and mesmerising cities of Rajasthan is an experience the tourists relish. The beautiful backwaters of Kerala, the film capital of India, Mumbai offering the travellers so much more than Bollywood, the lovely beaches of Goa providing tranquillity but at the same time also bustling with the exciting night markets, the clubs, the shacks and so much more. The snow-capped mountains of Himachal Pradesh, the valleys of Kashmir and the mountain desert, Ladakh have all done well in the summer time. There is an upward swing for those travellers looking for wellbeing, health and Ayurveda.

Q What does Caper's landscape of growth look like for the next five years?

They say the sky is the limit but there are already footprints on the moon. I believe my journey is limitless and there will never be any stopping! We have multiple plans of growth and hope to go public in the coming years. Increasing our sales revenue as well as contributing to the growth of foreign tourist arrivals by a large number is also on our radar and we are aiming for a global presence by targeting markets that are yet to be explored. We invite profes-

sionals who aspire to live their dreams of entrepreneurship, to head new SBUs supported by CTC Holding.

Since technology is becoming an increasingly huge part of every industry, I would like to evolve Caper into a fully automated entity driven by technology. We already are environmentally friendly, and aim to be a 100 per cent paperless company. Additionally, as part of our CSR activities, we are also in the proc-

Q What trends do you see picking momentum in 2017?

This year will surely see a rise in health and wellness tourism (yoga and Ayurveda) including medical tourism. India is the home to the ancient art form of yoga which provides a healthy balance of the mind, body and spirit that results in an overall feeling of well-being. In terms of destinations, the demand for the unexplored region of the Northeast India will see a rise as

“We are aiming for a global presence by targeting markets that are yet to be explored. We invite professionals who aspire to live their dreams of entrepreneurship, to head new SBUs supported by CTC Holding.”



Bharat Bhushan Atree
Managing Director
Caper Travel Company

ess of adopting villages and providing them with fundamental necessities.

Q In your opinion, what are some of the hurdles prevalent in the industry?

First and foremost, the perception of India in several countries needs to change – a better likeness of India will definitely increase the demand and lead to a growth in the number of tourists. The challenges are majorly related to the lack of state-of-the-art infrastructure, an almost non-existent platform for global branding and the promotion of Indian tourism. An exceedingly higher tax structure is a deterrent for many and the law and order situation requires better governance and as well as a more pro-active press advocating responsible journalism. GST will be rolled out in the coming months and the Government should be compelled to take on Tourism as a priority sector as it is one of the biggest employment generator and foreign exchange earner for country. In this regard, taxation must be rational and competitive with our neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, China, Singapore and Thailand, making India travel friendly for the masses rather than a luxury destination.

the area is not only scenic but is rich in history, art and culture. Tours combining itineraries with our neighbours like Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Dubai and Thailand with Indian tours will attract more tourists. A multiple destination package will work very well for those travelling from long-haul destinations as they may not visit this region again in near future.

Caper's five-year plan

- To raise funds for expansion and growth through IPO
- To increase sales revenue, tourist traffic to India and the adjoining regions by a stupendous number
- Looking at a global presence, targeting markets untouched by Caper and its group of companies
- Invite professionals who aspire to live their dreams of entrepreneurship, to head new SBUs supported by CTC Holding
- To be a fully automated entity driven by technology and aim to be a cent per cent paperless company
- Adopting villages and providing them with fundamental necessities. CTC desires to extend them the benefits of tourism through its CSR activities

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