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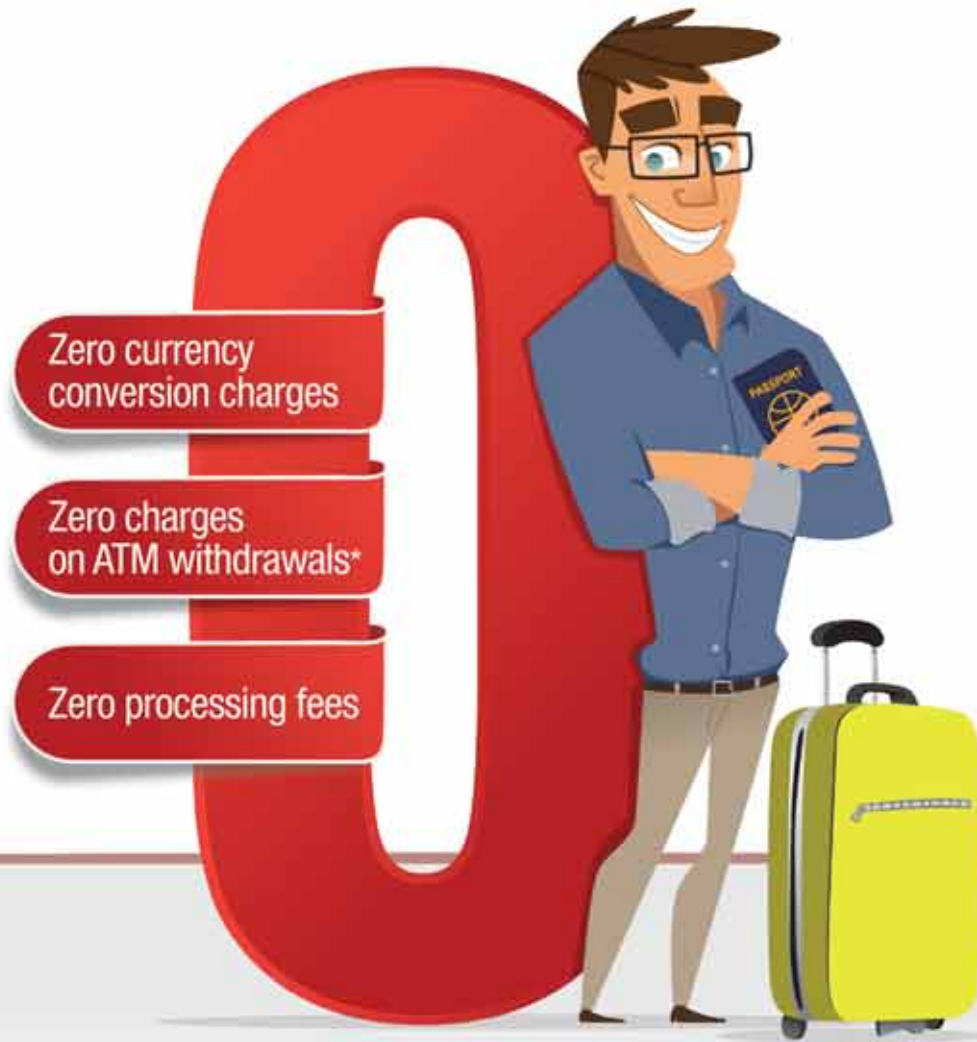
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10,000+ meetings at GITB '17

As many as 275 foreign buyers and 288 exhibitors met at the 10th Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB) from April 23-25. Over the two days, 10,800 meetings were conducted compared to 10,600 meetings in the last edition.



ANKITA SAXENA FROM JAIPUR

The Great Indian Travel Bazaar, an inbound show committed to boost tourism in India and in Rajasthan, was inaugurated by **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, **Krishnendra Kaur**, Tourism, Art and Culture Minister, Government of Rajasthan, **Dr. Jyotsna Suri**, Chairperson, Tourism Committee, FICCI, **Nihal Chand Goel**, Additional Chief Secretary (Tourism, Art & Culture), Government of Rajasthan, **Bhim Singh**, President, Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan, and **Rahul Chakravarty**, Senior Director and Head-Tourism, FICCI.

The dignitaries also released two reports- FICCI-YES Bank Report and FICCI-MRSS

Knowledge Paper, aimed at providing a snapshot of tourism potential and growth opportunities for inbound tourism in India. Apart from Rajasthan, eight partner states namely Gujarat, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Tamil Nadu also participated in the show.

"GITB is the largest and an exclusive inbound show, committed to increasing inbound tourism to India and we feel it has played a role in increasing inbound tourists from 8.03 million in 2015 to 8.9 million in 2016," Suri noted.

Applauding the efforts behind the show, Billa said, "GITB is the most definitive platform to showcase India



(L-R): Rahul Chakravarty, Nihal Chand Goel, Dr. Jyotsna Suri, Krishnendra Kaur, and Suman Billa

to the world and it has grown from strength to strength. It attracts very high quality buyers and now has reached a critical mass to truly take off." He observed that Indian tourism industry grew at a rapid pace of 11 per cent in 2016 and since January 2017 to date it has grown at the rate of 16 per cent. He also said that there is no indicator in the market to suggest that this growth will slow down

and suggested that it is up to the buyers and exhibitors at the show to capitalise on this opportunity. Billa further cited the recently released World Economic Forum report where India improved its tourism competitiveness by 12 places since 2015, and now occupies 40th rank globally while countries like Japan, China, US, and Switzerland have improved by less than five positions.

Kaur informed that the Government of Rajasthan in its budget sanctioned ₹163.47 crore for tourism which is an increase of 22.37 per cent over last year. Kaur said, "We will use the sanctioned money to undertake aggressive marketing and promotional activities. We are also planning to develop the Krishna Circuit and Spiritual Circuit, which are to be sanctioned by the Ministry of

Tourism. Regional connectivity is a key focus area for us and I feel it will take time for intra-state connectivity to truly take off."

Goel further added that Rajasthan tourism recorded 17 per cent growth in 2016 with over four crore tourists. In 2017 the state is expecting a better response both from domestic and international tourists especially after the aggressive marketing campaign which promotes Rajasthan as an unexplored destination. "Promoting the various tourism products of Rajasthan at domestic and international level; restoration and conservation of heritage properties and maintenance and upkeep of various tourist spots for smoother operations are three key focus points of the government," said Goel.

Experiences > Shopping for Indians

Indians are known for being shopaholics and for the revenue they add to the source destination. An increasing number of travellers are now choosing sightseeing over shopping and are immersing in local culture and attractions.



TT BUREAU

Discovering new places has become a key driver for travel amongst Indians leading to sightseeing as a major activity which mostly includes high points of natural beauty, animal safaris, tourist icons, and wildlife, says **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, President, OTOAI. He says that while a few years back, shopping used to be an important aspect of an Indian outbound traveller's itinerary, now with almost all international brands opening shop in India, the charm of shopping abroad has dimmed. "The traveller today is seeking sightsee-

ing and adventure sports which are fascinating abroad. The adventure activities abroad are drawing large number of Indians because of a perception that maybe they are safer and more difficult than those available in India," he says.

According to the report 'Outbound Tourism from India 2015,' the topmost common leisure activities of Indian travellers abroad are shopping and sightseeing. Approximately two in five Indian travellers made travel plans primarily for shopping, allocating a significant proportion of their total ex-



Guldeep Singh Sahni
DDP Trailblazer 2016
& President, OTOAI

penditure to shopping when travelling abroad. A survey conducted by VisitBritain in 2013 amongst Indian travellers to Britain estimated



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

that 42 per cent of travellers had planned the travel primarily for shopping. However, what they shop differs by individual destinations.



Rajan Sehgal
Chairman-Northern Region
TAAI

Riaz Munshi, Managing Director, N. Chirag Travels, points out that Indians have in the past and still do, travel to various destinations across the

world to enjoy shopping as a major activity. When compared to sightseeing as an activity, the percentage of travellers who prefer to visit attractions is less. "Destinations like Italy and the UK, especially London have witnessed a large share of Indian travellers flocking the markets for shopping expeditions. Eastern Europe is now catching the eye of the Indian travellers and soon these will also become hubs for Christmas market shopping," he says. Dubai, Milan, the US, Canada, the Far East, Singapore have been some of the most popular shopping

Contd. on page 12 ▶



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MOT approves new MDA scheme

The Ministry of Tourism has given its approval for the new Marketing Development Assistance (MDA) scheme that allows a maximum grant of ` 2.5 lakh to tourism service providers for promotional activities abroad.

TT BUREAU

The new Marketing Development Assistance (MDA) scheme, administered by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, came into effect from April 1, 2017, however, the prior intimations received for promotional activities abroad up to March 31, 2017, will be considered settled according to the existing scheme guidelines of July 9, 2015.

According to a letter from the Ministry of Tourism, all claims received during the year 2015-16 and 2016-17 will be considered in accordance with the existing scheme guidelines. All the travel trade associations such as FAITH, IATO, HAI, FHRAI, TAAI, ATOAI, ADTOI and others have been asked to convey these guidelines to all stakeholders.

Under the MDA scheme, MOT gives a maximum grant of ` 2.5 lakh to tourism service providers, i.e. hoteliers, travel agents, tour operators, tourist transport operators for undertaking tourism promotional activities such as sales tours, roadshows, and participation in travel fairs/exhibitions abroad by the way of reimbursement towards air fare, participation fee, hotel accommodation. The Tourism Departments of all States and Union Territories are also eligible for benefits under the scheme. The main objective of MDA is to

reimbursement, the applicant would've to request MOT for approval at least 21 days in advance before going abroad for promotional activity with the required list of documents.

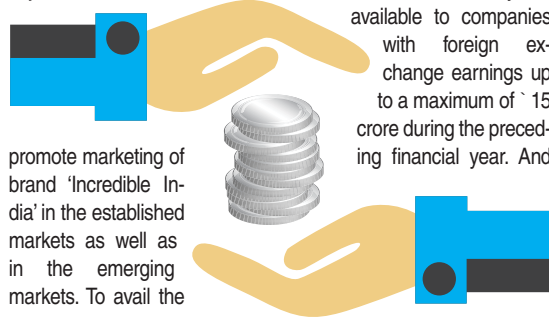
Only those tourism service providers approved by the MOT, Govt. of India, and in case of J&K and North East states, tourism service providers approved by the state tourism department, are eligible for benefits under the scheme.

Financial support under the scheme would only be available to companies with foreign exchange earnings up to a maximum of ` 15 crore during the preceding financial year. And


in case of J&K and states in North East Region, the service providers not having any foreign exchange earning but with a total turnover of up to ` 20 crore would also be eligible.

According to MOT guideline, tourism service providers must show a cumulative increase of 5 per cent in FEE during a three year period, to be eligible for financial support under the new scheme, i.e. at the end of the year 3, there must be a cumulative increase of 5 per cent in FEE over the base year. This clause will be made effective from the financial year 2015-16. Also, those service providers including States/UTs who have participated in a minimum of two events (covering sales tours, travel fairs/exhibitions and roadshows) in one financial year will be provided financial support under this scheme.

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VIEWPOINT

The millennial is king

A revered species these days, this member of Generation Y is gaining popularity by the nanosecond. They are the influenced as well as the influencers. They are part of the focus group and the target audience. This anomaly of a category, millennials are the precious batch of our successors that will have it all. The world is being designed as per their needs and wants. Any and all service providers, whether it is an airline, a tour operator or an OTA, are tailoring their interface to accommodate them. But one thing that runs common through them, and this is a pattern that cannot be ignored, is technology.

The only way to get the attention of the hallowed millennial is by being technology-savvy. The more seamless and more adept your technology offering is, the more popular you are. This is because, as a senior airline official recently pointed out, they prefer zero human interaction. A lot more has been said to define them and their behavior as consumers. So if you are looking to innovate and evolve but don't know where to start from, all you need to do is study them and you'll find your way.

Ode to Indian outbound

Come May and the outbound market will return in full swing. In fact, with May and June being the major travel and spending months for Indians, outbound travel agents and tour operators are busier than ever. Looks like everybody has come out of demonetisation blues. When demonetisation struck, it was worrisome as to how it would affect the summer business. However, contrary to earlier assumptions, outbound summer travel did not really take a hit from currency crunch, as bookings are going on even in the luxury long-haul segment. Right from travel exhibitions to roadshows, to NTOs, and the agencies, everyone is busy preparing for the next two months, especially when the most dreaded GST bill is set to come into effect in July. However, even that won't deter the Great Indian Outbound market, as Indians are ready to spend for new experiences in new destinations out of the country.

All-inclusive holidays on the rise

Today's travellers want to experience destinations rather than just navigating the world. Since planning the holiday in a stipulated budget can be strenuous, the concept of all-inclusive holidays is a good option for tourists who are always on the hop.

The hectic pace and humdrum of our daily rigmarole means that holidays are now a must to unwind, disconnect from the routine, release accumulated stress, and enjoy the finer aspects of life. Thanks to affordability, better connectivity, and funding options, a holiday abroad is increasingly becoming an annual ritual for a number of travellers. Holidays abroad not only allow an individual

to be imprudent to overspend on holidays.

An 'All-inclusive Holiday' concept, as the name suggests, takes care of all aspects of holiday- right from travel to accommodation, food and drinks, entertainment, and recreational activities. It is an experiential holiday concept which helps to combat overspending while on holidays and offers im-

added risk of cost overruns leading to an incomplete and unsatisfying holiday experience. However, the chances of such cost overrun and missed opportunities are nullified when booking an all inclusive holiday. Travel and accommodation are assured, as are a host of food and entertainment options and recreational activities for the duration of the holiday. The traveller doesn't have to worry about overspending and running up a huge credit card bill.

The advantages associated with this concept are the reason why all-inclusive holidays have been gaining popularity year after year. Whether it's a romantic break or an annual family trip, everyone can benefit from an all-inclusive package. Comparing the existing destination holiday trend; all-inclusive holidays turn out to be value for money proposition as they offer a hassle-free premium holiday experience. All essential elements of holidaying (airport transfers; accommodation, food, snacks, bar, activities, entertainment and parties) are handled by the main service provider (hotel/resort), thus ensuring the standard and quality of services to their guests.

Different holidaying options have their own charm and cater to different sets of people. The purpose and reason for embarking on a holiday differs and so does the expected outcome or experience from a holiday. It could, however, be said with conviction that no other holidaying option can match the affordability, convenience, comfort, security and variety of an all-inclusive offer. At the same time, all-inclusive holidays still have enough room to evolve and improve in the coming years.

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



Manoj Upadhyay
Country Manager-India
ClubMed

It is an experiential holiday concept which helps to combat overspending while on holidays and offers immense flexibility and can be tailored to suit expectations and requirements of varying age groups and interest areas

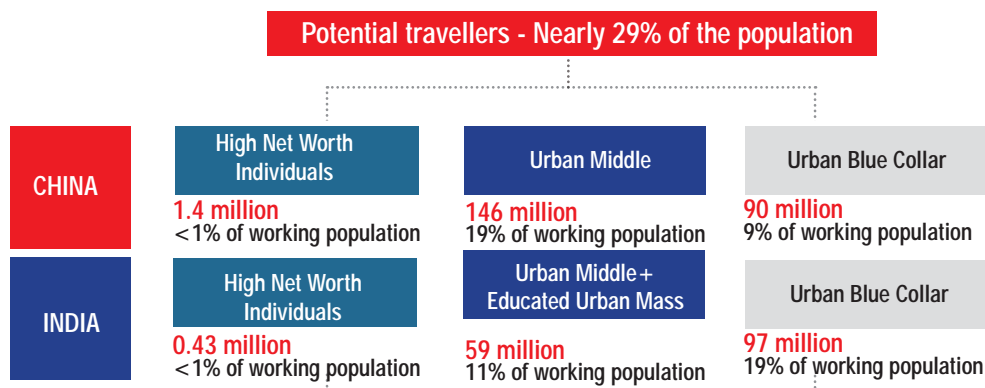
to experience different geography and food but also give an opportunity to understand and interact with people belonging to another culture.

However, planning for holidays is not always an easy task since it usually involves spending lot of time and money. One also needs to ensure that sufficient amount of fund is allocated but at the same time, expenditure must stay within the budget as it would

tailored to suit expectations and requirements of varying age groups and interest areas. Such an arrangement offers multi-cultural environment to the travellers and offers huge advantage over manually hunting for the most affordable holiday deals, individually booking tickets for travel, accommodation, entertainment, dining and leisure activities. Individually paying for each component of a holiday comes with an

India & China power GCC tourism

In an effort to boost tourism economies, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are exploring different approaches to attract and satisfy visitors from two key growth markets — India and China.



Source: Goldman Sachs

Source: Colliers International's report on 'Capitalising on Experiential Travel: China and India Mega Source Markets'

Potential travellers - Nearly 31% of the population



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Arunachal takes the adventure route

At the first Arunachal Pradesh Tourism Conclave 2017, **Dr. Joram Beda**, Tourism Secretary, informed that tourism in the state has doubled in the past five years and wants the momentum to pick up through adventure and ecotourism.



AHANA GURUNG

The largest North Eastern state, Arunachal Pradesh is leaving no stone unturned to attract more tourists to the region. In a first, the state's tourism department organised a tourism conclave in the capital to raise awareness about the myriad offerings as well as investment

are well-promoted in key cities. Arunachal received a total of 3.5 lakh tourists in 2016 and expects a steady 20 per cent growth in the next three years. Commenting on the issue of connectivity, Beda informed that three greenfield airports in Ziro, Pasighat and Mechuka which are currently under defence services, have been proposed to be opened

up for civil services as well. In addition, the central government has recently granted site clearance approval for setting up of five greenfield airports in the country, including one in Itanagar.

The state's tourism department has also signed MoUs between four key partners to work together to pro-

mote and generate a strong tourist traffic to the state. The partners include Oxigen-Wallet – the official e-wallet partner for the department of tourism, MakeMyTrip – the official partner in the online travel portal category, Travel Agents' Association of India (TAAI) as the official partner, and Fly Wings – the partner for hospitality training. ↴



Dr. Joram Beda
Tourism Secretary
Government of Arunachal Pradesh

It is the perfect place for water sports, thanks to the presence of the five rivers that flow through Arunachal

opportunities. The conclave was graced by **Kiren Rijiju**, Union Minister of State for Home, Govt. of India, along with other dignitaries like **Ajay Singh**, CMD, SpiceJet, and **Capt. Swadesh Kumar**, President, Adventure Tour Operators' Association of India (ATOAI), among others.

Arunachal Pradesh is by and large, gearing up to establish itself as an adventure tourism hub and aims to achieve this by fortifying relationships with various partners and through theme-based festivals. **Dr. Joram Beda**, Tourism Secretary, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, gives more details on the approach and says, "We have been organising the Kameng river festival in Mechuka, which promotes adventure in the state including others like Tawang festival, Ziro festival of music, Arunachal Spring Carnival, etc. It is the perfect place for water sports, thanks to the presence of the five rivers that flow through Arunachal, and the three peaks that are yet to be conquered. In addition, it is home to as many as 25 different tribes, setting the right tone for ecotourism."

He added that while tourism in the state is at a nascent stage, the possibilities are immense provided the products



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Sands Macao bullish on MICE & leisure

As part of Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao, seven hotels including The Venetian Macao and the recently-opened The Parisian offer a total of 13,000 rooms and suites, 150,000 sqm of meeting and exhibition space. **Ruth Boston**, Senior VP, Marketing and Brand Management, Sands China, speaks to TRAVTALK about the group's plans for India.



SONIA BUTALIA FROM MACAU

Q Kindly brief us about your brand and properties in Macao.

The Venetian Macao, the largest integrated resort of its kind in Asia, has become

famous Venetian Resort-Hotel-Casino in Las Vegas. Twice the size of its sister property, The Venetian Macao features Shoppes at Venetian, international restaurants, the 15,000-

As part of Sands Resorts Macao, the addition of The Parisian Macao offers leisure and business travellers and MICE delegates an extraordinary retail experience of more than 850 duty free stores, from luxury to high street brands, as well as over 150 dining options. World-class entertainment includes live shows in The Parisian Theatre and The Venetian Theatre, colourful Parisian and Venetian Street-mosphere performances, and live shows in the Cotai Arena, all under one roof.

Sands Resorts Macao has a clear vision to establish Macao as Asia's top entertainment destination, and with the introduction of the 1,200-seat, purpose-built The Parisian Theatre, is another step closer to realising this ambition. The state-of-the-art venue, which officially opened September 13, 2016, brings the very best in international entertainment from around the world to Macao.

From live music concerts to Broadway and West End theatre and Vegas-style shows, there are entertainment events for the whole family to enjoy.

The Cotai Expo at The Venetian Macao offers more than 75,000 square metres of exhibition space, and is one of the largest exhibition centres in Asia. It is complemented by 6,500 square metres of pillar-free ballroom space and 108 meeting rooms with more than 18,600 square metres of flexible meeting space.

Q What kind of occupancy do you see from around the world?

During the peak season and weekends, we see very high occupancies. Over weekdays we tend to focus on MICE and leisure groups. India is an important market for us in terms of MICE groups. Big holidays and festive seasons are becoming more and more popular for visits, with tourists coming in from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, while Korea, Japan and India are our three strongest markets outside the Greater China area. The US is becoming a very important market for us as is Australia, Singapore, and the rest of South East Asia. Even though UAE is not a huge market for us at the moment, we do get travellers from the region. We recently hosted a large Israeli group for a MICE event, which was very successful.

Q Do you offer any special incentives to the Indian travel trade?

We do offer regular hotel packages to the Indian market. Currently we have spring packages in the market which are selling very well. The Venetian Macao is still our strongest selling hotel for the Indian market but we do see a change in trends as more Indians guests are visiting The Parisian Macao. MICE visitors to The Parisian Macao can enjoy all the facilities available at The Venetian Macao; Four Seasons Hotel Macao, Cotai Strip; and Sands Cotai Central, which is comprised of hotel brands including St. Regis Macao, Cotai Central, Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel, Cotai Central; Conrad Macao, Cotai Central and Holiday Inn Macao, Cotai Central.



We'll have an exciting package coming up this Diwali and we also have 'Smart Meeting' package which offers a range of benefits depending on the size of the group.

Q Sands China planning to promote its properties for destination weddings from India, as it's a \$14 billion industry?

We do Indian weddings, but don't actively promote destination weddings. Our focus is on MICE because we obviously have seven hotels as part of Sands Resorts Macao, offering a total of 13,000 rooms and suites, 150,000 square metres of meeting and exhibition space and 334 breakout rooms. For us the meeting space is very important as it drives room nights, food and beverage revenue and retail within our 850 duty-free international brand shops as well. In addition we have 150 restaurants, ranging from food courts to Michelin-starred restaurants.

Q Tell us more about the entertainment activities planned at your properties.

The Parisian Theatre has a full calendar till the end of the year. We try to do different activities at this venue and a lot of performances are aimed at the family market. Thriller Live is a stunning theatrical concert created to commemorate the world's greatest ever entertainer, Michael Jackson.

The 90-minute show takes the audience on a magical audio-visual journey through Michael Jackson's 45-year musical legacy. The show will be held till this September.

Guests and visitors alike can enjoy daily entertainment from French themed Streetmosphere characters including an eclectic mix of mimes, Parisian-themed 'living statues', ballroom and can-can dancers, 'Belle Époque' costumed performers, barrel organ players, accordionists, French song singers, opera singers and caricaturists. There is a new touring Bollywood style show coming up.

We also have hosted different concerts at the Cotai Arena of The Venetian Macao every weekend.

Q Which are the new markets you are exploring for business now?

We are planning to explore new markets, particularly for leisure; we have China, Korea, India and South East Asia as our major markets in leisure business. We are going to the US for a three-week trade mission because we believe we can get very good business from that country. Many companies are going global now and Asia Pacific is one of biggest growth areas, so we need to be in that market. India forms a very large part of our business plan moving forwards.



“We are planning to explore new markets, particularly for leisure; we have China, Korea, India and South East Asia as our major markets in leisure business. We are going to the US for a 3-week trade mission**”**

Ruth Boston
Senior Vice President
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Canada comes calling

Destination Canada, along with **Nadir Patel**, High Commissioner for Canada, hosted an evening for **Bardish Chagger**, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism in Canada, to discuss prospects with Mumbai trade fraternity.





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More than just an evening in Paris

Rouen and Normandy hosted the 12th Rendez-vous en France Travel Market from March 28-29, 2017. On the sidelines of the tourism trade fair organised by Atout France, France Tourism Development Agency, TRAVTALK spoke to **Sheetal Munshaw**, India Director, Atout France, on the growth of Indian tourists in the country and the factors behind it.



ANUPRIYA BISHNOI FROM FRANCE

Q Has there been a surge in Indian arrivals to France?

I am very happy to say that since I have taken charge, the number of Indian tourist arrivals in France has been on the uphill. In 2015, we witnessed a 45.8 per cent rise, wherein, we went from 365,000 travellers to 500,000. The 2016 figures are still awaited. However, what we do know from the indications of visa statistics is that, there has been over 15-30 per cent growth over 2015. So we are very optimistic about 2016. The first quarter of 2017 has already shown an increase of 20-35 per cent in visa statistics depending on the areas like Mumbai, Pondicherry or Delhi. Also what is very encouraging for us is that we have seen a boost in the regional presence of France in the itineraries of the Indian travel agents and tour operators. They are doing things differently, showcasing different regions of France.

Q What are the reasons for this phenomenal growth?

Atout France is promoting the destination as differently as possible. We have had the 'Be There, Do That,' campaign for three years with an aim to showcase France differently. We then launched the campaign, 'Made in Paris' last year and this year, we launched the campaign, 'Made in France.' The idea is to take it to the next level and talk about not only different experiences but experiences that are authentic to France. In addition to that, we launched our global strategy which is called 'Marques Mondiales'. We have hand-picked certain brands which we think will allow us to ride on the wave and leverage on the brand to better position France to create better destination awareness.

On the other hand, we have identified our 'Pôles d'excellence' which for ex-



“The first quarter of 2017 has already shown an increase of 20-35 per cent in visa statistics depending on the areas like Mumbai, Pondicherry or Delhi.”

Sheetal Munshaw
India Director
Atout France

ample is our gourmandise, mountains, nightlife, fashion, shopping, etc. We work very closely with the Ministry of Tourism and External Affairs, and at the Embassy and Consular level with VFS, to ensure that there is seamless facilitation of visas. Today, there is a 48-hour deliverance of visas. Despite the implementation of biometrics in November 2015, we have seen there has

been no change in the ease of delivery and swiftness of the process. We have 14 centres in addition to four Consulates and an Embassy which makes 19 points of contact and its growing. In addition to that, we are also working on the French side where we acclimatise the French suppliers and travel professionals with what to do to be better received by Indian travellers.

We launched the first online training programme in France for Asian market in which India was a big part. They have access to a training programme where they can better acquaint themselves with the specificities of our market. We also launched a dedicated 200-page guide on how to welcome Indian clients. Also, we launched an Indian wedding guide, because we saw a surge in Indian weddings in France across different regions. In fact, Monaco had three Indian weddings last year.

seen Indian honeymooners, families, couples and affinity travellers with just women travelling together. We have even started to work on the youth market. This has also benefited us in enhancing our seasonality because earlier it was just the Indian summer where France sought tourism while today, there is tourism throughout the year.

Q Tell us about Atout France's marketing strategy?

Social Media is something we are getting more active in. It has become a very important part of our global strategy. The world is going digital and this is the best way for us to communicate with all our audiences across the board. We noticed through the launch of movie *Befikre* and the testimonial that we got from Ranveer Singh which gave us more than two million hits. Also, we have moved to the site.fr recently which is a huge plus for us. ↴

Q How do you see the change in travellers' profile from India?

We've seen a lot of development especially with groups spending around 3-5 nights in Paris, which is a big leap. We've also seen a huge surge in the incentive market. We received the largest incentive group in December 2015. FITs is something where we have seen the largest growth. We have definitely

Indians prefer experiences

▶ Contd. from page 3

destinations amongst Indians. Though being spendthrift, an Indian shopper is both value and status conscious even when shopping abroad. However, with the changing times, the industry claims that the charm of shopping tourism is wearing off. **Rajan Sehgal**, Chairman-Northern Region, TAAI, says, "If I go back 10 years to identify tourism trends amongst Indian travellers, then

nation, it is usually and purely for experience."

C.P. Sharma, Managing Director, Neptune Travco, says as the demographic of the Indian traveller is changing, so is the choice between shopping and sightseeing. "Gradually as young Indian travellers are travelling to faraway destinations, they are more drawn to the culture, heritage, attractions, and even adventure activities. Shopping is over-

and explains that whether Indian travellers prefer shopping or sightseeing depends on the type of trip they take; when on a family trip, or couples, then shopping is a must do which could change for a solo traveller. "However, by and large sightseeing and shopping are simultaneous activities," he says.

Sudesh Behal, Director, Indo Asia Tours, takes this a step further and ex-



C.P. Sharma
Managing Director
Neptune Travco



Shravan Bhalla
CEO
High Flyer



Sudesh Behal
Director
Indo Asia Tours

shopping was an integral part of the travel itinerary. It was a status symbol for many to return from foreign destinations with a number of bags full of exploits. However, today this is not the case nor is shopping a criteria in decision making process amongst Indian travellers. When they decide a desti-

ruled by a large margin. The planning stage of an itinerary includes 80 per cent of activities that can provide the local flavour and experience while 20 per cent of the trip is either reserved for shopping or sometimes even skipped." **Shravan Bhalla**, CEO, High Flyer, adds to the change in travel patterns

plains that once tourists mature and become travellers in the true sense, shopping doesn't remain priority. "Indian travellers have moved on to explore experiences, want to interact with local culture and lifestyle. Food is also an area where Indian travellers are experimenting in." ↴

Skål Delhi's Exec Committee

With a new team in place, the new core members of Skål Delhi chapter plan to add more value to the club by hosting expert speakers and team-building activities.



Skål Delhi's newly elected Executive Committee for the term 2017-2019 recently held their first meeting of the term on April 19 at ITC Maurya New Delhi which gave the members, old and new, an opportunity to break the ice. Skålleagues interacted over lunch and discussed ongoing happenings. Speaking on the occasion, **Sunil Gadhiok**, President, Skål Delhi, said, "With the commencement of the new term, we will continue aiding memberships to the chapter which currently stands at a 200-member strength. Skål Delhi is the second largest chapter globally and our aim is to take it to the top. In terms of club activities, members can expect more team-building activities and events that are in sync with the current happenings, along with expert speakers to give more value for the membership. CSR has always been one of our priorities and the emphasis will continue for the coming term."



Sunil Gadhiok
President
Skål Delhi

In terms of club activities, members can expect more team-building activities and events that are in sync with the current happenings

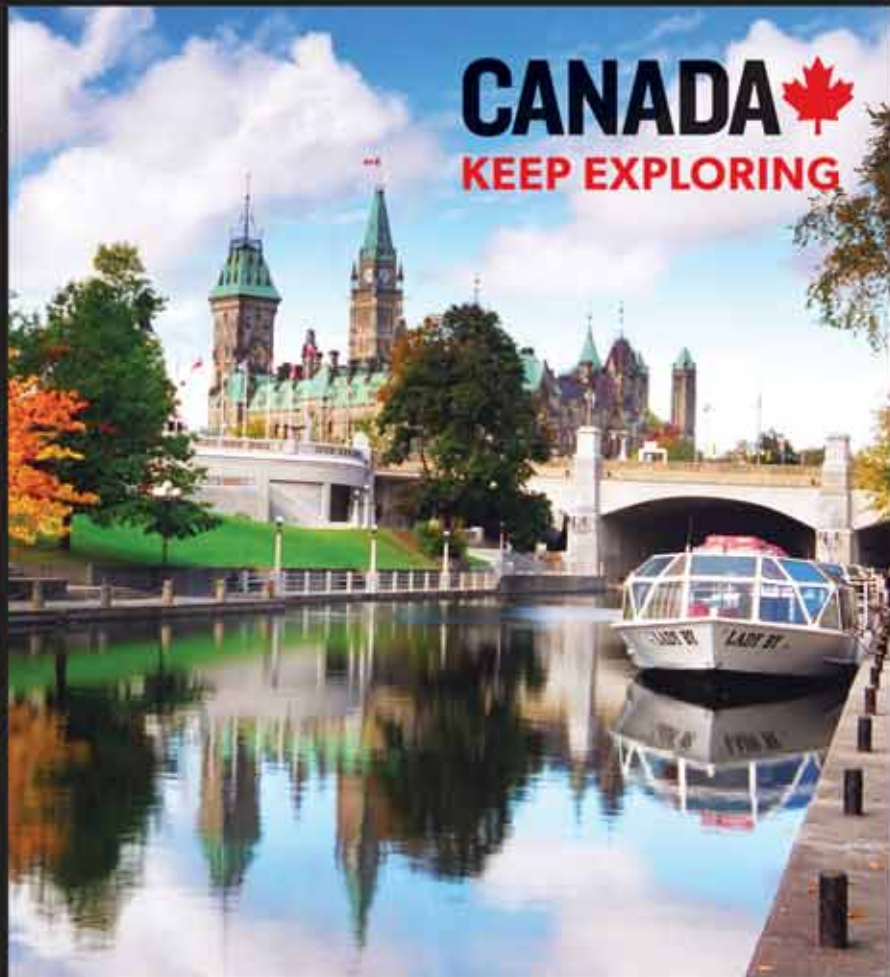
ate past President; **Homa Mistry**, Member; **Ankush Nijhawan**, Member (Director, Young Skål); **Rajinder Rai**, Member; **Tekla Maira**, new Member; **Rohit Khosla**, new Member, **Sunny Sodhi**, new Member.

In addition, Skål Delhi has launched a Young Skål club which aims to nurture talent and shape budding professionals into strong leaders of the future. Gadhiok informed that the membership for Young Skål is currently around 30-member strong which will soon be officially formalised and taken forward in the next few months.

Core Committee

- ↴ The new core committee members are **Sunil Gadhiok**, **Greesh Bindra**, **Ranjit Vig**, **Ajay Bhatnagar**, **Sanjay Datta**, **Homa Mistry**, **Ankush Nijhawan**, **Rajinder Rai**, **Tekla Maira**, **Rohit Khosla**, **Sunny Sodhi**

The new core committee members include **Greesh Bindra**, Vice President; **Ranjit Vig**, Secretary; **Ajay Bhatnagar**, Treasurer; **Sanjay Datta**, Immedi-



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Inbound takes centre stage at GITB

The who's who of the tourism and hospitality industry flocked the 10th edition of GITB held from April 23-25, 2017, in Jaipur. The show offered networking opportunities and relationship building among Indian exhibitors and foreign buyers to promote the tourism potential of India in the international market.



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Red carpet laid out for foreign buyers



Anantya targets Oz, Germany markets

Anantya Resorts has witnessed a surge in wellness tourism from Germany, Australia and the UK.

TT BUREAU

Anantya Resorts, located in Travancore on the banks of Chittar Lake, sets the ideal tone for a relaxing getaway. Acres of rubber plantation envelope the retreat which boasts of different types of villas along with a spa called Astitva that brings the ancient art of Ayurveda to the forefront. The property provides authentic Ayurvedic services with the Pankajakasthuri Group that runs the Pankajakasthuri Ayurvedic College and Hospital and is a renowned name in the field.

Anantya's popularity as a destination resort has been growing year after year.



Lavanya Ramachandran
Director
Anantya Resorts

Lavanya Ramachandran, Director, Anantya Resorts, says while the property is popular among domestic travellers, an increase in wellness tourists is expected this summer. "We are making a big push towards expanding into the health and wellness market," she says. "Guests from various countries like Germany, UK, and Australia are looking to experience holistic wellness and so, we are gearing up towards a busy inbound season. We are expecting a bigger movement from the Australian market this year for Anantya's yoga retreats and guests from Germany for Ayurveda. Anantya has also teamed up with premier yoga providers to conduct 200-hour internationally certified yoga teacher training programs." Sattvic diet is also available for guests who want to indulge in the Ayurvedic experience all the way.

The resort's serene ambience has also made it a favourite among honeymooners and nuptials and Ramachandran informs of several customised facilities that are on offer to make the experience even more personalised. She explains, "Several couples from South

Africa and Canada are looking at Anantya for destination weddings. Honeymooners can cosy up on a romantic getaway in Anantya's private pool villa, and enjoy private candlelit dinners amidst a fitting setting. Guests who like the outdoors enjoy the hiking and cycling trails within the rubber plantation."

Kolkata next stop for DS Group

DS Group is all set to open its new property in Kolkata, reveals Nikhil Vahi, Senior VP, Hospitality Operations & Development, DS Group.

TT BUREAU

A regular participant at the Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB), Nikhil Vahi was happy with the turnout at the latest edition of the event in Jaipur. "We have been participating in GITB for a couple of years now. It is our fourth year and it's always been beneficial. We had FTO's visiting us and our schedules were fully packed. I hope this

transcends into business as well," he said.

Giving a low-down on their properties, Vahi informed, "We are exhibiting our four hotels, namely our boutique brand in Jim Corbett Park-Namah, Manu Maharani in Nainital and also Crown Plaza, Jaipur, as well as the Radisson in Guwahati. Our 5th hotel is under project stage, which is at Kolkata airport, and we will

be adding it to our exhibiting list very soon."

He believes that technology is the need of the hour today, right from the conceptual stage of a hotel, till the execution, as well as the day to day running of a property. "Technology is very fast paced and one has to look at forecasting and what will be trending in the future. I believe that one should be as close to technology as they can," he claimed.



Nikhil Vahi
Senior Vice President, Hospitality
Operations & Development, DS Group



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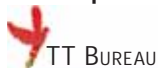
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A-ROSA in India with STIC Travel Group

A-ROSA River Cruises has partnered with STIC Travel Group in order to introduce sailings to Eastern Europe and promote its various itineraries in the Indian market.



A-ROSA offers premium experience of Eastern Europe on a river cruise. As a 4-star Plus river cruise, A-ROSA caters to the premium segment of travellers. "We are very excited about our new partnership with STIC Travel Group and the possibility to show the Indian travel market a new way of exploring Europe. STIC Travel

Group's extensive B2B network of partners across the country will allow us to capitalise on their knowledge of the market and promote the product better," says **Darren Caldwell**, Sales Manager-International and Coordinator International Standards, A-ROSA Flussschiff GmbH.

He feels that with any new product it is always difficult to gauge exactly what



the resonance in the market place will be but the company is confident that the products that it offers will soon find an avid following in India. "We prefer to work with partners who are not just trying to find any product to sell, but to find the right product for the market. This combined with STIC Travel Group's experience in the Indian market, offices and sales presence in all the major cities of India, make them the ideal partner," he adds.



Darren Caldwell
Sales Manager-International and
Coordinator International Standards
A-ROSA Flussschiff GmbH

STIC Travel Group's experience in the Indian market make them the ideal partner

Danube is A-ROSA's most popular itinerary which offers an experience of Eastern Europe. The five-nights sailing and seven-nights sailing covers popular cities like Vienna, Budapest and Bratislava. Excursions are not included which allows flexibility to the guests during land visits. The river cruise offers a high standard of service, buffet-style restaurants which include alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. Vegetarian meals are also available on-board. Caldwell claims that A-ROSA caters to families better than any other cruise line and children aged 15 and younger travel for free.

He points out that the prices offered to the travellers are approximately 50 per cent lower than cruise rates offered by other luxury river cruises which are already active in the Indian market. "Depending on the cruise and time of year, the rates begin at about €115 per person per night. Given the fact that the cabin, transportation to the next city and all meals and drinks are included, the price is reasonable and young children on board do not cost anything at all," he says.

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Ras Al Khaimah entices Mumbai agents

The Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) roadshow held in Mumbai recently saw more than 100 travel agents and tour operators come together to meet 17 sellers who were present at the event, which included DMCs, airlines, hotels and attractions.



Pushing Russia for MICE

Offering MICE packages for Russia and CIS, Dimaz Group showcases exclusive products from this region, like military tank ride and zero-gravity flight experience.

TT BUREAU

Claiming to have vast knowledge and experience in an offbeat destination like Russia and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Mumbai-based Dimaz Group specialises in MICE to this region. It organises dealers meet, award ceremonies, conferences and gala events for corporate clients from India.

But it is not limited to this. **Manish Syngal**, Chairman and MD, Dimaz Group, adds, "We also assist with all kind of requirements of film production houses in Bollywood for shooting of films in Russia and CIS



Manish Syngal
Chairman and MD
Dimaz Group

countries. We offer great and exclusive packages because we have tie-ups with leading international chain of hotels, reputed Indian restaurants in Russia mainly in cities like Moscow, St. Petersburg and Sochi for our event management and MICE activities."

The promoters of Dimaz Group have their presence in Russia and CIS since the early 1990s. Syngal explains, "We speak their language and enjoy good relations with local authorities, reputed hotels, Indian restaurants, transport companies and the local guides. Yes, the cost and quality of services offered by Dimaz are much better than other service providers to Russia and CIS."

The company offers free visa tour packages for the Indian travelers arriving on international cruises to St. Petersburg. "One of our group companies, Dimaz Agastyaa Productions Private Limited, is assisting a few Bollywood production houses for film shoots in CIS this season, which will help promote travel to the CIS from India. Dimaz works closely with the CIS for-

India big market for Oman Air

Ihab A. Sorial, Senior Vice President-International Sales, Oman Air, says they are studying places in India they should fly to.

TT BUREAU

Oman Air has completed two years in Goa. Sorial says the journey has been very successful so far. "We started with four flights and today we have seven flights. We have new recruits and have put in a lot of emphasis on our people." In India, Oman Air has just increased capacity by 6000 seats which includes for metropolis and Calicut in Kerala. "In Goa,



Ihab A Sorial
Senior Vice President-International Sales
Oman Air

the moment we see we are ready, the connectivity will be tweaked," he adds.

Sorial says India is a very big market and has huge potential for the airline. "We have a big force of Indians working for us at Oman and India is the third largest revenue generator for us. We are studying in India to cover new destinations and sectors and once we decide on it we will launch it," he adds. Goa is a leisure des-

ination and competition for Oman Air is not as fierce as it is in other sectors, he says. "We have Qatar Airways and other low cost carriers and hence I can see a big opportunity here in this state," Sorial says, adding that their focus is on Europe and London (UK) currently. "We have changed the schedule and connectivity at Frankfurt and it will help Goa a lot. The focus is to get more European passengers to Goa," he adds.

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Networking opens doors to inbound



Guests steer the course for Jet Airways

Jet Airways' focus on guest experience has steered it towards constant innovation and much of it has been brought about by the unstoppable force of technology. The airline is currently running a pilot programme of linking Aadhaar card with bookings that allow passengers to travel without any ID for Bengaluru airport, another first of its kind.



HAZEL JAIN

A good indicator of success for a company, second only to its P&L, is customer feedback and Jet Airways seemed to have scored high points on that account. It recently won the 'Best Airline - India' by TripAdvisor's first annual Travellers' Choice awards for airlines. This, says Jayaraj Shanmugam, Chief

Commercial Officer, Jet Airways (India), is a reflection of the company's growing inflection on its customers. "Our philosophy is 'guests first'. After streamlining our company in 2014, we went back to the basics to see what will drive our business forward. Things have changed dramatically now and the way customers book us has also changed. We are talking about the millennials and we need to adapt to them," he says.

ment modes with 21 options today including the latest Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and the first airline to do that. Starting from check-in kiosks at airports to e-tickets, Jet Airways was the first airline to work with airports like Bengaluru and Hyderabad to bring in mobile barcode technology that allows passengers to board their flights without a

physical boarding pass. "We were the first ones to have an iWatch app and the first to allow check-in on Twitter. India's eco-system is changing and digital is becoming an important part of it," Coutinho says.

Yet another first that the airline is working on is linking the Aadhaar card with the booking that allows passengers to travel without any ID. "This is currently a pilot program for Bengaluru airport. When the boarding pass is scanned, the system opens up the Aadhaar ID. The technology is working beautifully and it's just a matter of scaling it up across airports. We are talking with multiple airports including international ones like Changi," Coutinho adds.

Finally, it all boils down to offering choice to customers. Shanmugam adds, "We operate on four Cs: Choice, Convenience, Comfort and Connectivity but my favourite is Choice. We demonstrate this in our interactions with them across platforms and from the time they get on our flight until they get off. The entire industry works on

technology simply because the aircraft is in itself a technological marvel. You have to see what the customer experiences with other service providers and then replicate that convenience into the airline industry. We no longer talk about the airline industry alone but also include other industries in the conversation."



Jayaraj Shanmugam
Chief Commercial Officer
Jet Airways (India)

Commercial Officer, Jet Airways (India), is a reflection of the company's growing inflection on its customers. "Our philosophy is 'guests first'. After streamlining our company in 2014, we went back to the basics to see what will drive our business forward. Things have changed dramatically now and the way customers book us has also changed. We are talking about the millennials and we need to adapt to them," he says.



Belson Coutinho
Vice President - Marketing, eCommerce & Innovations, Jet Airways (India)

This journey was made across several touch points that meets with customers. Belson Coutinho, Vice President - Marketing, eCommerce & Innovations, Jet Airways (India), who has been at the forefront of some of its innovations shares insights. "It started with how customers interact with us as a brand and the website was the core. Not only did we revamp it, we even customised it to cater to our visually-challenged guests and guests with hearing disability," he says.

Jet Airways claims to be a first-mover for many industry innovations. It brought onboard the latest digital pay-

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Wendy Wu woos Indians to SEA

Wendy Wu Tours, a US-based tour operator, is now foraying into the Indian outbound tourism market with Holidays on Tracks, their recently appointed India representative.



Holidays on Tracks, an exclusive B2B travel marketing and sales organisation, has been appointed as the exclusive in-market India representative for Wendy Wu Tours in order to tap into the ever growing Indian outbound tourism to South East Asian destinations, China and Japan.

The company will be responsible for creating market awareness, educating agents and handling reservations



Ashish Saran
Director & Founder
Holidays on Tracks

for Wendy Wu Tours. **Leslie Peden**, President, Wendy Wu Tours, expressed delight upon the new appointment that will allow them to tap into the significant demand for travel to the region. He says, "Holidays on Tracks can introduce Wendy Wu Tours' escorted



Leslie Peden
President
Wendy Wu Tours

groups and private tours as well as custom itineraries to the Indian market. With their unique experience, strong trade relationships and proven track record of success in launching new international products for India, we are confident that Holidays on Tracks will springboard and accelerate our entry into the Indian outbound market to Asia."

Ashish Saran, Director and Founder, Holidays on Tracks, explains that Wendy Wu Tours offers all inclusive tours and the price includes everything from hotels, tours, transfers, meals and all local entry fees and taxes except gratuities. He feels that the unique feature of the company is that it offers group depar-

tures as well as FIT tours to the travellers to the popular and unexplored destinations in the region as well like Vietnam, South Korea, Myanmar, etc. The company will focus on selling fully inclusive land-only packages through their network of Indian travel agencies whilst creating the opportunity for the agents to add the air component. He says, "There is a major chunk of agents, espe-

cially in Tier-II and Tier-III cities looking at newer destinations and newer product formats and this opportunity will reach out to them and give them a brand to associate with, creating a unique distinction for them in their markets. We will create Exclusive Regional Agency Partners and provide them all the tools enabling them to promote Wendy Wu Tours through their respective market places.

Education, sales based incentives and back office support is critical for any new product to be accepted and to produce the desired results."

Saran further feels that currently there is very little business which is mapped from India and the company is looking forward to some early successes through its agency network. ↴

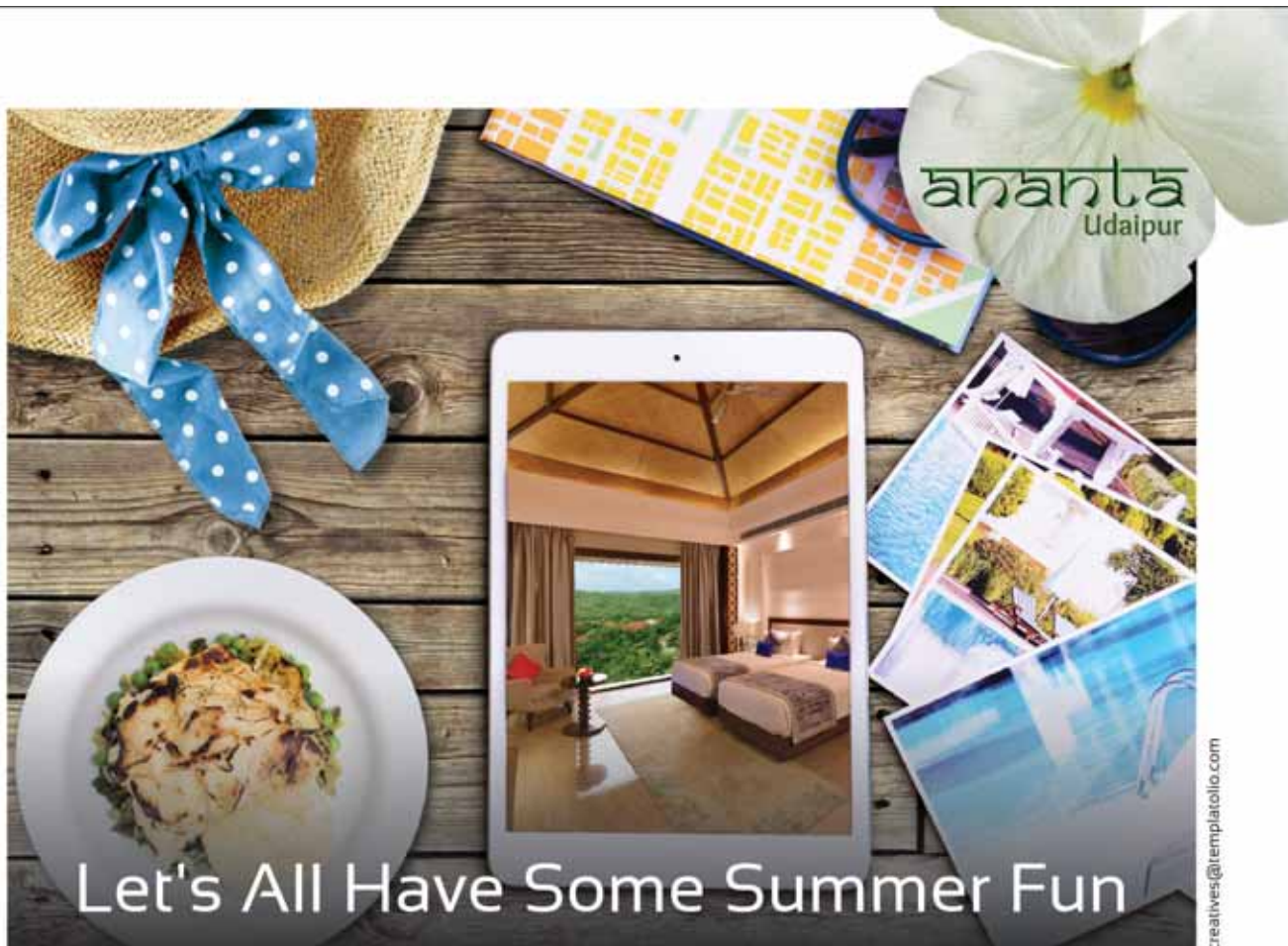
Etihad, Jet Airways sign agreement with Maharashtra

■ Etihad Airways and strategic partner Jet Airways have signed an agreement with the Government of Maharashtra to promote tourism. The partnership will enable both airlines to capitalise on their links with Maharashtra and propel domestic and international arrivals into the state capital Mumbai and beyond. It is the first time an Indian state has signed a tourism collaboration agreement with the airline sector.

Maharashtra Chief Minister **Devendra Fadnavis** presided over the signing of the

MoU in Mumbai. Under the agreement, the three entities will pool marketing resources to participate in travel-trade events in key markets such as the UK and the UAE; jointly promote 'Destination Maharashtra' through advertising campaigns; and organise inbound familiarisation trips for travel agents.

Collectively, the two airlines operate five flights a day between Abu Dhabi and Mumbai. In addition, Jet Airways flies daily between Maharashtra's second largest city of Pune and Abu Dhabi.



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Travel agents using the roomsXML platform can now get access to all the Swiss Quality Hotels International hotels at attractive wholesale rates.

TT BUREAU

Swiss Quality Hotels International represents more than 60 quality-oriented and individually-run hotels across 40 cities and resorts in Switzerland, Germany and Italy. Under the recently-signed direct distribution agreement, travel agents using the roomsXML platform get access to all the Swiss Quality Hotels at attractive wholesale rates with abundant availability.

Prakash Bang, Founder and Executive Chairman, roomsXML.com, says, "Swiss Quality offers travel agents wide range of first-class accommodation options to choose for their customers. Guests booked into one of the member hotels can be guaranteed of Swiss-style contemporary, efficient and open-minded hospitality."

roomsXML is winner of numerous industry

awards and accolades, including 'MSE 2' high credit worthiness certificate from CRISIL – an S&P Global company. "We see huge potential with roomsXML. With their innovative technology and distribution reach in emerging markets like Asia Pacific and Middle East, we look forward to welcoming scores of guests at our group properties," says **Amjad Nashashibi**, Director Sales and



Prakash Bang
Founder and Executive Chairman
roomsXML.com, India Travel Award winner

Marketing, Swiss Quality Hotels International.

Experiential tours in demand

Regular holidays are evolving into experiences and bringing about this change is Vedic Walks.

TT BUREAU

The idea of holidaying is undergoing a subtle change and Vedic Walks, a division of Active Internationals Travel Network is helping bring this about by offering bespoke and experiential tours to the inbound traffic. Speaking

about the gradual change is **Anirudh Shukla**, Founder and Director, Vedic Walks, who says, "Talking about Rajasthan, travellers are now looking for experiences beyond forts and palaces. Experiences that involve human interaction be it with an artist for a workshop or a home cook for cooking lessons."



Anirudh Shukla
Founder & Director
Vedic Walks

The UK, US, Spain and France are his biggest source markets. But the company has seen growth in experiential travellers from Brazil, Australia and New Zealand in the past two years. "Nevertheless, inbound tour operators in India remain our biggest market for experiential tours. We service the B2B market as well and with pride. Our division, Vedic Walks, has been developing bespoke tours and experiences for top inbound travel DMCs in India. We go a step ahead and offer 'white label' services to our B2B partners to keep their brand promise," Shukla adds.

Until now, Vedic Walks had been working as an experiential travel partner in Rajasthan for high-end luxury tour operators in India. But it believes the time has come when it should also offer ground-handling services which generally include transport, guide and assistance. Shukla says, "The biggest advantage for our partners is that they will not have to go back and forth for developing new products and getting product updates."

Small groups now look for indigenous experiences, less time for shopping and more for cultural exchanges and option for boutique hotels. "So, if you are an inbound travel company and still do not have a service provider for experiential tours, you need to either revisit your product or change your market. Every time you propose a generic travel product, it is as good as an opportunity lost," he says.

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EVENT TALK

MAY 2017

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

JUNE 2017

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

JULY 2017

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

AUGUST 2017

Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Kochi	3-5
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Pune	10-12
ACTE Conference	Tokyo, Japan	22-23
La Cita	Florida, USA	29-31

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Pullman Novotel New Delhi Aerocity

New Delhi

Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity has announced the appointment of **Tristan Beau de Lomenie** as Director of Operation LUXE Hotels India apart from his current role as General Manager Delegate of Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity. Lomenie has been associated with AccorHotels for almost 30 years now having been responsible for managing many AccorHotels across many brands and locations. With AccorHotels India, Lomenie has been associated since 2013. In his extended role, Lomenie will be responsible for the operations of all the luxury and upscale hotels in India.



Royal Orchid Suites

Bengaluru

Royal Orchid Hotel has announced the appointment of **Dr. Shinoj Joseph** as the General Manager for Royal Orchid Suites. Joseph comes with more than nine years of experience in hospitality. Prior to joining Royal Orchid Suites, he was the General Manager at Ginger Hotels-Taj Hotels & Palaces. He also worked with some of the renowned brands such as ITC Riwaz, Kumarakom Lake Resort and Muthoot Hotel, to name a few. In his new role, Dr. Shinoj will be responsible for overseeing the performance of the brand's properties in India in terms of strategic direction, guest satisfaction, and day-to-day operations.



Elbon Conferences & Events

New Delhi

Rajiv Pande has joined Elbon Conferences and Events, a PCO division of Minar Group, as Senior Vice President (Business Development). He brings with him 23 years of MICE experience. Pande's last assignment was with Plan it! Meetings and Conferences where he spent nearly a decade. In his career spanning more than two decades, Pande has worked with corporates like WISITEX, Carlson Wagonlit, SITA, Trade Wings, Creative Travel, TCI and MCI. Pande started his MICE career with standalone exhibitions at WISITEX Foundation in 1994.



The Courtyard Marriott Kochi Airport Hotel

Kochi

Michael Lestourgeon joins Courtyard Marriott Kochi Airport hotel as the new Associate Director of Sales. Lestourgeon comes with over 10 years of experience in the hospitality industry. In his new role, Lestourgeon would lead in planning, developing and implementing the Sales strategies for Courtyard Marriott Kochi Airport hotel and Kochi Marriott hotel. Prior to joining the Courtyard Marriott Kochi Airport, he was the Associate Director of Sales, National Sales Marriott International. He has worked in different capacities with Marriott India as well as other major hospitality chains like Gulliver's Travel Associates, Westin and Le Royal Meridien.



JW Marriott Pune

Pune

Debarati Bose has been appointed as the Director of Sales and Marketing for JW Marriott Pune. In her current role, Bose will be spearheading responsibilities such as setting annual budgets, forecasting, analysing revenue reports and strategy building to increase the hotel's RevPAR and the banquet sales, amongst others. Over the years, she has been handling sales operations and marketing responsibilities with the Oberoi Group. Her expertise lies in strategically aligning objectives and activities will see her execute a pivotal role in all sales & marketing decisions.



Yogesh Bisht has joined Elbon Conferences & Events as Senior Vice President. He comes with over 24 years of experience in the areas of MICE, Sales and Operations, Management, Administration and Leadership. His previous engagement was with Plan it! Meetings & Conferences. MICE sales, operations, administration, guidance and motivating team members are his forte. His past assignments have been with Indtravels (Carlson Wagonlit), ITC Travel House and Travel Corporation of India. He has a passion for travelling, trekking, motorcycling and bicycling and pursues these activities in his spare time.



JW Marriott Pune

Pune

Aparajita Das has been appointed as Director of Services of JW Marriott Pune. She has more than a decade of experience in the housekeeping department. Das holds a three year Diploma in Hotel & Catering Management from the Institute of Advanced Management and a Bachelor's degree in International Hospitality Management from Queen Margaret University, Scotland. 12 years ago, she began her career with the Taj group and has worked at hotels like Novotel - Kolkata Hotel & Residences, The Ritz Carlton Bangalore, The Courtyard by Marriott Pune, The Oberoi Trident - BKC, The Oberoi Grand Kolkata, and The Taj Coromandel, Chennai.



Hotel Royal Orchid

Bengaluru

Armed with an MBA in Marketing, **Akash V** joins Hotel Royal Orchid as its Marketing Manager. He will be responsible for leading the marketing team as well as overseeing entire marketing plans for all hotels. Before joining Royal Orchid, Akash has worked in South Africa, Dubai and India with Mirah Hospitality where he handled marketing for brands like Rajdhani and Rasovara. In his new role, Akash will be responsible for designing the strategies in marketing & communications.



Jaipur Marriott Hotel

Jaipur

Azeem Khan joins Jaipur Marriott Hotel as its Assistant Marketing & Communication Manager. In his new role, Khan will be looking after complete offline and online marketing activity at Jaipur Marriott. Armed with an MBA in Marketing, Khan has worked as Assistant Marketing Manager at Holiday Inn Jaipur City Centre. He has an overall work experience of four and a half years.



TALKing People

Technology connoisseur **Matthew Powell**, MD, Travelport Middle East and South Asia, is a quintessential experiential traveller. When it comes to vacations, he shies away from the glitz and glamour of high-end properties and instead opts to stay in traditional huts, immersing himself in the local culture. "I personally love Vietnam, especially the north part. Everything is so peaceful and pristine there!" he claims. His most memorable experiences have been the trek to Mt. Kilimanjaro as well as some relaxing time off in the shacks of Goa.



Krishna Kumar, General Manager, Radisson Hyderabad HITEC City, loves cycling and travel. "There is nothing that beats a long ride very early in the morning which sets up my day beautifully too. Cycling and travelling are the most enjoyable activities I indulge in," he says. Thailand remains his favourite destination with Phi Phi islands being his preferred place to visit. "My most memorable holiday remains a three week trip along the Andaman Coast with the family," Kumar adds.



Ranjeesh PK., General Manager, Davanam Sarovar Portico Suites, Bengaluru, believes in working hard and relaxing well. "The hotel business is a demanding one and I welcome any chance to ride out on my Harley to de-stress. Spending time at home with my wife and son are blissful moments for me, and I look forward to us spending time together on a Europe tour where we can soak in the best of culture, food, and experiences," he adds.





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Clarks Inn forays into Nepal

After establishing itself in the Indian market, Clarks Inn Group of Hotels is all set to open its latest property in Kathmandu, Nepal, reveals **S.N. Srivastava**, President & Co-founder, Clarks Inn Group of Hotels.



NISHA VERMA

Q Please elaborate on Clarks Inn Group of Hotels' foray into new markets?

Clarks Inn witnessed huge growth in 2016 as it added a total of 21 new properties, including 12 operational hotels, last year with total tally now reaching 75 hotels. At Clarks Inn, we are most excited about making our first foray into international market with a five-star property in Kathmandu, Nepal, towards the end of 2017.

New hotels opened and signed in 2016 include Bhagalkot, Buxor, Hampi, Mysuru, Patna, Shimoga, Sultanpur, Balan, Kanpur, Ara, Faizabad, Katra, Bijapur, Noida, Vasundhara, Kurloon, Greater Noida, Ujjain, two in Shirdi, and Vrindavan. Of these, 12 properties at Alwar, Bhagalkot, Dehradun, Gangtok, Gwalior, Buxor, Musoorie, Mysuru, Panchkula, Shimoga, Sultapura and Ujjain, respectively, became operational in 2016. The Group is now eyeing another year of sustained growth in 2017 and beyond, and hopes to have a 100 hotels portfolio by the year end.

Q What is the USP of Clarks Inn Hotels?

After launching in 2006, Clarks Inn has emerged as the fastest growing hotel company in the budget and mid-market segments in India with a portfolio of over 75 hotels, including 40 in operation today, spread across 16 states in India and one in Nepal. The USP behind this unprecedented growth is Clarks Inn's tremendous delivery on its brand promise, to deliver world-class and value-for-money hospitality experiences across its hotels.

Q How do you tackle competition in the rapidly growing mid-market hotels segment?

Our customers and owners trust our focus on services, personalised attention, affordable rental and promise to provide great value, world-class hospitality, as well as unique offering of local, regional, Indian and international cuisines. Our record of repeat customers and customer retention is very strong. Besides, we maintain excellent post-stay connection with our guests. The unobtrusive customer

Q On what basis do you choose a new destination for a hotel?

Every region in India is showing strong economic activities and recording even stronger economic growth. Therefore, at this period of growth and prosperity in India, I personally see the 'destination' less of an issue for a hotel project than the execution of the plan and utilisation of the resources to the best of one's ability and advantage.

However, we do have our market research and intelligence resources, which are very unconventional and don't necessarily follow the modern matrices like others in choosing a destination for hotel. This has been an important reason why we have been able to buck all trends and have emerged as the fastest growing hotel company in the budget and mid-market seg-

seas. We have worked hard in developing resources at unit levels to leverage each others' strength.

Q What incentives do you offer the travel agents to boost sales?

Travel agents and tour operators are one of our closest business partners and have supported us right from the beginning and vice versa. Besides engaging with them directly through our trade sales division, we also participate in travel trade fairs in India and overseas to interact with and meet prospective trade partners.

Q How do you apply technology to ease business and enhance guest experience?

From seamless reservation and online booking to maintaining customer database that offer our patrons

“After launching in 2006, Clarks Inn has emerged as the fastest growing hotel company in the budget and mid-market segments in India with a portfolio of over 75 hotels, including 40 in operation today, spread across 16 states in India and one in Nepal.”

S.N. Srivastava
President & Co-founder
Clarks Inn Group of Hotels



ment in India. Of course, Tier-II, -III and -IV cities have been a focus area for us, where we see little risk and stronger ROI, but that again is a fact that many hotel companies would not agree up on.

Q What kind of promotional strategies have you adopted to create awareness about the brand?

Our marketing and promotional activities are comprehensive and 360 degree in nature. Our promotional outreach encompasses consumer, trade, online

seamless check-in and later the in-room experience in all our properties, advanced CRS, CRM and other such technologies are extensively used at every stage to make our guests' stay a delightful experience with Clarks Inn hotels. Besides, we are also constantly upgrading these technologies to provide our guests, bookers, travel agents, hotel staffs, the best of what is available in the market. Apart from upgrading its website and customer feedback system, Clarks Inn will also soon launch its own app that will not only help customers booking at the first point of touch but also offer information about our properties and the destinations they are located in.

Q How do you promote sustainability and ecotourism at your properties?

Sustainability is an integral part of Clarks Inn corporate philosophy. As hotel operators, most of the properties that we operate come to us at an advanced stage of development giving us little or no say in hotels' sustainable development. However, the properties that come to us at the greenfield stage are starkly different in adopting sustainability and ecofriendly practices. However, notwithstanding at what stage we get involved in, all our hotel operation and services, from kitchen and in-room services to back office and front desk, are strictly guided by sustainable practices. ↴



Velvet Clarks Exotica, Zirakpur

database management is a huge advantage and customers feel very good about it, not only because of the seamless check-in and services that it helps us offer, but also because they are accorded due acknowledgement as our patrons.

space, among others. Not only are we aggressive in digital space directly as well as with OTAs, but we have other channels and offline initiatives like corporate networking. We also attend trade road shows and fairs in India and over-

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