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ME shot to medical tourism

As a growing sector in India, medical tourism has now been taken over by hospitals and corporate houses, although it was started by tour operators. India receives good numbers from the Middle East, and this growth is aided by state-of-the-art medical facilities and 30-day e-visa facility for selected countries.



TT Bureau



EM Najeed
Senior Vice President
Indian Association
of Tour Operators

“With excellent hospitals, world-class doctors and experienced paramedics, medical tourism is a great opportunity in India. A CII-McKinsey study reports that Indian medical tourism is expected to grow 30 per cent annually to grow to USD 9 billion by 2020. India currently accounts for around 18 per cent of the global medical tourism market. Locations like Kerala has a great opportunity to grow as a recuperative leisure destination in the years to come.”



Subhash Goyal
Managing Director
Stic Travel Group

“For the first time, we have getting a medical tourism board established, of which I am a member. We are going to have a common website with all the hospitals, accreditation and specialisation. Secondly, we have requested hospitals to fix the prices for major surgeries, where the price can fluctuate between 4-5 per cent and not more than that. MOT made a film that highlights state-of-the-art medical facilities and affordability of surgeries available at one-third the price or even less than the cost of what is available in other major countries.”



Sejo Jose
Chairman
IATO Kerala Chapter

“Wellness and medical tourism in India has witnessed tremendous increase in traffic in the recent past. In fact, during the Kerala floods last year, there were cancellations for leisure tours but medical centres along with wellness and Ayurveda centres were running full. In terms of source markets, people are mostly flocking from the Gulf and Middle East who visit the country for various check-ups. As far as Ayurveda and spiritual tourism is concerned, we have a great movement from Eastern Europe, Western Europe and Russia. The medical visa has worked in favour of this sector.”

Contd on page 8 ▶

'Indian inbound will certainly grow'

Satyajeet Rajan (IAS), Former Director General, Tourism, shares the biggest achievements and challenges for inbound tourism in an exclusive interview with **TRAVTALK**.



Nisha Verma

The association with Ministry of Tourism (MOT) is one of **Satyajeet Rajan's** best assignments as he feels honoured to be a part of the largest employment generator

in the country. However, the employment data in India tells a different story altogether, on which, he commented, "Tourism needs to grow at much larger rate of



growth. In fact, the entire short-haul market needs to be tapped, right from the Middle East market to the biggest market in the world, which is China as well as the Southeast Asian market. All

the stakeholders in the tourism sector need to look at these short-haul markets for faster growth as well as for faster employment generation."

The outbound market of India, according to Rajan,

is growing more rapidly than the inbound market. Sharing his views on the state of inbound tourism in India, he said, "The inbound market will grow from the countries from where the income growth is faster.



Satyajeet Rajan (IAS)
Former Director General
Tourism

Contd on page 6 ▶

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Maya makes its way to Chennai

The sixth edition of India Travel Awards- South 2019 will be held at Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa in Chennai on May 27, 2019 to felicitate tourism and hospitality industry's frontrunners in South India.



As a recognised all-India platform to reward and celebrate the success of travel and hospitality industry professionals, India Travel Awards is setting new benchmarks in the industry with every passing edition. **Nikhil Jeet**, Convener, India Travel Awards (ITA) informs that these are the first and only regional awards to reward achievers from every region, who have collectively supported the growth of the tourism industry and taken it to newer heights.

"Growth of the tourism and hospitality industry in the country is a mark of progress and development of the country itself. Every entity contributes to the overall development of these sectors. With a forecast of 20 million inbound tourists in 2020, the growth of tourism is going to escalate and we are going to be a prominent name on the global tourism map. Constant



Nikhil Jeet
Convener
India Travel Awards



Shibil Malik
General Manager, Sheraton Grand
Chennai Resort & Spa

recognition and acknowledgement of the efforts put in by industry players is a catalyst for this growth. With these awards, we intend to boost their spirit, recognise their significant role in the overall development of tourism and hospitality, and inspire them to be future leaders. We hope the tourism sector gets its due share in the coming years, leading the way for an even better tomorrow," he says.



As the host of the black-tie award ceremony, Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa in Chennai is all prepped up to put up a good show. **Shibil Malik**, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa, feels that ITA is an excellent forum to recognise talent and reward the efforts put in by colleagues who contribute to the growth of the industry. "It's very ethos is to honour industry achievements and

we are glad to host this event at our recently opened hotel. Tourism is a crucial industry for India and an integral part of the socio-economic development. The awards are a standard of excellence and an ideal platform to recognise and inspire colleagues from our industry for all the hard work, dedication and achievements," he says.

Located on the East Coast Road in Chennai and spread over 10 acres, the hotel is the first Sheraton resort in India.

The 125-room Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa is inspired by four Ss, namely, sun, sand, sea and South India, and this is reflected in the design of the hotel

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Jet crash lands

The beginning of this year has descended a pall of gloom over Indian skies. However, the crashing of Jet Airways comes as no surprise to those who have been following the airline's journey so far. Jet's troubles started when its then Chairman, Naresh Goyal, decided to buy Air Sahara in spite of many experts warning him against it. After Jet acquired the loss-making Air Sahara for about ₹1,450 crore in 2007, it was branded as the budget carrier JetLite. Around the same time, India witnessed a surge of low-cost carriers like IndiGo and Spicejet who were offering cheaper tickets. This acquisition made Jet bleed and the airline wrote off its entire investment in 2015. Also, in spite of low-cost carriers making flying affordable for a price-sensitive market like India, Jet continued to focus greatly on corporates.

However, this debacle may now help turn the government's attention towards including aviation turbine fuel (ATF) under the purview of Goods and Services Tax (GST). Today, fuel makes up about 40 per cent of the cost of running an airline in India; little wonder then that airlines struggle to make money even as passenger traffic continues to grow at double-digit pace. Currently, ATF prices vary from state to state. In Maharashtra and Delhi, it attracts a tax of 25 per cent. Hopefully, this will serve as a rude jolt to the powers that be!

Eco-exhibitions?

The recent TrèS 2019, organised by RARE India, set standards on how responsible tourism can be practised even at the exhibition space. As exhibitions and travel shows are getting bigger, there is a greater demand for infrastructure and material for décor, which ranges from flex, plastic, glass and what not. TrèS 2019 used recycled cardboard for branding and creating stall divisions. The effort not only showcased their ethos but the belief of sustainability that the brand propagates. However, would it be practical for international events to follow suit? While the discussion around responsibility is always a focal point at these forums, adopting it could be slightly difficult. With big corporate houses going fully environment friendly, we can probably look at something like eco-exhibitions in the future.

Then (May, 1993)

Jet Airways commences operations

- In May 1993, Jet Airways started its operations with a fleet of four B737-300 aircraft, which was to be expanded to eight aircraft within one year of operations.
- It was reported that in the first month, two B737-300 aircraft were to join the Jet Airways fleet. The aircraft were leased from Ansett Worldwide Services Australia.
- Jet Airways was planning to operate in new tourist and commercial operations in Maharashtra.
- Also, the airline along with Government of India, was looking at restructuring the airports to allow safe landings of the state-of-the-art aircraft and similar jet aircraft.



Jet suspends operations

Now (April 2019)

On April 17, 2019, Jet Airways announced the temporary shutting down of its operations after failing to get any emergency funding for keeping the airline afloat. Vinay Dube, CEO, Jet Airways, wrote an emotional letter to its employees, which said, "After 25 years of sharing the 'Joy of Flying' with Indian and international guests, Jet Airways and its Board of Directors have been forced to take this extreme measure, as prolonged and sustained efforts with lenders and authorities to ensure the sustainability of the airline did not yield the desired results."



The inbound growth trajectory

► Contd from page 3

The economic growth from short-haul markets has been increasing. The Asia income growth has been much more than Europe and America, and it is this market that we need to concentrate. In fact, we have the thrust in the Chinese market as well as the ME and South East (SE) Asian market. We need to look at all these markets repeatedly and keep sending the team of different stakeholders to these markets."

India was ranked as the world's third most powerful country for travel and tourism in 2018, according to World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) new T&T Power and Performance Report. Rajan lauded, saying, "Such a power ranking and the growth in tourism receipts is one of the four indicators of growth. There has been a big growth in receipts compared to rest of the world. The growth rates of inbound tourists are

more in number as well as in the receipts than the average world growth."

On the major achievements of MOT during his tenure, Rajan said, "The kind of infrastructure created under SWADESH and PRASAD schemes is just ₹7000 crore plus that has covered many of the small places across the country, thereby leading to a doubling of domestic tourism in five years. Secondly, inbound

tourism has also grown considerably. Further, e-visa reforms have also been a major success story."

He insisted that the raising of visa fee this year has completely switched off the Russians from India, especially Goa. "2018-19 was a year of negative growth primarily because of the increase in visa fee. Even 40-50 dollars per head matter as far as decision making is concerned." 📉

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Karnataka
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calls out to trade

In an endeavour to increase domestic footfalls, Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) and Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka, organised multi-city roadshows across the country to help travel trade promote the state in a new light.



Manas Dwivedi

Karnataka Tourism has set an objective to conduct at least two roadshows every month, covering one Tier-I and one Tier-II city, informed **Kumar Pushkar**, Managing Director, Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC). Sharing details about the roadshow in Delhi, he said, "We would like to take forward all our partners in the tourism sector to different places and build a networking platform. In Delhi, we had 25 trade partners from Karnataka who showcased their products, while we welcomed almost 150 tour operators from the city as buyers. I am sure it will help us in doing a better business. There has been a lot of development in the state

in terms of improved facilities and infrastructure. This is a right platform where we can elaborate our offerings and build better networking."

Pushkar further informed that Karnataka has moved from the ninth position to the third position in last two years, as per the India Tourism reports. "Karnataka had welcomed 14 crore domestic tourists two years ago while the tourist footfall increased to 21 crores last year. This growth in a period of two years is phenomenal. Looking at the betterment of infrastructure, the state has witnessed positive changes in the last couple of years," he explained.

Many new hotels have come up at major tourist attractions

in the state. "Hampi hardly had any five-star hotel three years back. The city currently has at least seven five-star hotels. In total, we have 1,500 rooms in Hampi and Hosapete. Now, Mysore also has a good number of five-star hotels. Hill stations like Coorg and

“Karnataka had welcomed 14 crore domestic tourists two years ago that increased to 21 crores last year”

Madikeri now feature so many hotels besides plenty of resorts and homestays. Same is the scenario with areas like Hassan and Chikmagalur. Things have been changing in the state and with better facilities, road infrastructure and air connectivity are also improving."

Pushkar also briefed about Karnataka's new promotional campaign. "Our new campaign called 'Script Your Adventure' is part of promoting the state globally with an eye-catching TVC and print campaign. Our tagline says, One State, Many Worlds, which truly suits our

multiple diverse tourism offerings and destinations. With the new campaign, we want to attract tourists to the state offering them freedom to script their own adventure along with having mesmerising experiences during their stay. We are also promoting

Karnataka aggressively on social media and other digital marketing mediums," he said.

To engage dialogue and business among stakeholders of the industry, Karnataka Tourism is organising Karnataka International Travel Expo 2019 (KITE) in Bengaluru from August 25-27. "The need was to conduct a travel show for showcasing Karnataka on the international platform immediately. The two-day show will feature B2B roadshow and meetings between buyers and sellers, where 100 hosted international and 250 hosted domestic buyers would be visiting Bengaluru to network, interact and do business with all our stakeholders. There will be post-

Fam tours for buyers too. The show will help tourism achieve new heights in Karnataka and build relationships across the world," he concluded.



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Avant Garde on a safari

Great Plains Conservation has signed on Mumbai-based Avant Garde Consulting as its sales ambassadors for its safari camps in Botswana and Kenya.



TT Bureau

South African company Great Plains Conservation has a newly-minted agreement with Avant Garde Consulting, headed up by Pooja Wadhwa and Kunal Munshaw. They will be responsible for targeted sales, marketing and public relations activities in the Indian market. Dereck Joubert, CEO, Great Plains Conservation, says, "We have always enjoyed the shared values and ethos of our guests from India at our safari camps in Botswana and Kenya. There is just something special about sharing the joy and appreciation that we love about this business. On opening newer safari offerings with the new camps in Botswana and Kenya this year and the totally new safari experience in Zimbabwe – the time came for us to further grow our relationship with these valued guests and to bring on a more



Pooja Wadhwa
Founding Partner
Avant Garde

permanent sales presence in India. Avant Garde has a great reputation in the Indian market and we feel that we share common values and sensitivities when it comes to conservation ethics, high-end tourism experiences and being respectful and caring to everyone and everything we touch."

Pooja Wadhwa, Founding Partner, Avant Garde, says, "Our foray into the African continent could not have been

met with a better partnership than the one we have found in Great Plains Conservation, a company that is so passionate about preserving everything that Africa really stands for, wildlife, nature and its people. It also leads us towards conscious luxury, tranquil travelling and giving back to where we came from, something that the evolved traveller is seeking, in today's fast-paced world."

Great Plains Conservation is an African-focused conservation tourism focused organisation that creates conservation and community initiatives through a sustainable bouquet of small luxurious camps, lodges and safari experiences. Great Plains Conservation currently runs and manages safari camps and lodges in Botswana, Kenya and Zimbabwe.

Fuelling medical tourism

Contd from page 3

"Medical tourism has been doing very well in Madurai, Chennai and Trichy. It is a completely different business model and I don't think any tour operators or IATO members are involved in this business. This sector is growing very fast with a growth of minimum 20 per cent. Every year one big hospital is opening in all cities with 200-300 beds that are always full. Most of the people coming for medical treatments are from the Middle East and Bangladesh who opt for heart and kidney treatments. India has a good reputation for medical care. Even Mysore and Bengaluru are doing well in attracting medical tourism. This is aided by the medical visa that the government introduced with recently."



K Pandian, Chairman
Tamil Nadu, Indian Association
of Tour Operators



Atul Rai
Managing Director
Ananya Tours

"Medical tourism as a sector has moved on to the large corporates as they find it a lucrative business. Whoever can take care of international insurance is in this business, including hospitals. The reality is that we as the industry started this business, but it's not with us anymore and the bigger corporates have taken over. In order to handle the basic travel arrangements, visa and on-ground facility, which is a minor part of the bigger billing they are eyeing, they hire a small agency to do the running around. It's no more our domain. USA and the UK are also big markets, but India is pacing well in terms of pricing and matching the standards."

"Even though medical tourism is promoted by inbound tour operators, the numbers are not very impressive. The high cost of hotel stay is affected due to high GST, ultimately affecting the overall benefit of cheaper medical facilities as compared to European countries. Moreover, medical tourism is still scattered and not recognised in a complete way. In states like Maharashtra, it is still expensive as compared to south India. Kerala for that matter is faring well in medical tourism as far as the Middle Eastern countries are concerned. Among medical tourism, the cosmetic sector has to be explored. This market is very well captured by Singapore, Thailand and Sri Lanka."



Himanshu Agashiwala
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India to get its first Raffles

Accor has recently announced the advent of its new brand, Raffles in India in Jaipur and Udaipur. **Jean-Michel Cassé**, COO – India and South Asia, Accor, elaborates on the brand and how India might see some more Accor brands in the coming years.



RAFFLES
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Anupriya Bishnoi

With a stronger focus on luxury and premium brands, Accor is all set to bring its Raffles brand to India in Jaipur and



Udaipur. The first property will open in Udaipur by mid-2020 with 101 rooms and suites. The group will later venture into the Jaipur market by 2022 with 55 suites. Both hotels will deliver a palatial experience in an extraordinary setting along with the famously discreet and personalised Raffles service.

Speaking more on the brand and its suitability for the Indian market, Jean-Michel Cassé, says, "The signing of the Raffles Jaipur and Raffles Udaipur marks a historic moment for Accor in India and certainly for tourism in India. We are seeing increasing demand for luxury travel in the country and are looking

forward to expanding Accor's globally renowned portfolio of luxury brands here. The addition of the iconic Raffles brand signals a new era for our group."

Rajasthan is unique for its rich heritage and tradition and is famous for its spectacular palaces and forts. While Jaipur

epicentres for the highest levels of luxury.

Cassé further shares more on Accor's expansion plans and its properties in the pipeline. He mentions, "Today we have 51 properties in India, one in Colombo, 52 in the region, taking the room count to 9,500 with the strong

“ We look at the term ‘profitability’ differently because we are now a pure asset-light company. It only entails looking at the operations of hotels for us ”

forms part of the culturally rich tourist circuit known as The Golden Triangle comprising Delhi, Agra and Jaipur, Udaipur is a natural extension of this, given its proximity to Jaipur. Both cities are renowned as

presence in 22 cities. What we have in the pipeline today is 25 per cent of our current inventory which will come in the next three to five years. Hopefully, we will also see new brands in this pipeline."

Since Accor has a wealth of brands, each performs differently and yields different profits owing to the dynamics of the market the hotel operates in. Cassé explains, "We look at the term 'profitability' differently because we are now a pure asset-light company so when I am speaking of profitability, I am just looking at the operations of the hotels. The reality in India is, it takes at least two years to ramp up and be at par with the market, and once it is at par with the market, then we normally go ahead of what the market does."

Also, with the quirks and options on offer, the arrival of Airbnb and the likes have put the hotel industry on its toe. But how does it affect

the industry or if it does at all? According to Cassé, "In our hotels, on an average, we have one customer per room who stays for one to two nights.

In Airbnb, you will notice the booking is always for more than one person, usually a family and for a longer period of stay; usually for three to five people with a stay ranging from three to five nights.

So, we are not playing in the same league, it's a different offering. So, a customer can be an Accor guest today and stay in an Airbnb tomorrow because they both are aimed at two different kind of experiences. It's in fact good to see the hospitality market evolving." 



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Future of Jet's codeshares

With around 20 codeshare partners from across the world, Jet Airways had the most widespread connection across India before it cancelled operations in April. The news disturbed passengers who already had bookings on the airline directly or via codeshares. TRAVTALK spoke to the codeshare partners of the airline on the crisis.



TT Bureau

April 17, 2019, turned out to be a black day for Indian aviation when Jet Airways announced cancellation of all its flights and ceased all operations due to a lack of funding. The airline was struggling to stay in business for a couple of months before finally pulling the plug, though temporarily. A statement from the airline read, "Since no emergency funding from the lenders or any other source is forthcoming, the airline will not be able to pay for fuel or other critical services to keep the operations going." Currently, the airline is seeking a private investor to buy 75 per cent of the company to restart operations. "Jet Airways hopes to bring the 'Joy of Flying' back to guests as soon as possible," claimed the statement.

Jet Airways had codeshared with around 20 airlines and was connecting their passengers to different parts of the country. Now, what happens to passengers who have booked on these airlines, with Jet Airways being grounded?

Etihaad

A major investor in the airline and a big shareholder, Etihad Airways pulled out of the deal with Jet Airways during the recent turmoil. On the crisis, the airline's spokesperson commented, "Following the announcement of Jet Airways' suspension of operations, Etihad continues to re-accommodate and support affected guests. Our teams are assisting guests with their travel arrangements and rebooking those affected onto the next available flights.

We continue to work with Jet management, lenders and key stakeholders in the context of the lender-managed effort to restructure the company."

Air France

Air France came to the rescue of its passengers, saying, "At this stage, Air France and KLM still honour customers booked on Air France and KLM flights under a Jet Airways code and holding a Jet Airways ticket."

Delta Air Lines

Delta Air Lines, in its statement, commented, "Delta is assisting Delta customers booked on Jet Airways flights to support their re-accommodation via alternative travel options. We apologise for any inconvenience caused to Delta customers impacted by Jet."



Virgin Atlantic

Virgin Atlantic echoed the sentiment, saying, "As with many airlines, we operate a codeshare agreement with Jet. Any customers who have booked directly with Virgin Atlantic should check our website www.virginatlantic.com for the latest advice. All other customers on Jet operated flights should contact them directly."

Aeromexico

Airlines like Aeromexico also came forward with their reaction for the situation, and commented, "We are aware of the situation of Jet Airways and we are deeply sorry of what they are currently facing. Regarding our codeshare, Aeromexico is taking actions to reduce the impact on our customers. Fortunately, the number of affected passengers is minimal, and we have already reached out

to them. We are working to get them to their destination. We are offering them the necessary support and we are relocating them in other flights with help of other SkyTeam partners."

Fiji Airways

Another codeshare partner of Jet Airways was Fiji Airways, which said that they have temporarily stopped codeshare bookings with Jet Airways flights. ✈️



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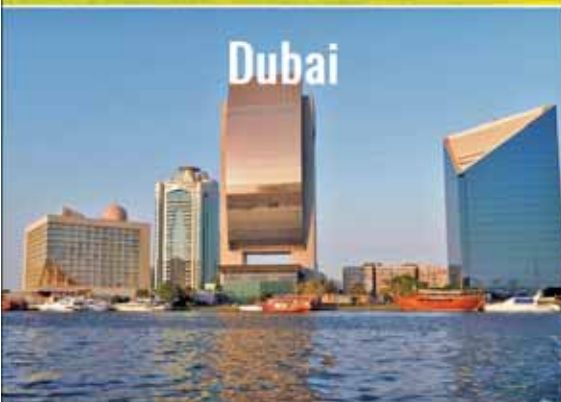
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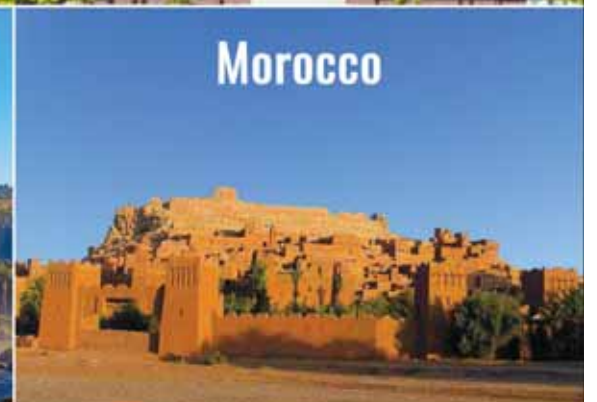
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Mazda Travel Inc.



TT Bureau

Mazda Travel has partnered with Australia-headquartered APT to offer their Canada and Alaska tour and cruise programmes exclusively to Indian travel agents. Mernoz Shastri, Director, Mazda Travel, says, "We are well-known as the India GSA for the Rocky Mountaineer. It was only logical that we partner with APT that has over 90 years of history as Australia's largest and most successful tour operator. Their Canada and Alaska tours make Mazda Travel a one-stop shop for Indian agents wanting to offer their clients the trip of a lifetime to this beautiful part of the world."



Mernoz Shastri
Director
Mazda Travel

APT offers unique inclusions in their fully-inclusive programmes that include 'Freedom of Choice' dining where guests are free to choose when, where and who they dine with from multi-choice menus in a variety of restaurants. 'Freedom of Choice' sightseeing allows them to select the activity that suits their interest, along with guaranteed view rooms at Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, luxurious Wi-Fi-equipped coaches and top tour directors.

Another feature of the APT range is the inclusion of a seven-night Inside Passage Cruise on Holland America Line or Princess Cruise ships. Craig James, Sales Manager, APT, says, "We always have the cruise at the end of the land tour. It's a highlight and it is wonderful to enjoy the land tour but still have the cruise to look forward to." APT tours have no hidden costs or optional excursions. All tipping, round-trip airport transfers,

porterage, port charges, etc. are included in the commissionable price.

Explaining why Mazda Travel chose to partner with APT, Shastri says, "I spend a lot of time in Canada and I often ask tourists how they are enjoying

“ The signature experiences APT offers are special like early access to Victoria's Butchart Gardens before the crowds arrive ”

their tour. Without a doubt, the APT guests were always the happiest and most satisfied.

Their signature experiences are also special, like early access to Victoria's Butchart Gardens

before the crowds arrive."

Mazda Travel will also offer Travelmarvel Canada and Alaska touring products. Travelmarvel is a value brand offering all the highlights of the region and Silver Leaf service on the Rocky

Mountaineer (upgrades available). APT's Australia inbound products such as Kimberley Wilderness Adventures and Outback Wilderness Adventures can also be booked with Mazda Travel along with a host of other APT and Travelmarvel global destinations. ↗

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IHG® & SAMHI: Winning team

It's tough to find the right partner, but when you do, miracles can happen! **Rajit Sukumaran**, Chief Development Officer—EMEAA, InterContinental Hotels Group, talks about the company's successful partnership with SAMHI to re-launch its Holiday Inn Express brand.



Hazel Jain

Q14 hotels at one go! How have you managed to stay on such an ambitious target?

We had been trying to collaborate with SAMHI for some time and the opportunity presented

itself in 2017. The way they approached us was to say that they wanted to use it as a way to re-launch the Holiday Inn Express brand. It was an interesting proposition! There were obviously some challenges but the key drivers working for us were great locations and a great partner.

This partnership is probably the largest portfolio transaction of that nature for a hotel management company – to do 14 hotels and 2,000 rooms in one go. In India, that was almost probably the largest one announced so far. We signed the deal in 2017 and we opened the first 10 hotels by the end of 2018. Something that was unheard of. But we managed to pull it off and we

not only managed to open them but also open them on budget. In some cases, like the first one we opened in Gurgaon six months ago is operating well above expectations. Six months in and we are already seeing 21 per cent above the forecasted RevPAR we thought we will achieve within the year!

QSo the partnership mix was right. What is the status so far?

It shows what you can do if you have the right partner, bringing in the right asset, in the right locations and with the right collaborators. 10 hotels are operational as of now. The others are in various stages of construction since some were brownfield projects. So it will take another year and a half.

“You can excel if you have the right partner, bringing in the right asset, in the right locations and with the right collaborators”

QAre you looking for other similar collaborations in India?

In the last five years, IHG has grown by 160 per cent! We now have close to 40 operational hotels and another 40 under construction across India. Our growth drivers are the Holiday Inn brand family, which accounts for probably 70-80 per cent of our growth in India. Almost 70 per cent of the hotels in the pipeline are under the Holiday Inn brand family and 80 per cent of the properties under construction are under this same family.

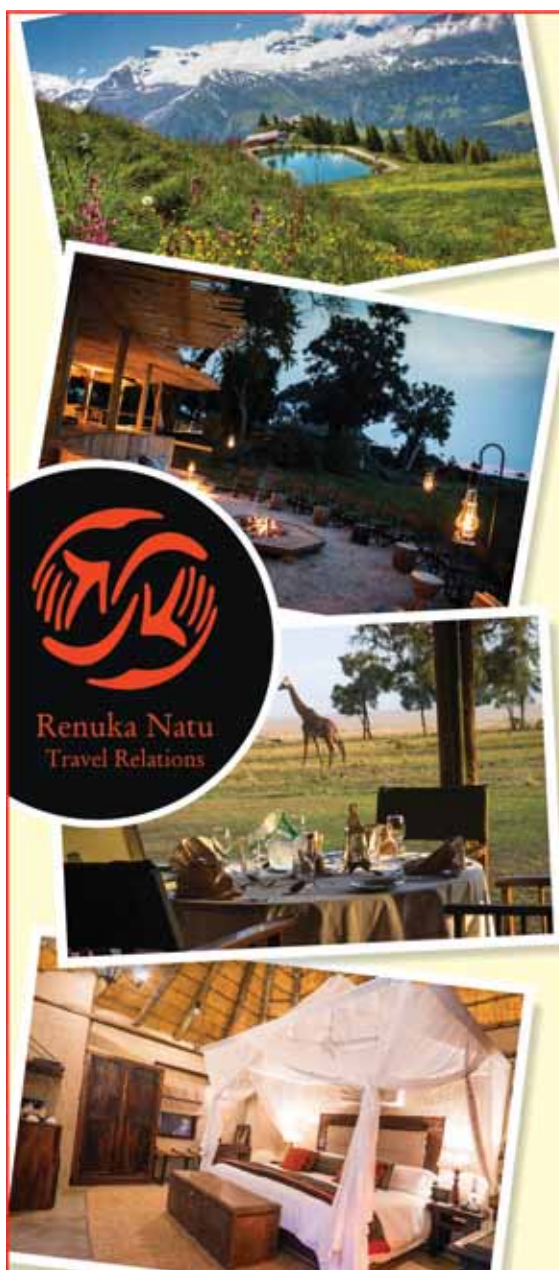
QWhy do you have so much focus on the Holiday Inn brand?

India is largely a domestic player. So you want to be able to go to the market and cater to that domestic guest and not just look at international tourists. That's why we recognised early on that our growth strategy should be from the Holiday Inn brand of family, which is in the mid and upper-mid scale and is perfect for the domestic market. It also allows you to have lower investment costs. We managed to achieve close to 10 per cent RevPAR

increase last year, making it one of our best years.

QDoes that mean IHG will not look at other brands for the India market?

Not at all. We currently have four brands present in India – InterContinental, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express and we are in active talks to bring in more brands. It is just about finding the right partner at the right time. In fact, we are in active discussions to close deals for InterContinental and Crowne Plazas in India. We are also looking at bringing our Kimpton brand into India. We are also looking at opportunities in the extended-stay area in India for our StayBridge Suites brand. ↴



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Model for sustainable tourism



TT Bureau

The Responsible Tourism (RT) Mission for Kerala Tourism started in 2018, reveals **Rupeshkumar K**, State Responsible Tourism Mission Coordinator, Department of Tourism, Govt of Kerala. "Even before starting responsible tourism, we faced agitations and struggles from the local community—agony, unethical and unscientific development of tourism. We decided to promote responsible tourism in the selected four destinations initially, and later added three more destinations during the second phase started in 2011. This means that around July 2017, we initiated seven destinations for responsible tourism. Now, in August 2017, we started the Responsible Tourism

Kerala Tourism's Responsible Tourism Mission is working towards promoting sustainability in tourism through various mediums—online as well as by working with hotels and other tourism products locally—besides encouraging community participation.

Mission, which is under direct control of Director Tourism," he shared.

Speaking about the initiatives, Rupeshkumar explained, "We are trying to develop three types of activities—majority of them being for economic responsibility, socio-cultural responsibility and environment responsibility. As part of this initiative, we have local production, procurement and supply mechanism with the hotels and resorts, which means one can supply their local products to these properties. If a destination creates money from tourism, the locals would get the money from the tourism industry. Therefore, we are trying to involve the local community to production procurement and purchase mechanism



Rupeshkumar K
State Responsible Tourism Mission Coordinator,
Department of Tourism, Govt of Kerala

with the support of hotels and resorts. During 2018, we created ₹ 7.99 crores in selected seven destinations. At the same time, we have three online platforms. The first platform is for product sales, which allows one to purchase all types of souvenirs and handicrafts from the local artisans. One can also sell products like vegetables, food items and everything else

through that process. At the same time, we have an online human resource directory, which allows a hotelier to select local people based on their capacity. This means that one can get electrician, plumber, artisan, etc from the locality on that portal. There is

"We have different experiential tour packages. Nowadays, people want to extract more from the destinations. This is not the time for sightseeing packages. We are trying to create a village-like experience package where we will try to find out community-based tourism

RT Mission is also promoting environment-friendly products. "We are trying to remove plastic bottles, plastic straws and bottled water from hotels. We are also trying to implement sustainable practices in destinations for waste management," he shared.

"We have local production, procurement and supply mechanism with the hotels and resorts, which means one can supply their local products to these properties"

also a responsible art and cultural forum, under which over 10,000 artists are directly linked with tourism industry with their art forms."

Rupeshkumar claimed that the agency also has a booking platform for a village experience.

products from the locality. We will train the local community, and later convert it into tourism products to create packages. From those packages, people will get money. At the same time, we have cuisine, storytelling and cultural experiences," he said.

Rupeshkumar insisted that they are reaching out to both international and domestic tourists. "Last year, we got around 1 lakh tourists for experiential tour packages. Out of them, 64,000 people were international. Our major source markets include the UK, USA, Spain, Germany and France. With this mission, we want to convey that we can create wonders in tourism with the support of local community whilst walking hand in hand with them," he concluded. ✈

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India as a summer destination

The winners of India Travel Awards – South list out both the popular and the unconventional tourist spots to visit during summer whilst reiterating the country’s significance as a year-round destination.



Best Tour Operator- Inbound
Cholan Tours

“According to Pandian Kumaraval, Director, Cholan Tours, India is definitely a 12-month destination. “We have everything here compared to other places in the world. We have serene beaches throughout India that can be experienced during summers. Prices work out comparatively cheaper during summer season which is an added advantage to promote India during summer. Apart from Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, other destinations haven’t been showcased properly,” he said.”



Best MICE Destination
Clarks Exotica Convention Resort & Spa

“M Balaji, CEO, Clarks Exotica Convention Resort & Spa, said that lesser known places like Aneundi, smaller temples with historic importance in and around Karnataka especially near Mangalore, Coorg, Malnad, etc, need to be promoted. “The government needs to focus not only at showcasing a destination but also in creating an experience through local art forms or other musical and cultural shows,” he mentioned.”



Best Corporate Hotel
The Oterra

“Raghu Nair, General Manager, The Oterra feels that hotels must work on seasonal packages to cater to the needs of discerning travellers. He explained, “To promote India as a summer destination, we must focus on cultural festivals and pleasant weather in the colder regions that are sure to lure tourists wanting to enjoy seasonal specialties of the region. From hill stations to beaches to monuments to backwaters to pilgrimage sites and wildlife, India offers a bounty of destinations travellers.”



Best Luxury Hotel
Park Hyatt Chennai

“For Vishal Mehra, General Manager, Park Hyatt Chennai, hill stations across all states boast of pleasant climate throughout the year, and with the summer, most of these places become the perfect getaways from the heat and clamour of urban tourist spots. “From scenic hill stations to sunny beaches, from heritage sites in urban destinations to the lush flora of Himalayas, Eastern Ghats and Western Ghats – choices for travellers can truly be found at each and every corner of India,” he said.”



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Provence catches Indian fancy

The region, new to the Indian outbound, is leveraging Paris' popularity to attract attention and eventually footfalls through its gastronomy, culture and diverse topography.



Hazel Jain from Provence

This year's Goût de France (Good France) 2019 has chosen Provence as the featured destination that will be showcased at the various events in France and in India through this platform. And about time too that locations other than Paris and South of France get some much-deserved attention from the Indian audience. While Provence is also in the south, it is in the south-east and so therefore gets ignored by the Indian outbound.

Isabelle Bremond, Director General, Provence Tourism, says, "We get very little traf-



Isabelle Bremond
Director General
Provence Tourism

fic from India – maybe about two per cent of the total number that visits France. For now, we are benefitting from Paris' popularity. We see huge potential in the India market and it is one of the international markets we want to develop and do more work here. The outbound numbers from India are huge and we would like to come to India to tap this. We are definitely preparing a suitable strategy for this."

The tourism board has an online programme but it is only for its local vendors for them to understand the international markets. Bremond adds, "We have

diverse offerings in terms of gastronomy, topography with quaint villages, mountains and the sea. Having met a lot of Indian buyers at this year's Rendezvous en France, I understand that Indians want high-end luxury products."

The biggest international source markets for Provence right now is the USA, Canada, and Korea, Japan and China in Asia. Its biggest city of Marseilles also benefits from cruise tourism welcoming almost two million passengers

every year. "Provence also has a lot of vegetarian food options since it is an agricultural territory and vegetarian food is a way of life here," she adds clarifying a query about food options available for Indians.

Sheetal Munshaw, Director – India, Atout France, says, "While Paris is still the undisputed leader, Rhone-Alpes, Occitanie, and Northern France are picking up now with lots of growth in the FIT numbers. There is also a larger night share

due to the different kind of experiences France offers. There is also a Telugu film that is being shot in the South of France. India is a priority market and we have not seen a slump in numbers in the last five years."



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Did you KNOW

1 in 5 new jobs were created by travel and tourism over the last five years, as per a latest annual research by World Travel & Tourism Council

Sustainable take on exhibitions

At a time when exhibitions are getting bigger and grander, Très 2019 held at Andaz Delhi came as a breath of fresh air, bringing together around 50 hotels and 150 tour operators in settings that reflect sustainability at every step, right from décor to concept. Perhaps a wise model to follow for many shows!



Nisha Verma

Moving beyond RARE, Très 2019 has certainly created a niche for itself in terms of offerings as well as ethos. A different entity altogether, Très 2019 brought together a total of 50 hotels under one roof, all following the same philosophy and principal. **Sowmya Vijaymohan**, Founder-Partner, Très, shared the idea behind the event, saying, "When I joined RARE India, I felt the need to have a large format for not only the RARE hotel partners but also those who were categorised under the concept of small individually-owned properties specialising in sustainability. With Très 2019, we are trying to facilitate this one set of people who put out these beautiful experi-

ences, and we have another set of people who are perhaps interested in these experiences but don't know where to find them. Since these small properties and individual stand-alone properties don't have the wherewithal to be part of all the shows, we have managed to get these people to meet each other. Très is the celebration of that."

Tracing the origin of the idea, **Shoba Mohan**, Partner, Très, revealed that it was Vijaymohan's larger idea that has been in conceptualisation for the last three years. "The agenda was to organise an event that's not restricted to RARE and its partners only but also other properties and people who love to work with RARE. It's been ideated for a long time



Sowmya Vijaymohan
Founder-Partner
Très

but Sowmya really powered it. Last year was the first step in that direction which has now evolved to become a much larger perspective," she shared.

Vijaymohan added, "All the 50 properties showcasing at Très was by invite only. The



Shoba Mohan
Partner
Très

two-day exhibition had around 50 per cent RARE properties while the non-RARE hotels were again from the field of intimate boutique, concept and experience-led properties in the Indian subcontinent. So there were many people coming from Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka too."

The event this year was much bigger not only in terms of exhibitors but also in participation, shared Vijaymohan. "Besides pre-scheduled appointments, we also had around six FTOs from different countries. One of the biggest manifestations of our success lies in having FTOs who fly all the way by paying their own fare without being hosted by anyone. We did host their stay but coming all the way from the UK, Singapore, Germany, France or Sydney, is in fact a great expression of interest. In the evening, we opened the exhibition to larger number of people, whilst having Très Discover sessions meant to discover trends, discuss ideas and get insights into a destination with an expert."

Even in terms of décor, the event followed sustainability to the core—a lesson for many other exhibitions with grand stalls using flex and plastic in abundance. "Unlike last year, this year was held indoors and we liked the flow of the studios whilst getting constant light in the space. We used glass bottles and recycled cardboards, and tried to do away with plastic as much as possible. Even for the lanyards, we used paper and a traditional 'mauli' instead of plastic ribbons. Through our years together, Sowmya and I have learnt a lot and we know what's working. Of course, the tour operator fraternity has been a big support, and there is no doubt about it," stressed Mohan. 🌿



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Visa fee hike deters Indian inbound

The marked increase in visa charges for visiting India has not gone down well with tourists across the world as well as inbound agents who claim that business has been affected whilst also expressing the impossibility of achieving the government's target of 20 million tourists by 2020.

TT Bureau



Rajiv Mehra
Vice President
Indian Association of Tour Operators

“The increase in visa fee has impacted business to India from across the world, especially from the Southeast Asian countries. We, as IATO, have taken up the matter with both Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Last year in December, we were called for a meeting by Secretary Home, MHA. Principally, it was agreed that the visa fee should be reduced and there should be no visa fee at all during the summer months. I think it should be implemented after the new government takes over, and this is set to certainly boost inbound tourism.”



Dipak Deva
Managing Director
Travel Corporation (India)

“It is harsh on visitors for the government to be asking for a visa fee. Even if it is looking to make some money out of it, the visa fee shouldn't be more than 25 dollars. The hike does impact the business as a tourist, while making a booking, would not choose India over destinations like Turkey or Egypt, because of the high visa fee here. In fact, there has been a decline in the number of tourists visiting Goa this year due to the high visa fee. If we need to increase inbound growth, the visa fee needs to be reduced. Multiple representations are being made by trade associations to the government urging them to reconsider and lower the visa fees.”



Suresh Periwal
Managing Director
Clubside Tours and Travels

“Inbound travel to India is facing multiple challenges in terms of the cost of travel as compared to other neighbouring countries with taxes on accommodation going up to 28 per cent. The hike in the visa fee will only add to their woes, thereby making India an unattractive destination to consider. The recent turbulence in the aviation sector is terrible news for tourism. The reduction in the number of seats is making travel to India very expensive. We totally support IATO in its demand for a reduction in the fee. This is a vital step to be able to attract a larger number of tourists and make India an attractive destination to travel to.”

“Visa fee hike is always a deterrent for people coming to India. If the visa fee is between \$70-80 for India, it doesn't look like inviting tourists as compared to other South Asian destinations. India is an attractive destination for international travellers for its heritage and culture. Hence, to encourage tourists to come to India, the visa fee needs to be in check. MOT recently invited representatives from various associations to get their feedback on visa fee hike. IATO proposed a reduction in the fee to make India a competitive destination. We also suggested that in low season, there should be no visa fee to encourage tourists to visit India during summers, just like what Thailand had done.”



Ravi Gosain
Treasurer, Indian Association of Tour Operators

“The visa fee for India ranges between \$70-80 approximately with an increase in validity from 90 days to a year. An increase of \$30 each on average on visa for a family of four would mean an increase of around \$120 in the cost of travelling to the country. This is at a time when our neighbouring destinations like Thailand and Indonesia are even offering free visa-on-arrival during their lean periods to attract tourists around the year. To attract tourists from around the world, MOT has to work out a gimmick with regards to the visa. Offering free visa in lean season would benefit as hotels, transporters as well as guides are comparatively free during summers.”



Rajnish Kaistha
Joint Secretary, Indian Association of Tour Operators

“The hike in visa fee has always desisted travellers. India in comparison to other countries has a long list of categories of travellers for this. And interestingly, the rates are exorbitant in each category (including Medical Visa Attendant category). Firstly, we should know our USP – i.e. tourism, medical, conferences, MiCE. If at all we wish to increase the numbers into our country, we should be more liberal about the visa fees we charge. Countries all over have realised that charging a fee for visa to the tourist discourages them as it adds to his initial tour cost. We need to understand that every visitor adds more to the economy by his or her spends when in the country.”



Sunil B Satyawakta
Chairman—Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter, Travel Agents Association of India



Deepak Gupta
Chairman—Sikkim & North Bengal Chapter, Indian Association of Tour Operators

“Visa fee is not a bigger issue but the security of the traveller visiting India is. There has been a lot of negative preaching in the outside world that India is unsafe. We have spent a huge budget on improving our goodwill throughout the globe. Thailand waived off the visa fee and witnessed a rapid hike in the number of tourists travelling to the country. The government needs to take immediate steps or provide lucrative options in terms of visa. A country like Bhutan marks friendship with Japan by reducing the royalty fee for tourists every year that results in huge number of Japanese travelling to Bhutan.”



Sandipan Ghosh
General Secretary, Eastern Himalaya Travel and Tour Operators' Association

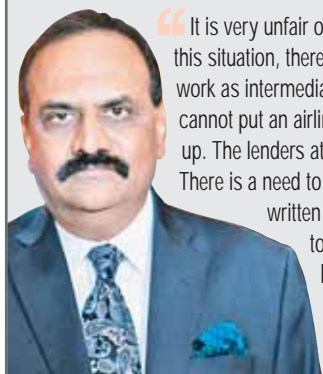
“The recent hike in the visa fees might have an adverse effect on the tourism industry as people will be apprehensive in choosing India as a destination because of the additional cost supplement. Many countries are exempting visa fees for tourists to lure them into visiting the respective countries. Case in point is Thailand which has seen a significant rise in the inflow of inbound tourists and has resulted in a significant increase of cash inflow and tourism growth. Looking at the current scenario, steps are being taken by leading trade associations like IATO to coax the government into reviewing the current policy.”



Hector D'souza
Director
L'Orient

“Increasing the visa fee to enter India is not entirely counterproductive as long as the facilities become seamless and quicker. Many of my guests complain of long waiting hours for getting the visa stamped at many Indian airports as there are long queues at arrival terminals. Hence, more visa processing counters are needed with clear instructions to carry a copy of the visa approval letter prior to boarding a flight to India in order to reduce processing and waiting time at the airport. The effect for individual tourists travelling as FITs is minimal as compared to MiCE and group travel which is price-sensitive.”

Grounded: Trade voices concern over Jet crisis



Sunil Kumar
President, TAAI & Vice Chairman, FAITH

“It is very unfair of the agents who have booked tickets on Jet Airways, and in this situation, there is a need to protect the customers' rights. Since travel agents work as intermediaries for a very small fee, their role is to advise customers. One cannot put an airline off air suddenly. The government and the DGCA must wake up. The lenders at this time should have put the customers' interest forward. There is a need to regulate the airlines and address the issues at hand. TAAI has written to IATA to stop all payments to Jet Airways and has asked IATA to work with agents to get customers' refunds. I have written to Madrid, Singapore and India office of IATA on the issue.”

“Jet Airways has been suspended from the IATA Settlement Systems following the airline's announcement of the temporary suspension of flight operations. Jet Airways had been participating in over 73 Billing and Settlement Plan (BSP) and 19 Cargo Accounts Settlement Systems (CASS) around the world. Passengers who purchased Jet Airways tickets through IATA accredited travel agents are advised to submit their refund through the IATA accredited travel agent they bought their tickets from, as soon as possible. The travel agent will then liaise with IATA and Jet Airways to process the refund.”

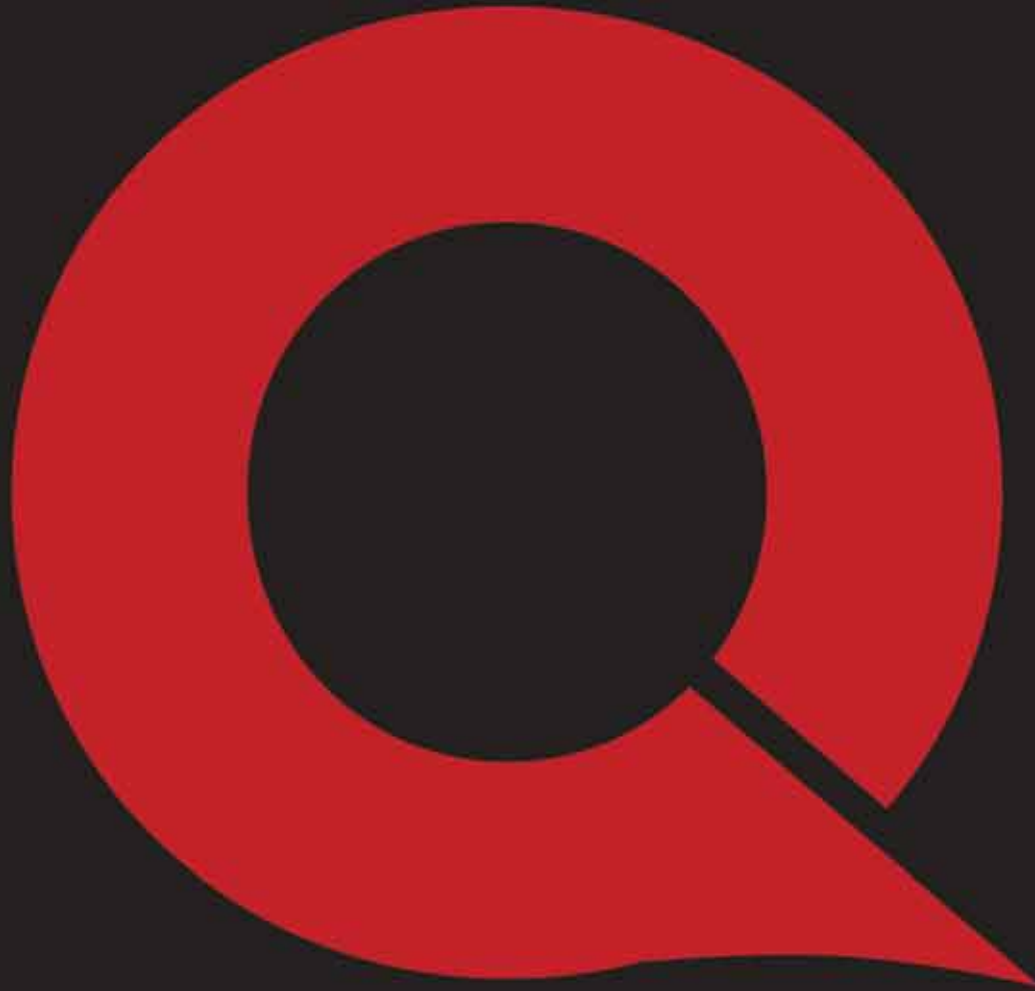


Albert Tjoeng
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'India is millennial-driven'

Having taken over the leadership position at one of the top hotel groups worldwide just four months ago, **Zubin Saxena**, MD and VP Operations—South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, has no time to settle in, he is already steering the team to launch its sixth brand in India.



TT Bureau

He has been with the hotel group since February 2018. **Zubin Saxena**, Managing Director and Vice President Operations—South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, was appointed in his new role only in December 2018. He is fortunate to be at this position at such an interesting juncture for the group and he voices it. "This is a very exciting point in my journey. We are excited about Radisson Red Mohali, which is our new lifestyle, select service brand. It will be a 160-room property and is currently in the advanced stages of construction. We are looking to launch it in the next 12 months. This will be the first Radisson Red in the Asia Pacific region and in India. We have also recently signed

a 350-room Radisson Red in Noida which will open in four to five years," he says.

The Radisson Red brand caters to the millennial customer which is one of the fastest-growing segments in India. Why Mohali? "Located near an IT Park, this hotel is being

make for a great location.

Close on its heels is another brand of Radisson that is getting ready to announce its debut in India – Radisson Collection, which is in the luxury space above Radisson Blu. "We would love to have the Radisson Collection brand

right location and partner for this, we will announce it," Saxena reveals.

Focus on tier cities continues


However, Radisson's focus on tiered cities will continue. Replying to a question as to which brand is performing well in India, Saxena says, "All five brands in India are doing well. We were 1.2 per cent above RevPAR in India. India is certainly growing in Tier II, III locations and almost 50 per cent of our pipeline is coming up in these locations. So, different segments are growing in different locations. Our focus will be on increasing our average rate growth through robust revenue management."

The fight between room supply and ARR is not likely to sub-

side any time soon. Saxena explains this and says, "India has always managed to exceed supply growth. You can see that trend over the last several years. I see that trend continuing this year as well. Demand will continue to outpace supply in the next few years. In the immediate future, we should see an increase in occupancy rates as well as ARRs."

Initiatives

The group recently launched a new programme in South Asia called a 'Hotel Center of Excellence' – a workshop for General Managers in India. The group is also rolling out seven new global brand programmes including Rad Family, Radisson Meetings and Welcome India, which is dedicated

to outbound Indian guests. And Saxena is overseeing this strategy. 



Insight into Accor's products



Over 1,400 attendees interacted with Accor representatives from hotels and resorts in India and abroad at Accor Showcase this year. The event, held in Mumbai and Delhi, offered insights to discover accommodation trends and explore the latest and newest Accor hotels and resorts from around the world. It concluded with an entertainment packed evening over a selection of the finest food and beverage offerings.





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Tech helps drive biz value

Enabling information technology to bring in business value to its clients, TI Infotech is looking to focus on promoting its existing products like Travel Assist and Travel Cloud Suites as well as new products like Lakshya CRM, CSBT, mobile apps and car rental booking system.



Manas Dwivedi

As a premier travel technology company with over 14 years of rich experience, TI Infotech has basket of solutions for the travel domain. Its two signature products—Travel Assist and Travel Cloud Suite have transformed the use of travel technology in India. **Meenu Sachdeva**, Managing Director, TI Infotech says that the company's existing products have observed a version upgrade that are in line with some of the latest travel technology trends.

"The recent additions in our product list are Lakshya CRM, a car rental booking engine and corporate self booking tool. It is a cloud-based customer relationship management tool to automate the sales process.



Meenu Sachdeva
Managing Director
TI Infotech

Similarly, car rental booking engine is designed for travel agents and companies to manage their car fleet. Our Corporate Travel Management Solutions (CSBT) is made to simplify the complex travelling process for corporate clients," says Sachdeva.

Terming these products very beneficial for the travel trade

industry, she says, "As a CMMI Level 3 appraised company, we follow a 'Total Solution Approach'. This further results in streamlined business processes and efficient workflow to provide improved customer satisfaction."

Taking a note on the growing technological needs, demands of Indian travellers and chang-

company is looking for bringing in the unique and personalised experiences to each traveller. This gives rise to tools such as mobile apps, video-related content, multi-lingual voice search options and data-driven personalisation."

"Nowadays, the industry is focusing on smart tech trends to provide unique travelling

soon are big data, cloud technology, chatbots, personalisation and voice activated devices," she further adds.

Travel Assist and Travel Cloud Suite have been pioneers in providing travel tech solutions to the industry. Travel Assist is a comprehensive tour management software that enables an organisation to efficiently manage the complete tour cycle from product planning to profitable operations to accounting to MIS suite for all levels of the business. This application enables a tour company to manage operations of all business segments - FIT, GIT, series, ad hoc, charters, MICE and excursion management. Travel Cloud Suite is a state-of-the-art internet booking engine and a travel technology platform catering to

diverse needs of OTAs, travel agencies and travel management companies. An all-in-one suite to automate the travel business ranging from content acquisition to the complete distribution process, it easily connects with multiple GDS and third-party suppliers to fetch worldwide content for different channels like flights, hotels and packages. ➔

“The recent additions in our product list are Lakshya CRM, a car rental booking engine and corporate self booking tool”

ing trends, Sachdeva says that today's travellers are extremely tech savvy as they go online for their travel-related search and bookings. "This is the reason every travel management

experience to customers. Some of these updates are rich NDC content, rise of millennial travellers, use of apps and user-generated content. Most talked advancements to be adopted

The Provence region, located in south-eastern France, includes Provence, Alpes and Côte d'Azur. Among the 28 cities in the region, the largest city is Marseille

THINK

Up, close & personal with members

The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) recently conducted a Members Meet in Ahmedabad. A team from Accor delivered a presentation showcasing the brand's product portfolio and loyalty programmes. Close to 50 agents, including members, as well as prospective members attended the event.



الجزيرة
Jazeera

takes the 'Spice' route

Jazeera Airways has partnered with SpiceJet to allow agents to issue tickets to connect seamlessly on a single ticket. It will also launch a direct, non-stop service from Kuwait to London Gatwick this summer.

 Hazel Jain

Low-cost carrier head-Quartered in Kuwait, Jazeera Airways, is engaging with like-minded low-cost carriers across countries to allow seamless travel to its passengers. Sharing this is Rohit Ramachandran, CEO, Jazeera Airways, who was in Mumbai recently to meet the airlines' stakeholders during a networking evening and thank them for their support. He said, "Instead of investing in expensive systems as legacy carriers do, we are engaging directly with other like-minded low-cost carriers around the



world. In India, we are working on an integration with SpiceJet which will allow passengers on its network to connect seamlessly to ours with one ticket without going through the complicated process of code-sharing and interlining in the traditional sense that the full-service carriers do."

This means that the travel agents would be able to seamlessly issue tickets on one document from SpiceJet onto the Jazeera Airways' network. He added that the airline is looking to work out similar relationships out of London Gatwick. For instance, it is working on one with Norwegian in Norway which in theory would allow passengers to go from New Delhi to Los Angeles all on low-cost carriers on one ticket. "This was not possible in the past. This will be announced soon," Ramachandran revealed.

The airline currently flies five routes in India, the latest one being New Delhi started in December 2018. The others are Hyderabad, Ahmedabad,

Kochi and Mumbai. To this, he added that the airline is seeing current seat factors of up to 85-90 per cent, the lowest being 86 per cent out of India. "We would love to add more capacity to New Delhi but we are restricted by bilateral agreements between the two

“ Our integration with SpiceJet will allow passengers on its network to connect seamlessly to ours with one ticket ”

countries which right now are maxed out to 10K seats and is being utilised 100 per cent. There is more demand than supply which calls for a more liberal approach," he added.

When asked if the airline would ask for more routes whenever possible, he said, "We would immediately increase services into India. I can foresee Jazeera Airways being interested to operate services to at least 10 more cities like Trivandrum, Kochi, Calicut, Kannur,

Bengaluru, Chennai, Jaipur, Amritsar and even Lucknow." The airline will be launching direct, non-stop, low-cost service from Kuwait to London Gatwick this summer. "This will be the first low-cost airline service connecting the GCC to the UK," he said.

TRAVANCORE COURT
BY




Travancore Court by Spree is a harmonious blend of modernity and tradition. The property has 71 tastefully appointed rooms categorized into deluxe rooms, Executive Rooms and Suite rooms, each of them meticulously designed for luxury and comfort. The rooms are imbued with character and furnished with polished wooden floors, chesterfield sofas and metal crafted cots. There are over half dozen suites that overlook the magnificent Arabian Sea with a breath taking view. The hotel includes all the comforts of a modern hotel such as a swimming pool, spa, business centre, coffee shop, fitness centre and restaurant and banquet halls.

Feast the in house multi cuisine restaurant at the hotel serves mouth watering food in a pleasant ambiance with great service. The food ranges from Continental cuisine to local delicacies to short eats.

The in house coffee shop Treat is the perfect place for guests to catch up with each other or to indulge themselves in some delicious short eats and famous Kerala tea.

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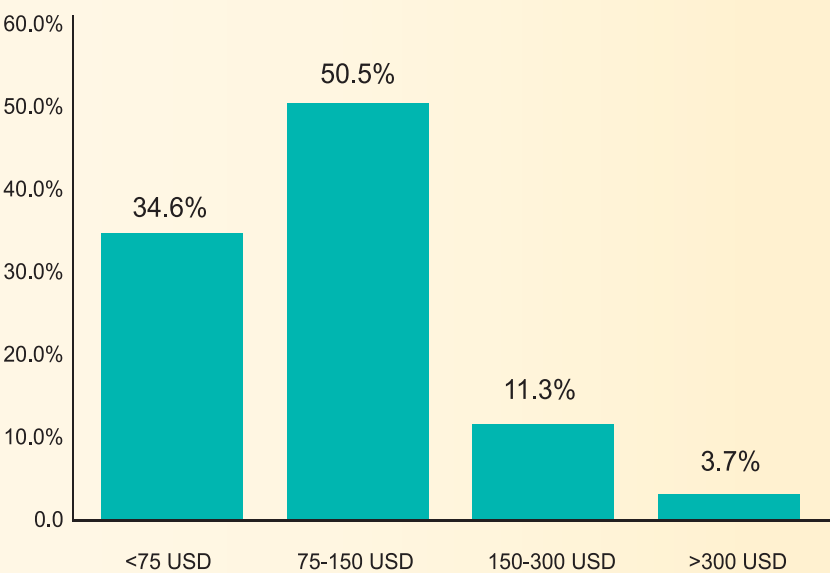
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Indians spend \$75-150/day per room

More than 50 per cent of Indian travellers budgeted USD75-150 per room per night for leisure travel, reports a study by CAPA India and Expedia titled ‘The Inflection Point for Indian Outbound Travel’.

Indian travellers’ average spend per day per room on overseas holidays



- Hotels have been the standard option for the Indian traveller in the past, however, travellers are now exploring other accommodation options, with 38% of survey respondents having rented a villa or apartment while travelling overseas. This has been made more accessible by online platforms such as Airbnb and others, which offer homestays.
- Traditionally at short-haul destinations, Indian travellers spend one-third of their holiday budget on accommodation. Indians visiting Singapore spent around 35% of their trip cost on accommodation, compared to Chinese and Indonesians who spent only about 18% in 2015. For medium to long-haul destinations, the spend on accommodation can increase to up to half of the total trip budget. Indians visiting Mauritius in 2016, spent around 56% of expenses on accommodation while those visiting Switzerland spent around 48% of their budget on accommodation.
- International leisure travellers from India are drawn mostly from high and upper-middle income economic segments. They are used to a certain standard of living and expect similar conditions and conveniences when travelling.

Source: CAPA India Research

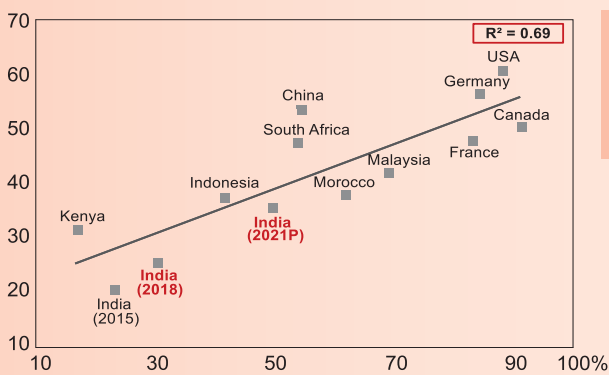
\$24 bn more on online bookings

Online bookings in India are projected to rise from 25 per cent to 35 per cent as internet penetration increases from 33 per cent to 50 per cent, according to a latest study by Bain & Company and Google.

- As India’s travel spending is set to grow from \$94 billion in travel spending to \$136 billion by 2021, around \$24 billion (or 57 per cent) of the incremental bookings will be online. The report states that frequent flyers research online and make decisions on the basis of business needs and availability of flights and hotels.
- They rely heavily on travel provider websites online (59 per cent) and price comparison websites (51 per cent) for airline and hotel reviews and availability with a tendency to search first by mobile device (61 per cent) and then by laptop (26 per cent).

Note: Total travel spending in India includes transport & lodging (~40% online) and consumption spend which is largely offline

Sources: Bain, Google, Omidyar report ‘Unlocking Digital for Bharat: \$50 Billion Opportunity’; World Bank data; Emarketer; Euromonitor

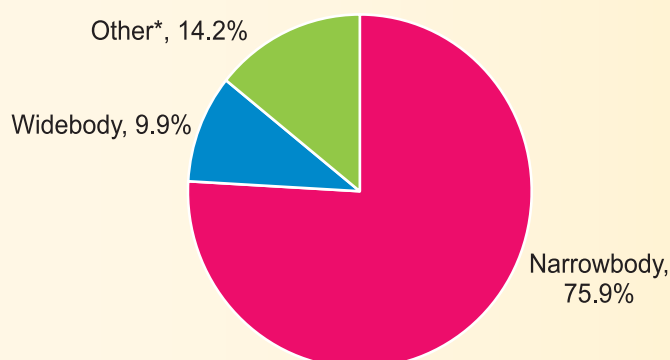


Online Travel spending as a percent of total travel spending (2018)

Internet penetration as a percent of total population (2018)

Narrowbodies account for ¾ of fleet

Composition of India’s current aircraft fleet



Narrowbodies account for ¾ of the current aircraft fleet in India, with widebodies contributing a further 10 per cent, as per a recent ‘Project Rupee Raftaar’ report by MoCA.

- The remainder consists primarily of turboprops and regional jet aircraft. Reflecting the relative size of the domestic and international markets, the composition of the current in-service fleet is heavily tilted towards narrowbody aircraft.
- India, which has the third-largest aircraft order book (including wide-body and narrow-body aircraft) after the US and China, now has more narrow-body orders than China, CAPA India said in one of its reports.

Source: CAPA

Educate agents for conversions

At Renuka Natu Travel Relations, the focus will be to educate the travel agents about different destinations through training and help them achieve conversions.



TT Bureau

Renuka Natu Travel Relations is a tourism representation and consulting service, effectively handling international travel brands on the Indian turf since 2010. Renuka Natu, Director, Renuka Natu Travel Relations shared, "We are working closely as a catalyst between distinguished international travel partners and focused travel fraternity within India, Sri Lanka, Nepal as well as within areas with high density of NRI population. Cur-

albeit gradually. "Kenya and Tanzania always live up to their potential owing to several factors such as awareness, ease of doing business due to the understanding of Indian requirements, given the ethnic Indian communities that op-

erate in the tourism sector in these countries as well as the promise of the numbers of the wildlife. For the refreshing Swiss mountain Brnuni, the awareness is growing and will soon translate into decent numbers as well," she shared.

Natu expects a healthy 2019, saying, "As the year began, we were slightly concerned about the impending elections in our country, and the subsequent effects and repercussions. As of now, there seems to be no adverse effect as business has been promising for the

conventional Indian summer season of April to September. Should there be any drastic changes in policies in the period post the formation of the new government, the effects will be sensed in the Diwali/winter season of October '19 to March '20."

In terms of new signings, Natu believes in organic growth. "In case of any opportunities in the regions I am already active in or in the segments such as wildlife, conservation, adventure, luxury that I already operate in, I will be open to explore," she added. 📌



Renuka Natu
Director
Renuka Natu Travel Relations

rently the portfolio comprises DMC Tourvest for South Africa; DMC Sense of Africa for East Africa; Property Management Company – AHA in South & Southern Africa; Governors Camp Collection Kenya & Rwanda; Wilderness Safaris active in eight African countries; and Brnuni-Bahnen, mountain excursion in Switzerland."

She claimed that 2018 has been a reasonably good year for them. "The competition is tough on all platforms, levels and market segments, especially for destination South Africa. The market share for the destination in entirety hasn't grown, however the number of service providers have multiplied manifold, thus shrinking the pie for everybody. It is a completely open market. Despite this scenario, we have managed to stay afloat well by creatively modifying our services to open newer market segments," added Natu.

She claimed that for destinations such as Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Rwanda and Uganda, they have discovered that there definitely is a market which will only grow in the future




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Erco to add new products

Ravi Gosain, Managing Director, Erco Travels & Tourism Enterprises, believes in nurturing his existing foreign tour operator partners by offering them new circuits and activities.



TT Bureau

The inbound business of both Erco Travels & Tourism Enterprises has been stable in the last one year as they ventured into different segments and expanded their business to varied geographical regions. Underlining the importance of inbound market for the Indian travel and tourism industry, **Ravi Gosain**, Managing Director, Erco Travels and Tourism Enterprises said, "Inbound market to India is not taking a desired take off despite an overall increase in visa numbers as per the Ministry of Tourism. This is

inbound tourism is a great step. Erco Travels has actively exhibited in earlier editions but it no longer does because the quality of foreign buyers has deteriorated. What I observe now is either the junior staff or non-decision makers are visiting GITB as buyers. I am

sure that the current exhibitors are sharing their experiences with organisers of the show for the quality to improve in order to provide value to sellers. Overall, GITB is a good platform for both buyers and sellers with fixed meeting schedules," he said.

According to Gosain, his DMC representation brand, Tourism Enterprises, which markets and represents some foreign DMC brands in India, is growing day by day. "We have recently appointed a senior marketing staff based in Mumbai to spearhead Tour-

ism Enterprises' products in Western India. We are covering most of India with a strong presence in North, Central, East and West India. We continue to bring new destinations to Indian tour operator and educate them about various products which can be of great

interest to Indian tourists. We are also working on plans to offer exciting products for the middle-aged generation which are different from the usual tourist programmes. This will be done in co-operation with our existing DMC partners overseas," he concluded.



Ravi Gosain
Managing Director
Tourism Enterprises

due to spike in the number of business travellers as per my observation. Tourism industry feels otherwise because it is more dependent on leisure travellers which will ultimately increase business for them. Going forward, we will focus more on experiential holidays in India to attract more business," he said.

Talking about his plans for 2019, Gosain said, "We will continue to participate at major international tourism fairs, networking events, social media promotions and door to door marketing. At a moment when the world is waiting for a new government in India, continuity of the present government at the centre will give the country a sense of safety and confidence in FTOs to send tourists to India. I believe that India will continue to surge as one of the most exotic destinations rich in culture, traditions, festivals, rituals and a haven for food."

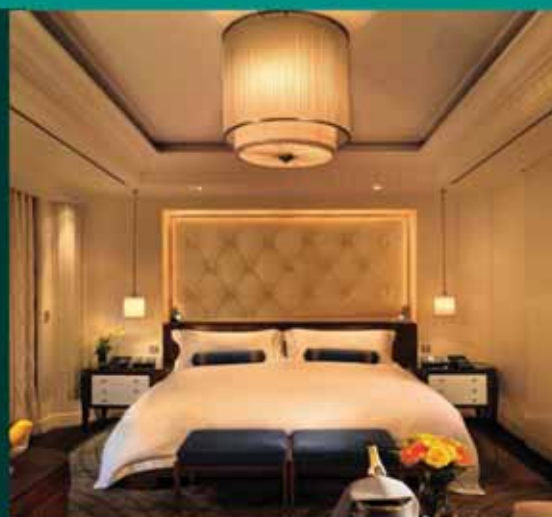
Gosain expresses concern over the quality of foreign buyers at GITB in Jaipur. "The concept of GITB for promoting

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J&K gears up for another season

Safe to welcome tourists, Jammu & Kashmir is now set to witness a major influx of tourists during the summer season as the state promotes new unexplored destinations.



TT Bureau

Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) Tourism partnered with All Ladakh Tour Operators Association of India (ALTOI) to organise Ladakh Travel Meet in Delhi recently. Representing J&K Tourism at the event. **Rigzin Samphel (IAS)**, Secretary Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir, said, "The idea behind sponsoring this event was to facilitate the local association in coordinating with stakeholders in Delhi whilst promoting J&K. This was one of the events in the series of events that we are holding in Maharashtra, Delhi and Ahmedabad."

After the recent Pulwama terror attack, a lot changed for tourism in the state. "There was a lull immediately after the unfortunate event. But now we are quite optimistic as of late, the increase in bookings gives



us a lot of hope to be able to sail through the momentary phase. We are positive that the season should be good," he claimed.

The department is working towards making people aware of how safe the state currently is. "J&K has always been safe. The idea is to clear the misinformation. In fact, even if one goes by any of the government's data, all three regions are very safe—Ladakh, Kashmir and Jammu," shared Samphel.

When asked about the number of tourist arrivals in the state in 2018, he revealed, "To begin

with Ladakh, particularly in Leh, the number of tourists in the last calendar year was three lakhs, while the population of Leh is about 1.3 lakhs. This was the first time that the tourist number crossed three lakhs. In the Kashmir valley, the number of foreigners, who are known to exercise a lot of due diligence

One of the challenges for J&K, according to Samphel, is the problem of plenty. "We have many destinations but what is important is that we push tourists towards Gulmarg, Pahalgam or Leh, to areas which are worth visiting, but not promoted. For example, there is a beautiful place called Butapatri

for the first time for travellers. Hopefully, we'll be seeing more tourists in these areas. Same is the case with Kargil; Suru Valley is multiplying Pahalgam 10 times in a stretch, and so is the case with Zaskaar. These are the areas we are trying to promote."

ties. Very soon, you will see a lot of advertisements from the Department of Tourism in television as well as in print media."

“J&K has always been safe. The idea is to clear the misinformation. In fact, goes by any of government's data, all three regions are very safe—Ladakh, Kashmir & Jammu”

before visiting a place, was high by 45 per cent. In Jammu, we are grateful to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine because of which we get almost a crore of tourists. Of late, we have been trying to promote the western part of Jammu, which includes Rajouri, Poonch, the Mughal road, etc."

near Gulmarg and another village called Aro near Pahalgam. The same is the case with Ladakh-Leh in particular—the Shum area is on the way to Srinagar and the entire area is yet to be explored. Recently, the Prime Minister opened nine tourist and travel routes

Insisting that the role of the government is to facilitate in creating the environment and to promote tourism, he said, "We are going through a very aggressive promotion and advertising campaign. This is part of the promotional campaign that we are conducting along with outreach activi-



Customer is king for Al Tawfeeq

With a mission to offer superior customer experience, Al Tawfeeq Travel, Doha, sets its service standards through a process of continuous training of its staff, reveals the company's CEO, **Rehan Ali Syed**.

Q *The last 10 years of Al Tawfeeq has been an eventful journey. What have been the key milestones?*

From humble beginnings with only seven staff and a

small office 10 years ago, Al Tawfeeq has witnessed significant growth; thanks to the vision of the Chairman Abdulla Al Mustafawi Al Hashemi and the support of our skilled team. With customer requirements as our key focus, the entire team had a single-minded vision of fulfilling their requirements by providing complete travel solutions.

We are justifiably proud of the successful journey that we embarked on 10 years ago and look forward to a future

that gives us an opportunity to scale new heights. Our success mantra has been to set high standards of service and ensure that our customers have access to the best travel products from around the world.

Q *What is your vision for Al Tawfeeq Travel?*

Al Tawfeeq's success lies in its ability to adapt, innovate and deliver quality customer experience and that is the vision for our continued growth over the next five years. The scope of our activities is considerable and plans are already underway to diversify into other verticals, establish inbound DMC operations, build and enhance our extensive network of partnerships and continue to bring to Qatar best in travel technology

and leisure products from around the world.

Q *What do you love most about your job?*

Having spent over 20 years in the travel industry, I am very passionate about this industry and my passion for all things travel drives me to continually look for innovative travel solutions. My team of over 100 staff is the backbone of our operations and I consider them as an extended family whilst ensuring their welfare.

The travel industry is all about people and building lasting relationships with your customers; this is one aspect that I love most about my job. Each day is a new challenge and finding innovative solutions to mitigate the challenges is what I find exciting.

Q *What do customers in Qatar value the most about your service?*

How do you manage to maintain excellence in your service?

Some of the hallmarks of Al Tawfeeq are professional skilled team, staying connected to clients at all times, offering CRM solutions for our corporate clients and providing accessibility and extensive coverage with nine retail locations. We take immense pride in the way we set customer service standards through a process of continuous training of our staff.

Q *Qatar has grown tremendously in the GCC. What can a first-time visitor expect from this destination?*

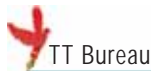
Qatar has lots to offer to all tourists whether they

are seeking beach getaways, adventure, culture experience or just shopping and family entertainment. The Qatar National Tourism Council has taken various initiatives to promote inbound tourism. Now 83 nationalities can get visa on arrival in the country. For instance, one of Qatar's most iconic spots — the mangroves of Al Thakira is a large area of greenery and water offering kayaking as a best way to see the mangroves. Some other attractions like Qatar National Museum, Museum of Islamic Art, Souq Waqif, world-famous restaurants and luxury hotels are sure to create a memorable holiday experience for any tourist visiting Qatar.



MiCE, weddings take centre stage

Qatar is engaging with Indian MiCE operators and wedding planners to grow numbers from this segment. In fact, the country has already received confirmation for six weddings.



The Indian market is one of the most important growth markets for Qatar. "India was the number one source market for us in 2018 with over 400,000 Indian visitor arrivals. Operating in the Indian market since March 2018, we've registered 20 per cent growth from the market in one year. we want to build

groups and leisure travellers," shared Al-Qurese.

Currently, Qatar is looking to capture the demand from the Tier-I cities and will later target Tier II, III markets starting 2020. Claiming that there will be many new destinations

coming up in Qatar, Al-Qurese, said, "In March-end, Qatar National Museum opened its doors. We are also hosting the IAAF world championship by the end of September this year. We have many offerings for the Indian market, right from desert, sea,

art and architecture to even urban offerings like shopping and F&B."

For the MiCE market, he believes that though Qatar is a new place, it is a boutique destination. "The number one attraction for MiCE groups is

the ease of facilitation, along with free visa, connectivity and proximity. Enjoying a convenient location, Qatar is only two-and-a-half to three hours from the west coast in India and about five hours from the east coast. We are connected to 13 cities, which

therefore provides ease for bigger groups to fly from various cities within a few hours. Also, MiCE venues in Doha are in abundance, including convention centres as well as hotel facilities for groups," concluded Al-Qurese.



Rashed Saeed Al-Qurese
Chief Marketing & Promotion Officer
Qatar Tourism Authority

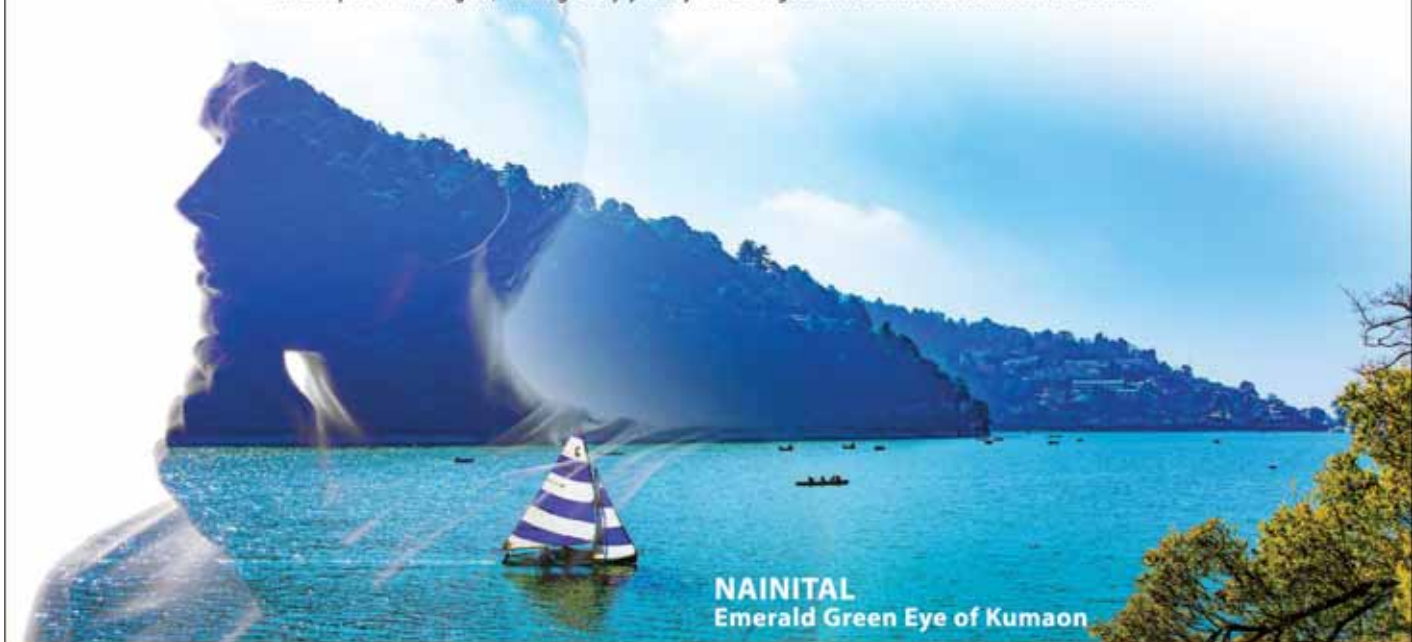
on this success and continue with double-digit growth this year too by exploring other segments like weddings and MiCE," said Rashed Saeed Al-Qurese, Chief Marketing & Promotion Officer, Qatar Tourism Authority.

The tourism board has an office in Mumbai that covers most of the Tier-I cities in India. "We work with MiCE planners, tour operators and wedding planners for promotions. We also run multiple marketing initiatives, owing to the budgets associated with the market as well as communicate various value propositions that Qatar offers for different segments of tourism," he added.

He informed that they already have six weddings confirmed for Q1 2019. "Other leads for the rest of the year are expected to be confirmed. Doha is a new destination for Indians in particular, specifically for weddings. Indians can travel visa-free to the country. We are connected via 176 flights weekly across 13 cities in India through airlines like Qatar Airways, Jet Airways, Indigo and Air India Express. All the hotels in the country offer great value for money, specifically for weddings, as well as for MiCE

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EVENT TALK

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MAY 2019

Africa's Travel Indaba	Durban	6-9
PATA Annual Summit 2019	Cebu, Philippines	9-12
Germany Travel Mart	Wiesbaden	12-14
ILTM Latin America	Sao Paulo	14-17
Taiwan Tourism Roadshow	Delhi	16
ITB China	Shanghai	15-17
Taiwan Tourism Roadshow	Kolkata	20
IMEX	Frankfurt	21-23
Taiwan Tourism Roadshow	Hyderabad	22
ILTM Asia Pacific	Singapore	27-30
India Travel Awards- South	Chennai	27
Oman Tourism Roadshow	Bengaluru	27
Oman Tourism Roadshow	Pune	29
IBTM Americas	Mexico City	29-30
Oman Tourism Roadshow	Mumbai	31

JUNE 2019

75th IATA Annual General Meeting	Seoul, South Korea	1-3
Best of Australia roadshow	Pune	4
Best of Australia roadshow	Ahmedabad	5
Dubai MICE Workshop	Hyderabad	10
Dubai MICE Workshop	Chennai	11
Dubai MICE Workshop	Bengaluru	13
Dubai MICE Workshop	Kolkata	14
Beijing International Tourism Expo 2019	Beijing	18-20
Asian Destinations Expo 2019	Malaysia	21-24
Asian Destinations Expo 2019	Singapore	26-29

JULY 2019

Asian Destinations Expo 2019	Indonesia	2-5
International Conference on Tourism and Hospitality (ICTH)	Singapore	4-5
TTF	Hyderabad	5-6
Kiwi Link India 2019	Mumbai	8-9
Kiwi Link India 2019	Kolkata	11
Kiwi Link India 2019	Delhi	12
TTF	Kolkata	12-14
Travel Wedding Show	Mumbai	13-14
MICE INDIA and Luxury Travel congress	Delhi	17-18
Amazing Thailand Roadshow to India	Ahmedabad	22
MICE INDIA and Luxury Travel congress	Mumbai	23-24
Amazing Thailand Roadshow to India	Pune	24
TTH Expo	Vadodara	26-28
TTF	Ahmedabad	30-1 Sept

AUGUST 2019

IITM	Bengaluru	2-4
Qatar Tourism Roadshow	Mumbai	6
Qatar Tourism Roadshow	Delhi	7
Qatar Tourism Roadshow	Ahmedabad	8
Tourism Australia India Travel Mission	Kochi	8-11
IITM	Chennai	9-11
Tourism Australia India Travel Mission	Mumbai	12

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

ASSOCIATION TALK

IATO discusses challenges upfront

IATO focused on its sub-committee proceedings and shared the progress with Services Export Promotion Council/Directorate General of Foreign Trade license renewal, visa fee and MOT Fam trip at its luncheon.



TT Bureau

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) discussed the concerns of members, sub-committees and shared the progress that the Executive Committee had made in the last month at its recently-held monthly luncheon meeting. **EM Najeeb**, Senior Vice President, IATO, said, "We had lots of queries on GST matters as well as the visa fee. The government's decision to double the visa fee for foreign tourists has been strongly taken up with Ministry of Tourism (MOT) and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). We have also decided to activate our sub-committee reports and recommendations and bring everyone at the same level and take the IATO activities forward."

IATO also announced the appointment of **Rahul Chakravarty** as its CEO and the



farewell of **Gaur Kanjilal** who served as its Executive Director for the last 14 years.

Updating about the SEPC/DGFT issue, **Rajiv Mehra**, Vice President, IATO, shared, "We can now apply online to get the SEPC license renewed. As soon as the new government comes in and we have the new rates available, we would be able to apply for DGFT. The revised rates for MOT Fam trips have also been circulated to all the members. The simplification of the procedure of getting



the payments still needs to be achieved. We have written to the MOT for the same to avoid delay in payments."

Mehra also shared that the association hopes for a reduction in visa fee after the elections.

Informing about the meeting which IATO had with MOT, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and MHA in December last year, he said, "We had a positive reaction from MHA officials. We met them for the first time and have heard from them too. We have written back sharing our problems which need to be addressed soon. A regular correspondence has started with them."

The association is also gearing up for IATO Convention to be held in September. 🇮🇳

Exciting times ahead for ICPB

India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) has planned a line-up of interesting initiatives including the 12th Conventions India Conclave in Kochi. The association also plans to open two more State Chapters.



Manas Dwivedi

Organising a productive international roadshow with 118 MICE buyers in Europe covering Paris, Brussels, Geneva and Zurich in 2018 was quite an achievement in promoting India as a popular MICE destination, feels **Chander Mansharamani**, Vice Chairman, India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB). He says, "2018 has been very fruitful with year-long activities organised by the bureau. The 11th Convention India Conclave in Kolkata was a successful event as we not only had a good number of foreign buyers but also Indian buyers from various segments of corporate and associations. The proud moment was to launch our first ICPB state chapter in Kolkata."

"We are also pleased to inform the substantial increase in our



Chander Mansharamani
Vice Chairman
India Convention Promotion Bureau

membership in the last one year. The one-time membership of nine state governments has not only given us the financial benefits but also enhanced the status of ICPB as we can now call ourselves a pan-India bureau. The other initiatives we have taken is to have a planner on the convention facilities in India which will be ready by the middle of May 2019," he further adds.

Moving forward, the association has planned a calendar

of activities throughout 2019. "We have planned an interactive session with our members for providing legal guidance and answer queries related to issues pertaining to GST on April 25. We are also organising the International Residential Training Programme with International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) on July 26-27 at Vivanta Surajkund where eminent international speakers will share their knowledge and experience on three most relevant topics — How to maximise ROI during exhibitions and trade shows, marketing of conference: sponsorship generation and delegates acquisition, research and bidding for international conferences," informs Mansharamani.

The 12th Conventions India Conclave will be held in Kochi from August 29-31 at Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty on the

theme 'Mapping the Sustainable MICE Future of India'. Sharing more information, he says, "We have already initiated the process to organise the conclave with Kerala government. The theme is in line with the importance of MICE and its economic and social impact on the industry. We have chosen Kochi keeping in view the growing upcoming MICE infrastructure in South India. I believe that Kochi is also emerging as a preferred MICE destination in the country."

ICPB is also planning to conduct a roadshow in Bhubaneswar in July and an international roadshow in the UK and Europe towards the end of September 2019. The bureau is also looking at greater participation at world trade shows such as IMEX Frankfurt, IMEX Las Vegas, EIBTM, AIME and CONFEX London. 🇮🇳



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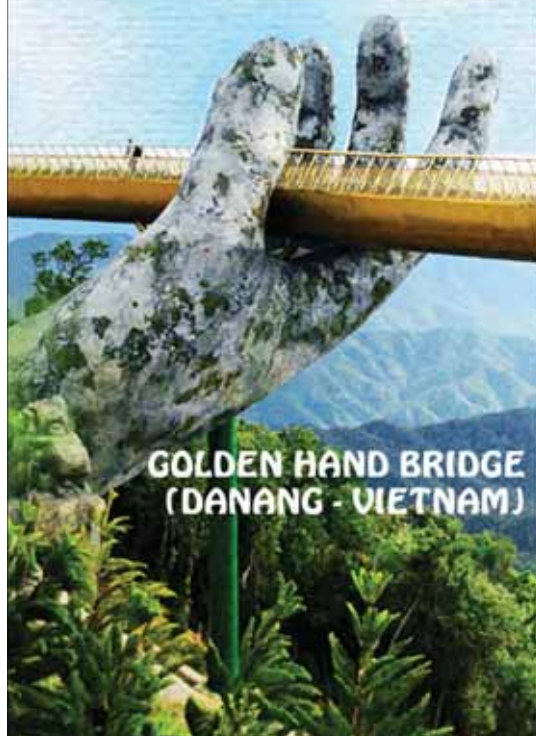


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Sabre

Bengaluru

Sabre Corporation has appointed **Jaya Kumar K** as Vice President and Managing Director for Sabre Global Development Centre in Bengaluru. In his role, Kumar will be responsible for propelling the Centre's innovation capabilities as well as attracting key talent to deliver cutting-edge technology solutions. He will spearhead Sabre's efforts in driving the industry toward next generation retailing, distribution and fulfillment. He comes to Sabre from Walmart, where he was Managing Director and Vice President, Global Technology Services, where he grew Walmart Labs India significantly, and established Centres of Excellence for analytics.



Rail Europe

Mumbai

Srijit Nair has recently joined Rail Europe's family as a Regional Sales Director, Greater India (India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan). He worked previously as a General Manager - Sales heading the NRI business (International Markets/Non-Resident Indian) in the B2B and B2C sales structure at Thomas Cook India. Prior to that role, Nair was responsible for leading the B2B business channels for the western and southern regions at Thomas Cook India. He was actively involved in building the franchisee model, new acquisitions of franchisee partners and with a focused approach on B2B space specially with the Preferred Sales Agents and travel agents.



Cygnett Hotels and Resorts

Delhi

Cygnett Hotels and Resorts appointed **Ankur Chandra** as its Director—Operations & Development. Chandra will be responsible for leveraging hotel operations and expanding the brand in new markets. He will also be responsible to keep a check on the profitability of operations and supervising all aspects of hotel management to ensure compliance with quality standards. With over 20 years of experience in handling multiple clientele and expertise in various facets of hotel management, Chandra is a result-oriented professional.



Hyatt Regency Lucknow

Lucknow

Ashish Kumar has been appointed as General Manager of Hyatt Regency Lucknow. With more than 20 years in the hospitality industry, Kumar has acquired a deep knowledge of diverse aspects of hotel management and has gained experience in dealing with different cultural backgrounds while working across India. However, his true passion remains with Rooms and Administration. He also possesses the knack of managing negotiations, forecasting and revenue management, crisis management, and various other operation services.



Holiday Inn Resort Kolkata NH6

Kolkata

Projjwal Ghosh is designated as Director of Sales and Marketing at Holiday Inn Resort Kolkata NH6. Ghosh comes with over nine years of experience in the field of sales and marketing. His key task is to launch the resort successfully while creating adequate awareness and business opportunities through various sales and marketing efforts. He is also responsible for the smooth execution of the hotel business and marketing plan along with meeting the revenue goals of the hotel. Prior to this, he was associated with Hilton for seven years.



Holiday Inn Chennai OMR IT Expressway

Chennai

Radhika Dhruv has been appointed as Marketing Manager of Holiday Inn Chennai OMR IT Expressway. In her current role, she shall head the overall responsibility of marketing communication, Public Relations and lead the team to drive the growth of the hotel. Dhruv is committed to ensuring the best positioning of the hotel and its outlets by working closely with her associates at all the levels. With a broad spectrum of hospitality experience over the years, her last role was with Marriott as an Assistant Manager – Marketing Communications.



Radisson Blu Atria Bengaluru

Bengaluru

Sanatan Sharma has been appointed as the Financial Controller at Radisson Blu Atria Bengaluru. With over 13 years of experience, Sharma comes in as a seasoned professional in the hospitality sector. In his current role, he is spearheading the overall operations. He started his career in 2005 as Accounts Assistant at The Oberoi Grand Kolkata. Later, expanding his horizons in Finance, he worked with some of the well-known luxury hotels like Hyatt Hyderabad and Park Hyatt Maldives as Assistant Manager Finance. He has extensive experience working across Asia with brands such as Marriott Bangkok, Radisson Blu Plaza Bangkok before he took up the role in Radisson Blu Atria Bangalore.



Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru

Bengaluru

Ashish Nehra has been appointed as Director of Food & Beverage at Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru. In his current role, he is responsible for overseeing Food & Beverage operations at the hotel. Nehra has worked with The Leela Palaces Hotel and Resorts, Gurgaon; JW Marriott Kolkata and Delhi; The Oberoi Udaivilas in Udaipur; Wildflower Hall, Shimla; The Oberoi New Delhi, The Oberoi Rajvillas in Jaipur and The Oberoi Amarvilas in Agra in the past. He started his career as a trained Pastry Chef in Switzerland during his formative years. Nehra sees his role as weaving a common thread between the outlets by focusing on consistency and quality.



TGI Group of Hotel and Resorts

Bengaluru

TGI Group of Hotel and Resorts has appointed **Deleeph Nair** as its Corporate Housekeeper. In his new role, he will be responsible for the development and implementation of housekeeping standards for the hotel which are aligned with the brand's overall mission, vision values, and strategies. Kumar comes with over 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry and is all set to streamline the functioning of the hotel's housekeeping standards. Prior to this, he held various managerial positions in housekeeping operations with some of the country's most renowned hospitality groups like Radisson, IHG, Residency Group, to name a few.



TALKing People

Sid Savkur, CEO, Realm Hospitality enjoys trying new cuisines and restaurants. "One thing I am most passionate about is supporting and promoting the destination where I am based – which is Bhutan – in any way that I can. Early in my career, I had left the hospitality industry and joined a BPO. I was sure that I would never return to hospitality. Look how that turned out!" he exclaims. One amazing holiday moment was on a trip to Moscow when Savkur's Airbnb host took him out for a pub crawl and to sample some restaurants.



Mit Bhatt, Managing Partner, The Grand Vacationist, de-stresses by thinking about his next adventure. "My bucket list has many items. One of them is going faster and higher than what I have already gone. My record is now touching Mach 3 and 31,000 feet. But before I can attempt that, I need to do some preparations – get my private pilot's license and undergo a week's training of ejection. It is a Russian fighter and it is by invitation only so I will need the right credentials for it," he shares.



Singing, sketching and playing table tennis are what makes **Nivedita Avasthi**, General Manager, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Mayur Vihar Noida, happy. "I love chilling out with old friends at home over dinner and drinks. Attending live concerts especially Sufi music is another thing which I definitely take out time for," Avasthi mentions. The picturesque Evian village in France, according to her, is the destination embedded very strongly in her mind.





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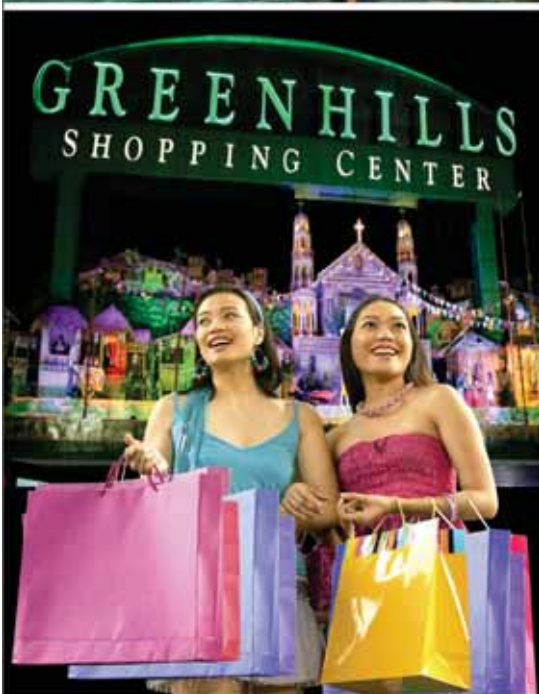
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The right tech for agents

Sandeep Dwivedi, Chief Operating Officer, InterGlobe Technology Quotient, shares how ITQ and Travelport are keeping abreast of the needs of travel agents across the country and offering just the right technology to help equip them with the best solutions.



Nisha Verma

InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ) as well as the entire aviation industry has enjoyed good growth in India, claims **Sandeep Dwivedi**, Chief Operating Officer, ITQ. "India is one of the fastest growing markets with a double-digit growth of 18-20 per cent on a CAGR basis, and this is being captured by LCCs as well as regional carriers under the UDAN scheme. From a GDS perspective, India became the second largest market across the globe last year after the US, and we expect the same from an aviation outlook too. By 2025, India is going to be the third largest aviation market after USA, China, subject to the challenges we have in the market," he shared.



ITQ looks forward to close 2019 on a high note. Dwivedi mentioned, "From a Travelport perspective, we aim to provide services to the customer and

"We will continue to enhance our solutions for the market. The entire process is automated for travel agents in Tier II, III cities as well as OTAs"

be relevant in the market. The case in point here is if we are ready for NDC, which is going to be a reality very soon. By 2020, we expect many airlines to be part of it. Unfortunately, not a single carrier from India is a part of NDC yet. In fact, internationally tickets have been issued under NDC and we are going to see that trend catching up in India as well. All these airlines are directly approaching bigger aggregators and OTAs for direct APIs. We hope to address these challenges through our solutions."



Apart from Travelport, Dwivedi revealed, ITQ continues to innovate new products including corporate booking tools and

solutions for travel agencies. "For instance, we have a product called VR3 (Void, Reissue, Refund, Revalidation), which can automate everything from re-issue, refund and cancellations of a travel agency. Usually, chances of errors are high in

are looking for. An interesting study by Google has suggested that any traveller and any e-commerce site visitor visits to a minimum 29 websites before taking a decision to buy. With NDC, I am sure all the content is going to be available at the same place for the travel agent," said Dwivedi.

In a dynamic market like India, Dwivedi claims that ITQ will be relevant more from a technology perspective. "We will continue to enhance our technology and solutions for the market. The entire process is automated, especially for travel agents in Tier II, III cities as well as OTAs who have specialised processes. That's why we rolled out Smartpoint. Travel agents can keep on giving cryptic commands of different GDSs even when they are not aware about Travelport command. He can give Amadeus or Sabre commands there and the system is intelligent enough to convert those into Travelport commands." 📌

these cases but VR3 can take care of all the challenges," he said.

Agreeing that there are initial apprehensions amongst travel agents and airlines for NDC, he insisted that it's human nature to be sceptical about anything new. "The clarity would come once the entire set up of NDC would be completed by 2020. Travel agents will be relevant if they are able to provide all the solutions for what travellers

Offering multi-modal services

Travelport has announced a new agreement with Airport Authority Hong Kong (AA) to promote the multi-modal connectivity services at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) to travel buyers in Asia, Europe and North America. As a regional hub and a multi-modal transport centre, it offers travellers extensive land and

sea connections to cities throughout the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, which includes Macao, Zhuhai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou and beyond. The technology allows overseas travel buyers to pre-book the airport's multi-modal transport services for their customers in 18 markets from across the world.



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