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Stronger MICE better for tourism

Ministry of Tourism advocates that a stronger MICE sector would inadvertently mean a more competent tourism industry, a goal that would only be achieved if both government and stakeholders work hand-in-hand, where the former provides support through encouraging policies and the latter catches the pulse of the client.

Nisha Verma

Prahlad Singh Patel, Minister of State (I/C), Tourism and Culture, has said that MICE helps create an ideal image of the country and also benefits all stakeholders while providing employment at various levels. The government has made some changes to conferences owing to the new SOPs, which include a reduced delegate limit from 500 to 250 and instead of allowance for one night, an allowance of two nights has been made - a benefit that can be availed by guests.



Prahlad Singh Patel
Minister of State (I/C), Tourism and Culture

I believe that MICE can be the biggest platform to attract international tourists and popularise India," the minister said in his address at the 13th Conventions India Conclave (CIC) by India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB).

Sharing a similar view, **Rakesh Verma**, Joint Secretary, MOT and Chairman, ICPB, claimed that growth of the MICE industry is crucial for the growth of many other segments of the economy.

"It impacts tourism, hospitality, event management and a host of other people in the supply chain. India has great potential for MICE, the challenge lies in building a strong 'Brand India' for conventions and events, backing it up with delivering on promises. We have to aggressively market India as a MICE destination. The government has to back the industry in bringing more events and conventions. The

government and industry must together build India as a MICE destination," he said.

He added that the first step would be to tell the world that India is ready to welcome more events and conventions. Verma said, "We have to aggressively market India as a MICE destination; our missions abroad can be of great help. ICPB, as a nodal body, can play a key role in securing support from various ministries and other organisations, both for winning bids and for subsequent successful organisation of events. ICPB needs to be developed as a single window for meeting such needs." He added that simultaneously, the country needs to prepare destinations for holding conventions and events, and meet the needs of visitors.



Rakesh Verma
Joint Secretary, MOT & Chairman, ICPB

"We must make conscious effort to make our destinations succeed. We have built convention centres at Khajuraho, Bodhgaya, Ajanta and many other places, and they can all be considered for promotion as MICE destinations," Verma said.

Developing professional skills is also very important. "MICE is a very dynamic industry and therefore, in order to stay in competition, it must constantly evolve and

innovate. Digitalisation is a major challenge, and we must stay ahead," he asserted, adding, "Having a stronger ICPB and good MICE destinations are a few suggestions that have found

MICE can be the biggest platform to attract international tourists

- Prahlad Singh Patel

Centres at Khajuraho, Ajanta can be considered for MICE

- Rakesh Verma

place in our new tourism policy. Soon, we will formalise these policy initiatives which will give fillip to our efforts to strengthen the sector, enabling the synergy of MOT and industry."

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Two nights for Statue of Unity

With multiple tourism projects coming up in and around Gujarat's Statue of Unity, the latest being the seaplane service starting from October 31, it may well become a two-or-more-night destination for tourists.

 Hazel Jain

The Statue of Unity may soon become a symbol of tourism revival for travel agents in Gujarat. With so many developments taking place in and

We will look at creating packages for the domestic market

around the spot, the travel trade is hopeful that it will become a two (or more) night destination for domestic tourists.

Sharing his view is **Randhir Singh Vaghela**, Chairman - Gujarat Chapter, IATO, who says, "The Statue of Unity is becoming a great

destination for tourism, and the latest development of seaplanes being launched on October 31 has added another feather to its cap. The monument is the world's tallest statue and to visit it by a seaplane will be an experience for tourists. Currently, they can only enjoy seaplanes when they go abroad to countries like the Maldives. Agents will start selling seats on the seaplane once they announce the opening of bookings."

The first trial run of the open-deck ferry at the Statue of Unity in Kevadia has already been conducted and the service is about to start soon.

There is also a jungle safari available in Kevadia, which is spread over 375 acres in seven levels and has 1,500 animals and birds. This, along with other attrac-



Randhir Singh Vaghela
Chairman - Gujarat Chapter, IATO

tions such as the Children Nutrition Park, Vishwa Van, River Rafting, Ekta Nursery, Cactus and Butterfly Garden, etc., have reopened for visitors with slot timings. Tickets can be booked online only.

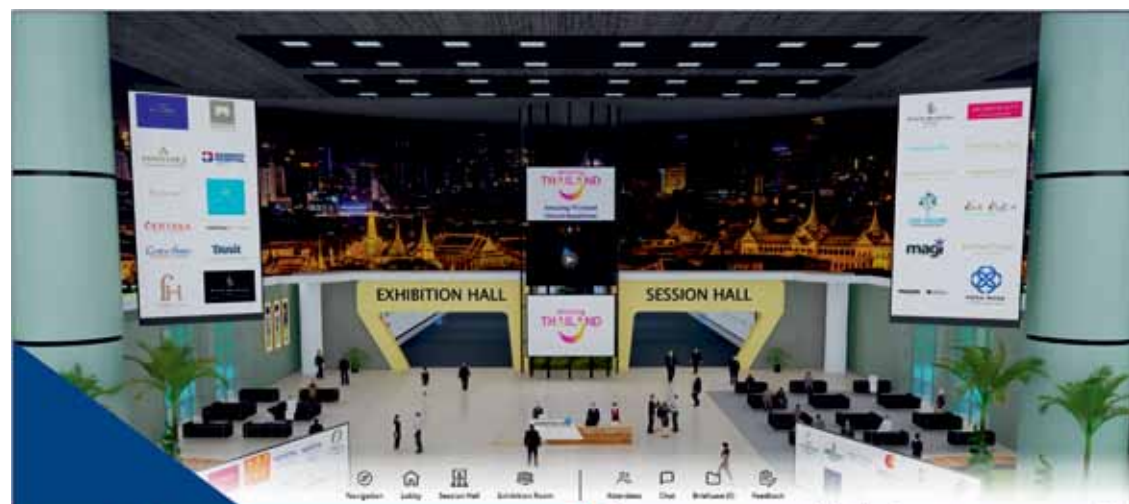
Vaghela adds, "Believe me, there are so many activities added at the Statue of Unity that it is now a minimum two-night destination and we are hoping that it will soon become one of the global destinations that every tourist would like to visit."

Switch to domestic

Many tour operators, including Vaghela, are looking at switching to domestic tourists for the time being. "It has been announced that international commercial flights will not operate until November 30, 2020. So we will look at creating packages for the domestic market. We shall also try to reach foreign expats who are working in India. We currently have foreign clients doing a Gujarat tour with us," Vaghela adds. ↴

DID YOU Know?

Kevadia is a town in Narmada district in Gujarat. It is in the vicinity of Statue of Unity and 'Valley of Flowers', and two Tent City set-ups available for accommodation have been developed in Kevadia.






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TRAVEL TALK
VIEWPOINT

The second chance...

There has been much hue and cry in the travel and tourism industry about the lack of relief measures being provided to it by Government of India, even when it is amply clear that it's one of the most adversely affected sectors by the coronavirus pandemic. But, recent reports have indicated that as part of the next stimulus package, the finance minister will announce sector-specific relief measures. Are we standing ready to persuade the 'powers that be' to include travel & tourism in the list of SOPs or share with them a list of countries that have offered suitable packages to their respective tourism sectors, or are we only going to go back and forth once again?

While it is not right to undermine the affect that the pandemic has had on tourism and hospitality, adversely impacting several lives and livelihoods, one cannot continue to harp on the ban on inbound and outbound tourism, a suspension that is expected to continue into year 2021. In hindsight, and however small or big, state governments have allowed the opening up of domestic tourism with hotels and even food joints being allowed to operate. In fact, the government has also given its go-ahead to the hosting of MICE events, though with a cap on the number of people attending – a move that has brought some much-needed relief to stakeholders of the sector. News has also been abound with domestic tourists flocking to destinations closest to them for a weekend break, simply to unwind. The Unlock 4 guidelines have truly opened up the market for domestic tourism with precautions and SOPs in place.

In such a scenario, it seems only appropriate to say that 'a bird in hand is worth two in the bush'. It is time that the industry make the most of disguised opportunities coming their way, think out of the box, and put their plan in full throttle. Many in the industry have already turned the adversity into a blessing, proving that there is ample opportunity to re-start business and earn revenue, one just needs to be on the lookout. And, while planning ahead, it is crucial to keep a key learning from the pandemic in mind - it may not be wise to put all your eggs in one basket.

From the philatelic archives!



Gajesh Girdhar, Owner, Paryatan Holidays and Chairman - Governing Body, NIMA, shares this First Day Cover with a stamp dating back to 1982, released to commemorate the centenary of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR). Few years later, on December 5, 1999, UNESCO World Heritage Committee inscribed DHR as a World Heritage Site.



Gajesh Girdhar
Owner, Paryatan Holidays;
Chairman - Governing Body
NIMA

Slow recovery ahead for aviation

According to CAPA India's 'Executive Summary of Mid-Year Outlook for Indian Aviation in FY2021', domestic traffic is expected to be in the range of 30-40 million airline passengers in the second half of FY2021, approximately 50 per cent down year-on-year.



TT Bureau

In the second half of FY2020, there were approximately 69 million domestic airline passengers. This is expected to decline by around 50 per cent year-on-year, driven primarily by a 60-80 per cent decline in business, MICE and leisure travel. Domestic traffic in the second half of FY2021 is therefore expected to be around 30-40 million.

The projected traffic in the second half represents an average of around 160,000-220,000 daily passengers. Towards the latter part of the year or during peak periods, this could reach a maximum of around 250,000. With airlines expected to be willing to accept average load factors of 65-75 per cent, at the mid-range of this traffic forecast this would require 250,000-300,000 daily seats, or a fleet of around 300 aircraft.

International travel is more constrained than domestic because even VFR traffic is subject to border and ca-

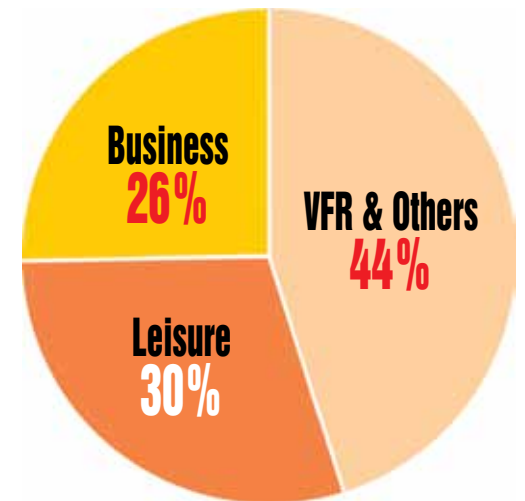
International Outbound Purpose of Travel	Estimated Share of Total in H2FY2020	Estimated Traffic in H2FY2020	Projected YoY Change in H2FY2021	Estimated Traffic in H2FY2021
Leisure	30%	5.5mn	-90%	0.6mn
Business	26%	4.7mn	-80%	0.9mn
VFR & Others	44%	8.0mn	-70%	2.4mn
Total	100%	18.2mn		3.9mn

International Inbound Purpose of Travel	Estimated Share of Total in H2FY2020	Estimated Traffic in H2FY2020	Projected YoY Change in H2FY2021	Estimated Traffic in H2FY2021
Leisure	17%	3.0mn	-100%	0.0mn
Business	8%	1.4mn	-90%	0.15mn
VFR	67%	11.7mn	-80%	2.35mn
Others	5%	0.9mn	-90%	0.1mn
Medical	3%	0.5mn	-100%	0.0mn
Total	100%	17.5mn		2.6mn

capacity restrictions. Although foreign business travellers and OCI holders are once again permitted to enter the country, India remains closed to leisure visitors, VFR travellers (unless they are NRIs or hold OCIs) and medical tourists. Only 60 per cent of the pre-COVID traffic is actually allowed to enter the country from a border control perspective, of which the majority is expected to defer travel given the risks and inconvenience associated with international travel at present.

Similarly, in the case of out-

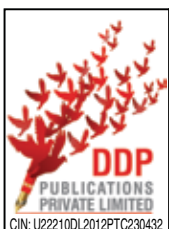
Outbound travel (by purpose of travel) pre-COVID



bound travel, discretionary business and leisure travel accounts for an estimated 56

per cent of total departures, and these segments are likely to see limited activity. VFR, employment and education accounts for around 44 per cent of traffic and may be slightly less impacted, but here, too, CAPA estimates that demand may be down by up to 70 per cent.

Domestic Purpose of Travel	Estimated National Share in H2FY2020	Estimated Traffic in H2FY2020	Projected YoY Change in H2FY2021	Estimated Traffic in H2FY2021
Business, MICE, Leisure	55%	38 million	-60% to -80%	7.6-15.2 million
VFR	45%	31 million	-20% to -30%	21.7-24.80 million
Total	100%	69 million		29.3-40 million



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Will we learn from this crisis?

If we don't adapt and learn from this crisis, we will be toast! Are we taking notes and implementing new ideas that come our way in our business or are we still waiting in vain for the crisis to tide over and things to get back to how they were before disaster spread?

“It could be the biggest gift of COVID if we learn from it. It doesn't matter where people are, but let's get the big stuff done, because that is what will make the difference. If we go back to our old ways, then we didn't learn much. The cycles are going to get sharper and shorter. So, if we don't adapt to that then we will be toast. We have to rethink where our markets are.”



James Thornton
Chief Executive Officer
Intrepid Travel

“It's no longer about having a physical presence or just an online presence, both are merging. Any physical model needs to have a digital interface, and companies that had that were able to survive COVID-19. Encourage digital channel and enablement of a business through just using tech interface - this is the new order. The travel ecosystem is changing!”



Philip C Wolf
Mentor, Serial Board Director
and Founder, Phocuswright

“Things look brighter post-COVID, with people realising the worth of experiences over things. Indulging in soul-filling experiences will become the pivotal point of travel. Travel service providers need to focus on creative and emotive experiences for their clients to stay ahead of the curve. It is time to buckle up and rethink itineraries to suit the evolved needs of customers.”



Mayank Kukreja
Co-Founder & CEO
ITILITE

“When I think about the post-COVID-19 future, I believe successful operators will be those businesses that use this period to take measurable and decisive steps to truly build a more sustainable travel industry in the future. We shouldn't be striving for things to go back to normal the way they were before the pandemic. We should be aspiring to do and be better.”



Deep Kalra
Founder & Group Executive
Chairman, MakeMyTrip



Amit Madhan
President & Group Head - Tech &
eBusiness, Thomas Cook India

“Companies need to reinvent the focus of the destination to more rural areas, to less densely populated areas. Secondly, you need to redraw a radius distance around your destinations because percentage of high frequency visitors is going to come from a tighter radius, so you will have to alter your customer acquisition strategy, your distribution plans, and reset your margins.”



Kartik Gaggar
CEO & Founder
Rajasthan Studio

“Year 2020 has changed the way business travel will be managed forever. Business travel will be key to revival, and hence the travel manager will see new demands from the company. A travel manager now needs to be an expert in immigration rules, quarantine rules by state and country, airline and hotel rules, and others.”

Inputs by Hazel Jain



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- New Indian regional airline 'FlyBig' to take off from 15 Nov
- SOTC & Thomas Cook India partner with Accor - Launch Holiday Safe
- DGCA approves 60% domestic operations in winter schedule
- Goa beach shacks to start opening from November: Nikhil Desai
- ITB Berlin 2021 to be entirely a virtual event
- E-boarding facility for int'l fliers at Hyderabad airport
- Lower COVID risk in air travel than shopping and dining out
- IRCTC's revamped Golden Chariot to restart from Jan

All eyes on domestic tourism

With both inbound and outbound business coming to a halt along with international flight operations, there has been a gradual shift in focus for tour operators to domestic business. While some were already doing it pre-COVID in a small way, there are many who are venturing into the segment now.

Inbound

“ We always had an outbound and domestic travel department in the organisation, and we were already selling these packages to our clients. However, our focus was primarily inbound business, which was the backbone of our operations before the pandemic. We have now begun focusing on domestic business as well. ”



Jatinder Taneja
MD, Travel Spirit International



Madan Kak
COO - Tours, Minar Travels India

“ We already had a domestic tourism division at Minar, which is called Wishcover Journeys by Minar. While inbound traffic, of course, is not there, domestic tourism has started picking up. The demand is there, but it is mostly for nearby destinations that people prefer to drive to. Travellers are not taking packages as of now, but they want to experience luxury hotels in and around their cities. ”

“ We have created a new domestic team in our office under the Caper brand, with existing resources. We have a website - india.capertravelindia.com, where we have put all the domestic packages. There are a reasonable number of queries as of now, since that also depends on investment on promotions. We will not go overboard with it, but if it generates something, we will continue it. ”



Deepak Bhatnagar
MD, Aamantaran Travel



Vinayak Koul
Director, Snowlion Expeditions

“ For us, domestic business is a complete overhaul since we have always been doing inbound. However, it's not easy because most of the inbound operators like us have been B2B and the business model is different. While things have started to improve, it is nothing close to normal. It is difficult to first approach a client, convince them about yourself, and then convince them to travel. However, it's improving. ”

Outbound

“ We were doing domestic earlier also, but only around 5-7%. At the same time, we are updating ourselves in outbound through webinars and trainings, since that is our forte. However, we know that for the next year and a half, people will travel domestic some more. We have trained ourselves for domestic. ”



Guldeep Singh Sahni
MD, Weldon Tours & Travels

Contd on page 23 ▶

Time to restart, refocus, reimagine

The way forward with or without COVID-19 will require a lot of steps to be followed, both by the public and private sector. Apart from focusing on newer avenues, the industry and government are also looking for corrective measures that may help the industry in the longer term in times of crisis and even otherwise.



Meenakshi Sharma
Director General, Ministry of Tourism

“ A lot of people in the tourism sector suffer from very low margins. This raises the question of whether we are selling ourselves too cheap or the service is not as promised. This makes it difficult to survive because there is not much scope left amidst too much competition. We are relaxing rules for approval of tour operators, so that the benefit can go to start-ups and those who haven't been involved with us. ”

“ The government will come out with a policy to encourage more vacation rentals to enter the market. This comes from the fact that after this crisis, we need to open new destinations that may otherwise be back or beyond. We will now look at identifying such offbeat destinations. Government of Maharashtra has also drafted a new adventure tourism policy, in the public domain now. ”



Valsa Nair Singh
Principal Secretary - Tourism, Culture Excise & Civil Aviation, Government of Maharashtra



Dipak Haksar
Retired CEO, ITC Hotels

“ It is important to restore consumer confidence. States have started opening and have come up with protocols both for stakeholders as well as tourists. I believe this is really a partnership, where the government will shape the rules and stakeholders will follow them, thereby helping restore consumer confidence. Communities and consumers must also be responsible. We need to change the narrative. ”

“ To revive tourism, we need to proactively tell people that travelling in India is safe, indicating the SOPs and asking the government to be an enabler for it. We should also take cue from how the Indian way of living and Ayurveda have played a crucial role in the country achieving the highest recovery rate. The industry should take up with MOT and RBI hotel projects being part of infrastructure financing. ”



BM Gupta
Whole Time Director, Tourism Finance Corporation of India



Kapil Kaul
CEO, CAPA India

“ Since May, the number of air travellers has increased from 45,000 to 150,000 in daily average. This means that people are travelling owing to varied reasons, and airlines, airports and hotels can share this data so that targeted efforts can be made to revive leisure air travel. This data should be shared across the value chain so everyone can learn and make targeted efforts in a more proactive digital marketing. ”

“ We need to refocus. Brands that offer the assurance of safety will be preferred over others. India needs envisioning the future that caters to the domestic needs of populations by creating and advertising domestic tourist destinations as safe and hygienic in the short term; creating a structure that is friendly for international inbound in the medium term and focusing on both for the long term. ”



Puneet Chhatwal
Managing Director & CEO, IHCL

Inputs by Nisha Verma

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Better your internet marketing skills

IATO and TRAVTALK recently organised a masterclass in association with Google-certified Internet Marketing School (IMS). Here, digital marketing experts **Pankaj Karmakar**, Technical & Academic Head, IMS and **Anushka Upasak**, Digital Marketing Faculty & Executive, IMS, addressed queries on effective website and social media marketing.

 Manas Dwivedi

Which software is suggested for bulk email marketing?

Software that is popular for bulk email marketing includes Octeth, Emarsys, Awebers and Sendinblue, but Mailchimp is one of the best premium software. With Mailchimp, you get a 2,000 contacts liberty for free and you can send 10,000 mails. After this limitation, you have to go for an upgrade. So, to try the bulk mailing feature, Mailchimp is a good option.

How do you reach the target audience's inbox and not the spam folder?

The decision depends on the design of the email. Personalisation is important to reach

the inbox. The moment you start personalising the mail, the system will detect that there is no computerised promotion involved.



Pankaj Karmakar
Technical & Academic Head, IMS

What is the difference between a blog and vlog? What should be used?

Blogs are the written form of a statement or text presented to provide information, whereas a vlog is the video form of the

same task. Both modes of communication are working very well but currently, vlogs are more popular for social media marketing or maybe mixing a blog and vlog can be a good option.

What is niche marketing on the digital platform?

Niche marketing is targeting your customer basis your demographic, location, language, behaviour and interest. It's like targeting a specific product to a particular mass of audience or group.

How do you enhance SEO?

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is an important tool to get your website visible on Google pages, and also improve the page rank. SEO is responsible for fetching best



results over interest searches. So, the more you use better and popular keywords, the more your website will be visible on search pages.

How do you protect your content and pages from plagiarism?

For this, when you design your website, giving alternative tags is important.

Is digital marketing profitable in India?

Digital marketing on social media such as Facebook and Instagram is much cheaper in comparison to marketing on Google, which is based



Anushka Upasak
Digital Marketing Faculty & Executive, IMS

on the popularity and price of keywords users search and rate per click.

Google ads or Facebook ads - which is more effective?

It depends on the nature of business. For the travel and tourism sector, social media ads on Facebook or Instagram will be more effective, but if you are promoting a specific product, go for Google ads.

How important is it to score high on Google page speed insights? How do you score high?

For your website, Google always suggests the areas where you can improve in terms of page. Using these insights, Google will tell you the issues on your website due to which your page speed on searches is getting compromised. Just note down those issues and contact your website developer to fix the page speed.

Which is the best social media platform for the older generation?

Facebook and Instagram are more popular among this age category. So, for amateurs starting out, Facebook is a friendly platform.

'Greatest Snow on Earth' in Utah

Joseph Fernandes, Chief Executive Officer, IndiJo - the India representative for Visit Utah - discusses why Utah will appeal to the Indian traveller and what's in store for the travel trade. Among the many opportunities in this western USA state are its remarkable natural beauty and film shooting sites.

 Hazel Jain

On behalf of the Utah-office of Tourism, IndiJo recently conducted a destination webinar which saw more than 500 attendees. This, feels **Joseph Fernandes**, is very good given that Utah is still a relatively new (but extremely exciting) destination for the Indian travel trade. While Utah-office of Tourism has undertaken a few activities in India over the last few

years. Utah is one of the most popular tourism destinations in the USA. In fact, it is the first US state to receive the highest rating, and has been recognised for the high quality of service, the beauty of its world-class landscapes, and the concentration of three Michelin star national parks. However, its awareness is relatively low in India. "So as we continue to build the awareness of Utah in India, the focus is to position it as a unique destination that



Joseph Fernandes
Chief Executive Officer, IndiJo

offers a plethora of outdoor attractions with wide open spaces (which is perfect in these times), like national and state parks. Utah offers a range of activities for the entire family, from hiking and skiing to amazing social media-worthy sites, given that many Hollywood movies have been filmed in Utah. Self-drive road trips are growing in popularity in India - Utah is often con-

sidered among the top road trip destinations in the world. We are working with key US DMCs as well as suppliers to help in our efforts to support the Indian travel trade in developing Utah products and tours that will resonate with the Indian traveller," Fernandes adds.

Trade engagement

The Indian travel trade is especially important in the promotion of any destination, more so a long-haul destination like Utah.

"That is why our promotions have been mainly focused on building the awareness of Utah amongst the Indian travel trade. This included participating in roadshows, organising networking events, webinars, etc. We

will continue our trade engagement activities with destination trainings, etc., but will further support the trade by providing tools, connections and enhancing their capabilities to promote and sell Utah. We also plan to drive consumer demand through co-op promotions with select trade partners," he adds.

The response from the trade has been excellent so far. "Numerous operators have reached out to us looking to incorporate Utah in their USA packages. Questions on self-drive, dinosaur trails, geologic wonders, stargazing tours, national parks and small towns are some that we received. We have also received queries about ski resorts in Utah, as Utah is known and scientifically proven to have the 'greatest snow on earth', and hence has several world-class ski resorts. However, the most common question is about the DMCs that can support with Utah tours. We have been actively engaging the key US DMCs who offer excellent tours in Utah that cater to the Indian traveller," Fernandes says.

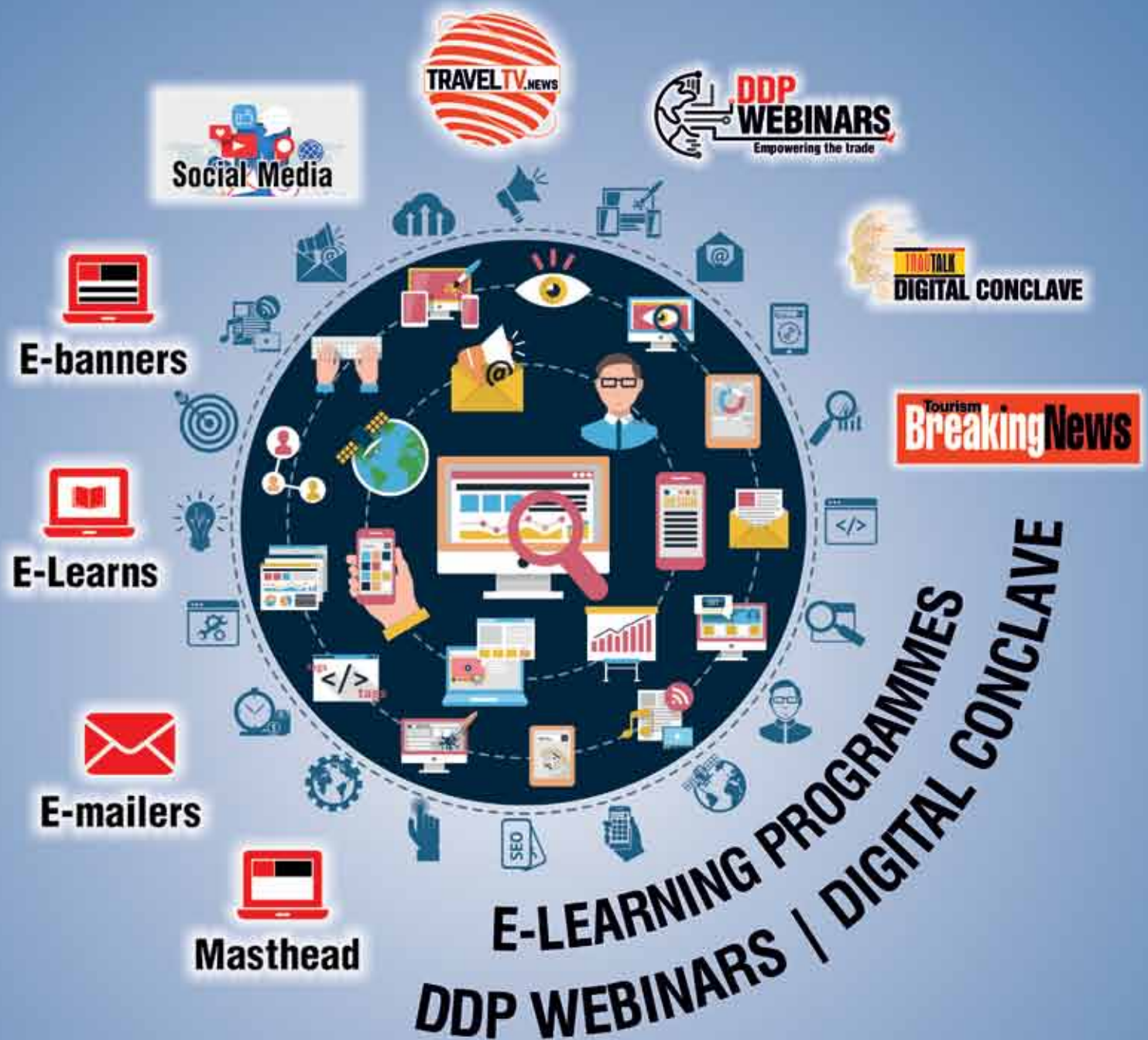
 We'll support the trade by providing tools, connections and enhancing capabilities to sell Utah 

Getting to Utah

Utah is easily accessible from key US cities like Las Vegas. Its capital city, Salt Lake City, recently expanded its airport, which was one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the USA at a cost of US\$4.1 bn. The new Salt Lake City airport promises incredible views, technology, efficiency, local art, and a variety of local shops and restaurants. It also offers best practices in sanitation, making it the newest gateway to western USA.



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Curbs keep Andaman from revival

The travel trade and hospitality associations in Andaman and Nicobar Islands have requested the local administration and government to revive tourism and remove restrictions on operation of flights and ferries. Domestic flight arrivals at Port Blair Airport have come down 11 per cent since January 2020, which means only two flights a day.

Manas Dwivedi

With tourism being a major source of employment and income generation in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, the situation there can only be adverse in present times, with the region not having received tourists for the last

seven months. Even after the UT's administration decided to open tourism activities from September 27, tourists and industry stakeholders are facing major hindrances in reviving the tourism sector, with flight and transport restrictions in the island. In comparison to 18 flight arrivals in January 2020, the local administration has put a cap on the number of daily inbound domestic flights, and just two flights are allowed to operate a day. Additionally, there is a complete restriction on inter-island ferry service, which is the prime source of transport between Swaraj Dweep and Shaheed Dweep.

Stakeholders and travel trade associations have been requesting the administration

and government to issue clear guidelines on reopening and better execution on ground, so that tourists don't



Mohammad H Jadwet
President, Ship/Ferry Owners Association

get discouraged from visiting the islands. Associations like IATO and FHRAI have already written to the Lieutenant Governor, Tourism Minister and Home Ministry for support in removing restrictions and for revival, while private players



Girish Arora
Secretary, Hotel Association of Andaman

like MakeMyTrip have also written to the Chief Secretary of Andaman & Nicobar Islands seeking immediate measures to support livelihood, income generation and employment in the industry.

Industry speaks

Sharing his view on the issue, **Mohammad H Jadwet**, President, Ship/Ferry Owners Association, says, "Connectivity and tourism

go hand-in-hand and are especially vital for Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Due to the restrictions on flights at the Port Blair airport and non-operation of ferry services, no tourists are setting foot on the islands. In fact, most of them are getting diverted to Maldives, where connectivity is not an issue. This is also hampering our Prime Minister's clarion call of 'Vocal for Local'. So, this needs to be corrected sooner than later as the tourism industry on the islands is going through a very hard time."

To this, **Girish Arora**, Secretary, Hotel Association of Andaman, adds, "Tourism is the only industry on the islands generating about ₹750 crore of revenue. Since

March, there has been no arrival of tourists here, unlike destinations in other parts of the country that are show-

Tourism is the only industry on the islands; since March there has been no arrival of tourists

- Girish Arora

ing early signs of revival and where hotels are getting visitors either in the form of those needing quarantine or others who have begun travelling to nearby places."

Tourists are getting diverted to Maldives where connectivity is not an issue

- Mohammad H Jadwet

Cap on domestic fares continues

Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of Civil Aviation, has announced that the price cap for domestic flights will be extended by a few more months, till February 24, 2021.

Nisha Verma

Hardeep Singh Puri has shared that the upper and lower limits on domestic airfares will remain in place for another three months. The price cap was earlier valid till November 24, and has now been extended till February



Hardeep Singh Puri
Minister of Civil Aviation

had placed these price bands when they announced the resumption of domestic operations, which began on May 25, 2020. "We are extending the price bands for another three months, but if by the time we reach the end of the year we find that there is an appreciable movement in the situation and we are reaching pre-COVID levels, I would absolutely have no hesitation if MoCA officials want us to not utilise the price band for the full three-month period," said Puri.

The Minister has also announced that bidding for Air India would be done on the basis of its enterprise value, and not equity value. "We have decided to ask for bids for Air India on enterprise value," he asserted.

Enterprise value of a company includes the equity value, debt as well as cash with the company. Equity value measures the value of a company's shares. **Pradeep Singh Kharola**, Secretary, MoCA, added that the bid will be on the enterprise value in which a ratio has been earmarked between how much the bidder can take as debt and how much he has to give as cash. Kharola further explained that whatever enterprise value the bidder quotes, 15% of that has to be given in cash to the government and remaining 85% has to be taken as debt along with Air India.

If we begin reaching pre-COVID levels, we may not use the price for the full period

24, 2021. The ministry will relook at it in February. Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA)

Rail Europe's expert programme

The third edition of the month-long Rail Expert India programme will be live from November 1, 2020, wherein travel agents and tour operators can learn about selling key European rail products.

Hazel Jain

Rail Europe has launched the third edition of its Rail Expert 2020 – a month-long programme that helps the travel fraternity to learn about various European rail products and gives them a chance to win exciting prizes. The Rail Expert India Program will be live from November 1 till November 30, 2020. This year's programme has companies like Eurostar, Deutsche Bahn, London North Eastern Railway and TGV participating.

Srijit Nair, Regional Sales Director (Africa, Greater India, Middle East), Rail Europe, says, "Every year we try to include different European rail carriers. This is an annual training programme which is planned at the beginning of the



Srijit Nair
Regional Sales Director (Africa, Greater India, Middle East), Rail Europe

year and I am happy to share this is going live as per the planned dates in spite of the difficult situation we are witnessing due to the pandemic."

Participants need to visit the Rail Europe global platform, sign up and enrol themselves specifically for the Rail Expert India 2020 programme. The quiz will be live from November 1 and they can complete the modules by November 30. Travel agents need to

complete five modules and they will be provided with the course material in the form of a presentation. On completion of the course and securing the minimum qualification, they receive the Rail Expert

This is an annual training programme which is planned at the beginning of the year

Certificate as well as a chance to win exciting prizes. Rail Europe has also replaced its distribution system from Euronet to Easy Rail Access from October 1, 2020 to improve the user experience.

Your quick guide to TCS!

Applicable at the rate of 5% on foreign remittances made through Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) of RBI, Tax Collection at Source (TCS) has created apprehension among travel agents. Global Panorama Showcase (GPS), in association with TRAVTALK, Flyremit.com and GMJ, organised a brainstorming session to clear doubts of the travel trade.

 Manas Dwivedi

According to CA **Hari Das Bhat**, Partner, GMJ & Co, levying TCS is government's move to bring people travelling abroad under tax net. "Majority of queries received from travel fraternity are regarding confusion between TDS (Tax Deducted at Source) and TCS. A travel agent's duty is to collect tax from overseas tour package (OTP) buyer and pay to the government. How you spend, how you remit it



Hari Das Bhat
Partner, GMJ & Co

every month for all months except March, where you get extension of 30 days. Then you have to file quarterly returns within 15 days from end of the quarter and for March quarter there's 45 days of time. Your duties and responses are simple, collect TCS and pay to the government in time. If you don't do it in time, then there are penal provisions, interest provisions and per-day fine. One thing you have to be clear of, if somebody is deducting TDS on your bill, you need not collect the TCS. So, wherever TDS is applicable, TCS is not applicable. The government wants you to

larger picture. "If people ask if TCS is an additional tax, no, it's not correct. TCS is not an additional tax, it is an advance tax. Whether you are a business or a salaried person, you can claim this payment against your income as



Harmandeep Singh Anand
Managing Director, GPS

income tax. Any amount that needs to be remitted out of India under LRS code SO306 comes under new TCS law."

Biggest nation building exercise Terming TCS as probably the biggest nation-building exercise in the travel industry brought in by the government, **Harmandeep Singh Anand**, Managing Director,



Abdul Hadi Shaikh
Co-Founder, Fxkart.com & Flyremit.com

and what you do with your expenditure has got nothing to do with TCS; if anyone

TCS affected parties			
Entity	TCS collection responsibility?	TCS burden?	Claim TCS amount in income tax
DMC	No	No	No
Overseas Sightseeing/ Attractions	No	No	No
Overseas Hotel	No	No	No
Indian B2B Consolidator	No	No	No
Foreign B2B Consolidator	No	No	No
Indian B2C Portal	YES	No	No
Foreign B2C Portal	No <small>But Credit Card Company will charge TCS</small>	No	No
Travel agents selling to Actual Traveller	YES	No	No
Authorised Dealer (I & II)	YES <small>Either TCS Amount or TCS Challan</small>	No	No
Traveller (PAN Holder utilising LRS)	No	YES	YES

buys OTP from you, then over and above ticket and GST, you have to collect the TCS also like any other tax. You also need to collect GST from TCS also on invoice or advanced receipt, whichever is earlier. Whatever TCS you collect during the month, you have to pay the government before seven days of end of

be part of the nation building exercise. Your responsibilities are immense," he explained.

TCS is not an additional tax Giving out an all-explainer presentation, **Abdul Hadi Shaikh**, Co-Founder, Fxkart.com & Flyremit.com, cleared most frequently-asked questions on TCS and presented a

GPS, said that TCS will help the Indian travel industry become an organised sector. "We need to explain to our clients that TCS is not an additional cost, it is just an advance tax. TCS is the way forward. We will have the right people in the industry continuing in a right format," Anand said.

Queries from trade

Who has to bear TCS?

For overseas travel, the individual travelling abroad has to bear TCS. Traveller or the person whose PAN is being used to remit money abroad has to pay TCS. For overseas education, the parent or the student has to pay TCS. When remitting, in addition to all documents, travel agent will give remittance company TCS challan and declaration.

Examples of payment liable for TCS?

Package tours bought from DMCs; stand-alone hotels, overseas (local) flights, sightseeing, food, attractions, etc., bought directly from overseas seller; foreign travel-related items bought but payment done in INR to local accounts.

What is TCS for education?

If self-funded education remittance, 5% TCS over ₹7 lakh remitted in FY and if loan taken, 0.5%.

Should TCS be added to the cost or be inclusive? How can customers be quoted?

TCS should be collected separately. If you do not collect separately, it will be your cost. Ideally, one should quote as the OTP price + GST + TCS.

If tour cost includes domestic and international portion, is the TCS applicable on total or only on international portion? Does TCS apply on total tour cost or only the forex component?

TCS is applicable on outbound tour packages only. When the package is sold including domestic portion, the TCS will be applicable on full package amount. Whether the seller of the OTP spends in forex or otherwise does not matter for TCS as applicable to travel agent. Better to bill both segments, domestic and international, separately.

If passenger pays by credit card directly to the hotel at the time of check-out, will the credit card company have to collect TCS? If agent buys services for his customers on an international website and pays by credit card, what is TCS position?

TCS is applicable when you bill for OTP and collect the same. If someone directly pays to the hotel via credit card, there is no liability of TCS on travel agent, who has arranged the booking. However, the bank will collect TCS on the same under LRS. The TCS will be applicable whether the agent pays for the same by credit card or through bank. All major credit card companies have come up with clarification that if an Indian credit card is used to pay for overseas travel services, then the credit card company will charge additional 5%. There may be an additional TCS processing fee also levied by the credit card company. Further, traveller will have to follow up with the credit card company for TCS certificate.

What documents are required from the customer for levying TCS?

Only the PAN card of the buyer of the OTP is required. It is suggested to keep the copy of PAN for record purposes.

Is TCS applicable on passenger purchase of currency and forex cards?

Yes, if the purpose of obtaining foreign currency or Forex card is declared as foreign travel.

If tour operator is a sub-agent of another tour operator, who is responsible for TCS? Who collects TCS?

The first person who sells overseas travel services to traveller (whose PAN is used for LRS) will have to collect and discharge TCS. Every subsequent movement of money in India will be: Invoice value + TCS payment challan (collected and paid by first travel agent).

Tour cost is collected in instalments, especially for MICE business. For MICE there are usually 3 payments, first advance invoice is raised, then pre-departure amount received, and final balance after tour is completed. At what stage is TCS payable?

At every stage TCS has to be discharged proportionately.

Cancellation of tours in the last minute happens frequently. How do we claim refund of TCS paid?

Traveller has to collect TCS refund in his income tax returns.



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People prefer postponing travel



A new global study by Travel Consul, participated in by over 1,000 travel executives from more than 20 countries, reveals some key insights into the future recovery of global travel distribution as well as regional trends. Results offer a look at traveller preferences and advance bookings.

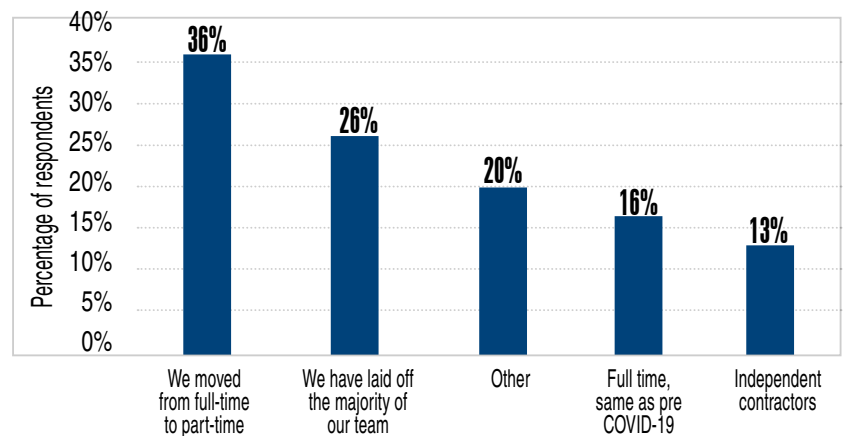


PANDEMIC'S EFFECTS ON THE COMPANY

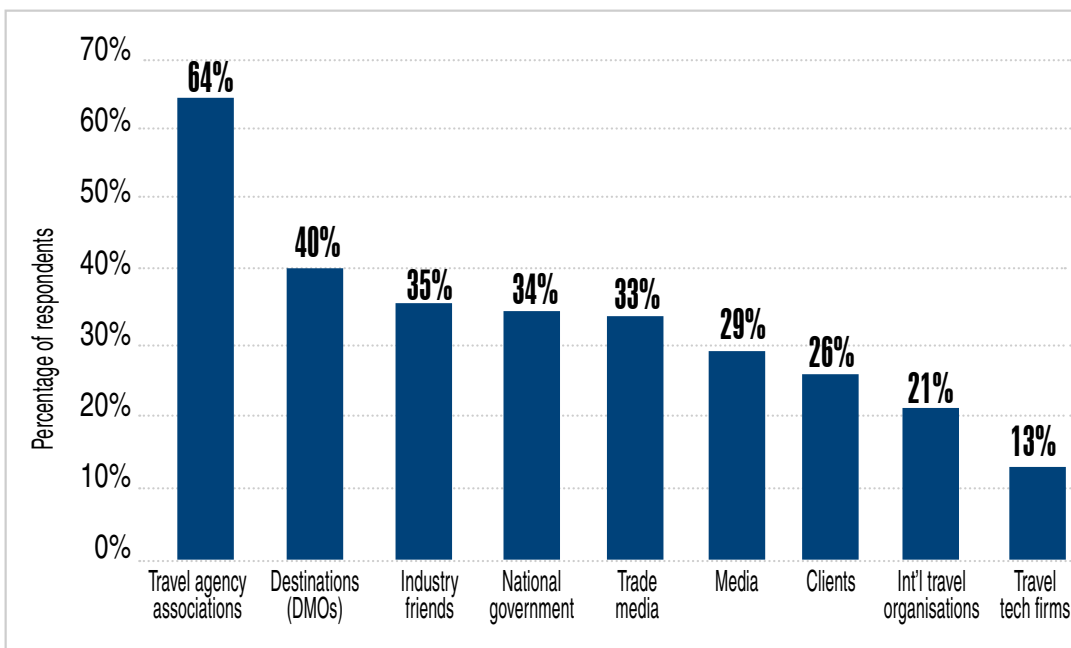
Overall situation of COVID-19 in the country

My country reopened cautiously, epidemic is on the rise	42%
My country's borders remain closed to travel internationally	32%
My country reopened cautiously, epidemic is on the decline	19%
Other	7%

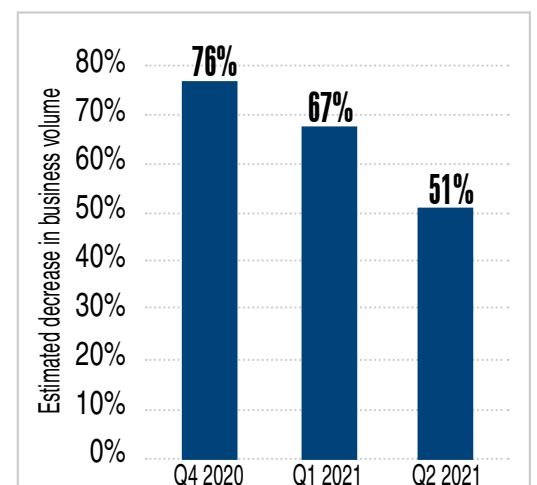
How teams are working today



Top three data sources that are helping cope with this crisis

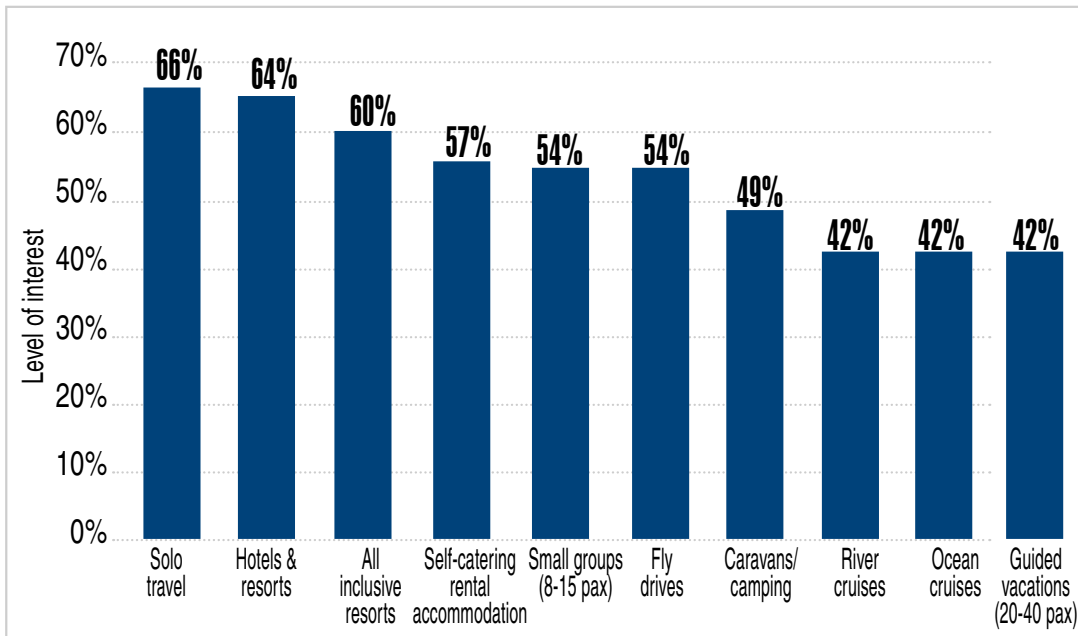


Compared to the last calendar year, what percentage drop is expected in business volume (revenues) for Q4 2020 and Q1-Q2 2021?



CLIENT PREFERENCES

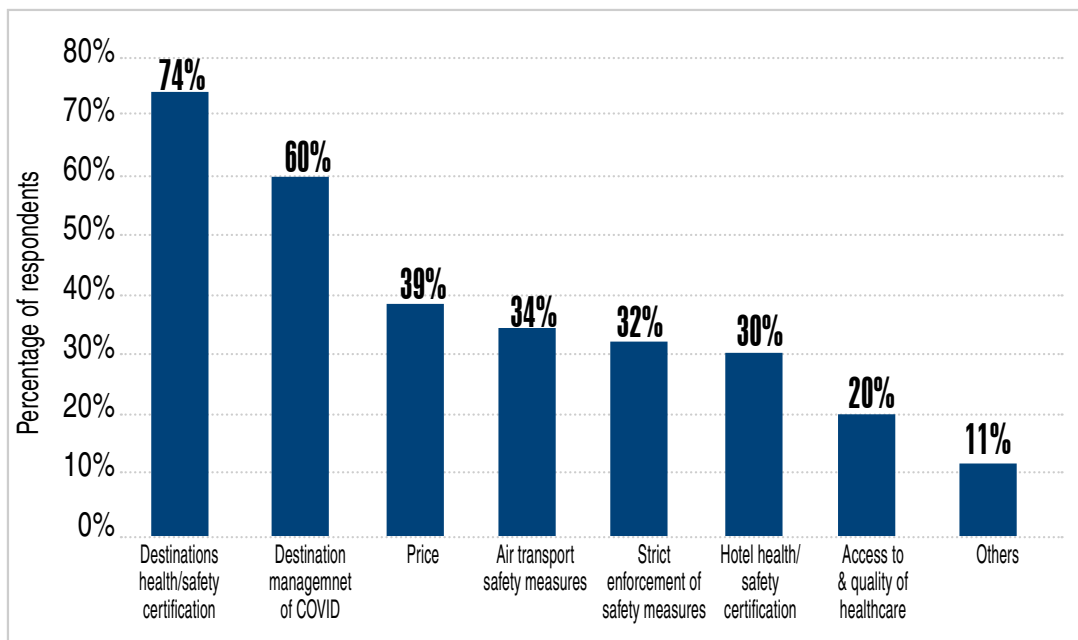
Clients' level of interest in various products



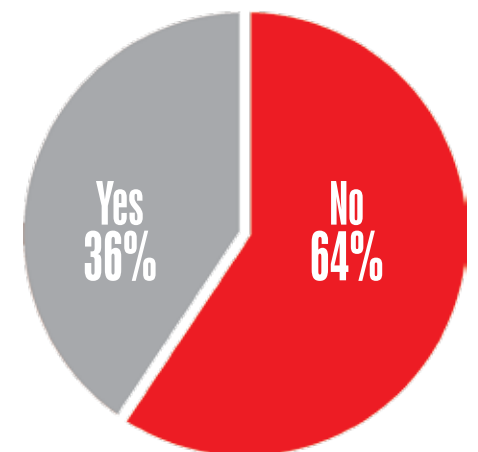
How far in advance are clients booking international trips?



Top three considerations of clients when choosing a destination today

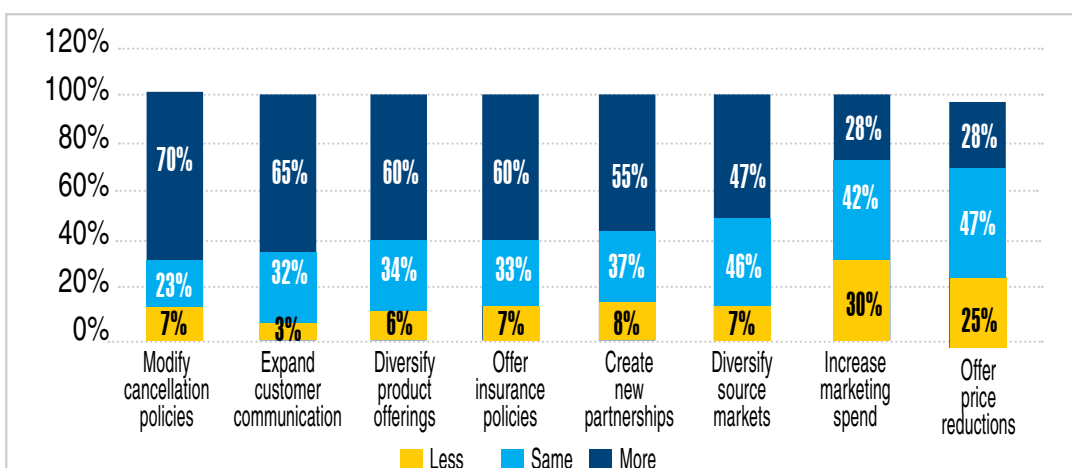


Are travel seasons being stretched out?

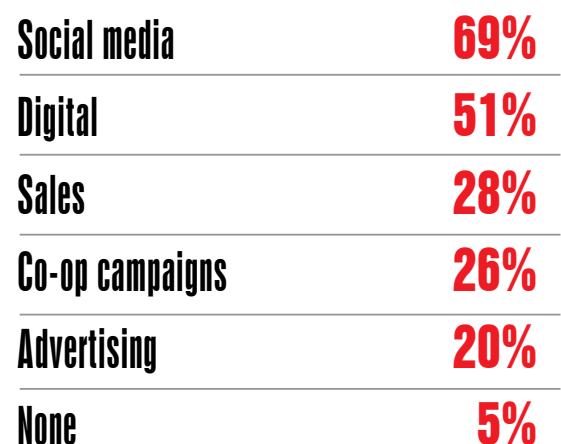


OUTLOOK

Main undertakings in 2020-2021



Marketing activities planned for coming months



Are we ready to go rural?

On World Tourism Day this year, focus was laid on rural tourism with eyes on India as the next big destination in this genre. But, that brings up some pertinent questions – what does rural tourism mean in India, do we match traveller expectations (both domestic and international) in this regard, and how far are we from truly tapping its potential?

 Nisha Verma

The Ministry of Tourism claims that India has the right products for rural tourism. Many properties that are dedicated to rural tourism and specific products in this genre are usually catered to by inbound clients, and now some of them are repackaging rural tourism to suit the needs of domestic tourists.



Steve Borgia
CMD, INDeco Leisure Hotels

Pandemic has done what pioneers could not do in rural tourism

– Steve Borgia

Are we ready?

Steve Borgia, CMD, INDeco Leisure Hotels, believes that India has always been ready for rural tourism. “The only problem is, India does not realise its potential. We need to look at Agri and rural tourism together. We could have stopped the damage that we were doing consistently and continuously to our rural pockets. If rural tourism was promoted in the right manner, it would have been the best economic development tool for India’s rural regions,” he says.

Agreeing, **Sunil Varghese**, Director, Dune Wellness Group, shares, “Rural or agricultural tourism is indeed a practical concept and a



Sunil Varghese
Director, Dune Wellness Group

To make it a success, the traveller must be ready to ‘experience the experience’

– Sunil Varghese

(The Goat Villages & Bakri Chhap), this new and upcoming genre of tourism is permeating into the segment of the elderly traveller for nostalgic reasons and into the segment of millennial travellers for exotic reasons. He goes on to add, “We are about to witness a paradigm shift in the space of tourism in India through rural tourism,” he adds.



Shoba Mohan
Founder, RARE India

What we do as a country to protect our heritage speaks a lot about our integrity and commitment to our traditions

– Shoba Mohan

Government support

In terms of the government’s preparation in promoting and supporting rural tourism in India, **Kuldip Gadhvi**, Founder, Kutch Adventures India, shares, “When it comes to the impact of promotions on rural India, local culture and environment, we have a lot to learn and do. We do not have strict policies or are not implementing them very well, or we are not as concerned about these subjects as we are about economic benefits. Perhaps economic benefit is a common motive for many people in the travel industry.”



Mani Mahesh Arora
Co-founder, Green People (The Goat Villages & Bakri Chhap)

We are about to witness a paradigm shift in the space of tourism in India through rural tourism

– Mani Mahesh Arora

But, **Frank Schlichtmann**, Founder, The 4 tables Project, does not think India is ready for rural tourism. “There is a philosophical question here about the merits of rural tourism as well as what it means. However, I see no efforts by the



Chhotaram Prajapat
Owner
Chhotaram Prajapat Homestay

Our country is ready; travellers are more interested in experiencing rural areas

– Chhotaram Prajapat

government and organisations to create a viable narrative around this topic,” he stresses.

Need to suit domestic travellers

While inbound tourists were always fascinated by authentic rural experiences, Borgia says that there is a need to repackage it for domestic travellers. “Traditionally, Indians don’t go to a place until foreigners start flocking there. The pandemic has done what pioneers could not do in rural tourism. COVID is driving urbanites to



Kuldip Gadhvi
Founder, Kutch Adventures India

We are not as concerned about these subjects as we are about economic benefits

– Kuldip Gadhvi

rural and remote regions. However, what is far more important in the repackaging is that we need to be responsible, sustainable and avoid damaging villages.”

Even Mohan believes that pricing will be a concern for domestic travellers.

Chhotaram Prajapat, Owner, Chhotaram Prajapat Homestay in Jodhpur, shares that they are doing well in domestic tourism.



Frank Schlichtmann
Founder, The 4tables Project

I see no efforts by the government and organisations to create a viable narrative around this topic

– Frank Schlichtmann

“Our country is ready for rural tourism because nowadays, travellers are more interested in experiencing rural areas and people also want to support this,” he adds.

More than customisation, says Arora, a strong ‘expectation management’ is required for domestic travellers. “Glamourisation of rural vacations and living; low-carbon footprint travel; eco, cultural, farm and responsible tourism experiences is the need of the hour, along with integrating other avenues of economic development in rural India with tourism and hospitality,” he adds.

Rural, not necessarily local

Schlichtmann disagrees, saying, “In India, one is bound to the concept that the rural must highlight only their traditions. The government’s tourism concepts are also along these lines. We have many successful modern art events, but people can’t think beyond rural handicrafts. Good ideas come from fusing the rural with the urban.”

Hybrid events, a golden chance

Sharing details on a unique corporate MICE activity organised for their client, **Rishiraj Singh Anand**, Joint MD, Jagsons Travels and GPS, says that they got a number of partners to their branch offices to participate in day-long activities, and tied up with Zomato for prompt delivery of meals and beverages as well as awards!

 Manas Dwivedi

Nothing comes easy, you have to think out of the box and make things work for yourself. Such is the belief of **Rishiraj Singh Anand**, who adds that there is plenty of opportunity to do business in the MICE industry despite being in the middle of a pandemic. Sharing his idea and explaining how it indicates early signs of revival for business, Singh says, "The corporate travel movement has taken a big hit, but since September, we have seen growth in it. People were not travelling for business - taking flights or spending on hotels - so we had to come up with unique ideas using technology, and introduce a hybrid model of

events to do business. We recently hosted one of our largest corporate events that had almost 1,000 delegates from across India participating from remote places as well as metros and Tier-II, III and IV cities and towns as well. We had delegates located at branch offices of corporate houses at these remote locations. We conducted a full-day corporate event with lots of activities for them."

Sharing more details about the format of the event and how the team executed it, Singh says that with the hybrid event, they tried to engage participants through activities, challenges and tasks. "We started the day early in the morning, when

all delegates reported in the branch offices. They were asked to come prepared for the day as it was almost a 12-hour-long event with



Rishiraj Singh Anand
Joint Managing Director
Jagsons Travels and GPS

back-to-back activities. We started with a little join-up session where we provided a brief for the day, what was planned for them and subsequently, went ahead


with team building exercises," he explains.

Not just activities, the team also organised meals for delegates in a unique way. "We arranged three meals as well as high tea to be delivered in each of the branches across India. For this, we tied up with Zomato to source food for us from domestic and international food chains, like Marriott, wherever possible. In remote locations, we went in for popular local options. Zomato did a fabulous job in helping us out and delivering the food

on time," he says. After all activities, including speeches and presentations, the team

 We conducted a full-day corporate event with lots of activities 

organised an award ceremony and gala night for everyone sitting in their offices. "Here,

as soon as an award was announced, Zomato had its delivery partner hand-deliver a cake and award as and when instructed. Timing was really important here. At the end, the client was really happy with our effort and execution, since they had never thought that something like this could be done," says Singh, explaining the process. He concludes, adding, "With technology, I feel hybrid events are going to be the future. We are working on more technologically advanced events and giving ideas to clients as well." 

 *Restrictions on travel introduced in response to the pandemic continue to hit global tourism hard, with the latest data from UNWTO showing a 70% fall in international arrivals for the first eight months of 2020.*



Ashford Castle

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SpiceJet offers seaplane travel

To boost tourism and provide last-mile connectivity, SpiceJet has launched a seaplane service between Ahmedabad and Statue of Unity, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the service. The airline has already conducted successful trial runs in Nagpur, Guwahati and Mumbai.

 Manas Dwivedi

In a move that would revolutionise the country's regional connectivity and provide a boost to travel and tourism, SpiceJet has launched its seaplane service between Ahmedabad (Sabarmati Riverfront) and the Statue of Unity in Kevadia, Gujarat. The flights will be operated by SpiceJet's fully-owned subsidiary, Spice Shuttle. The airline has secured 18 seaplane routes



Ajay Singh
CMD, SpiceJet

under UDAN. To begin with, SpiceJet is operating two daily flights on the Ahmedabad-Kevadia route effective

October 31. The all-inclusive one-way fares will begin from as low as ₹1500 under the UDAN scheme and tickets are available on www.spiceshuttle.com. The company will be using a 15-seater Twin Otter 300 aircraft for these flights.

Ajay Singh, Chairman & Managing Director, SpiceJet, said, "The launch of our first seaplane service will be remembered as one of the most notable events in the history of Indian aviation. We at SpiceJet feel proud to have played a role in fulfilling our Prime Minister's vision of connecting the remotest parts of the country by air. Our seaplane service between Sabarmati River-

front and Statue of Unity will cut down travel time to just about half an hour, and will be a unique, exhilarating flying experience that would immensely boost travel and tourism. With the ability to land on a small water body, seaplanes are the perfect flying machines that can effec-



tively connect the remotest parts of India into the mainstream aviation network."

SpiceJet has conducted thorough seaplane trials in India since 2017. While under the first phase, trials of the land plane were conducted in Nagpur and Guwahati, the second phase involved the am-

phibious aircraft for which trials were held at Mumbai's Girgaum Chowpatty. Regions in the Northeast, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andaman, Lakshadweep and other coastal areas are a few destinations that are being evaluated for amphibious plane operations. ↴

Flight schedule

From	To	Departure	Arrival	Frequency
Ahmedabad	Kevadia	10.15	10.45	Daily
Kevadia	Ahmedabad	11.45	12.15	Daily
Ahmedabad	Kevadia	12.45	13.15	Daily
Kevadia	Ahmedabad	15.15	15.45	Daily

 **With the ability to land on a small water body, seaplanes can connect remote parts** 

7 reasons to head to Nevada!

Got fishing, hiking or hot spring hunting on the mind? More than 80 per cent of Nevada is public land — the highest percentage among all states of the USA, which means this land literally is your land! Here are some exciting reasons to visit Nevada so you can explore it some more!

 TT Bureau

Nevadans are friendly. Just make sure you pronounce Nevada right. It's 'Neh-VAD-uh', not 'Neh-VAH-duh'. We suggest you practice saying that while getting to know the Silver State better.



Burning Man's Black Rock City is the largest temporary city in the world

With more than 70,000 partygoers in attendance each August — most only for about a week — Burning Man's Black Rock City becomes not only the world's largest temporary city, but also the sixth-largest urban environ-

ment in Nevada. Comprising elaborate theme camps, villages, art installations and individual camps, Black Rock City is so large that it builds its own post office, DMV and complete medical team.

The state of Nevada is the most mountainous in the Lower 48 Nevada claims 42 named



summits over 11,000 feet, including eight of the nation's ultra-prominent peaks, which means they rise a minimum of 4,900 feet up from their surrounding valleys.

Turquoise, garnet, and black fire opal galore means Nevada is a rockhoulder's paradise Nevada is the country's

second-largest turquoise producer, trailing Arizona to the south, and has more turquoise mines than any other state. Try your luck at rock-hounding black fire opal.

Nevada is one of the quietest places in the US Home to some of the last remaining true dark skies in the

country, expect to uncover the holy grail of stargazing. Nevada serves up thousands of stars, galaxies, and planets to your naked eye — some visible nowhere else on earth.

Nevada is home to nearly 50% of the nation's wild horse herds

More than 60,000 wild mustangs and burros roam the Silver State — more than half the entire population of wild horses in the US.

Nevada has more natural hot springs than any other state

With more than 300 natural hot springs bubbling up across the Silver State, know that in this soak-rich state, there's probably going to be a hot spring waiting for you at the end of the road. Plan a spa-day at one of Nevada's luxurious resort hot springs. ↴



Nevada has more ghost towns than 'living' towns

With around 100 locales with zip codes to 600+ ghost towns, Nevada has more historic mining camps and bygone boomtowns than actual populated cities and towns.

Tripjack's Fantasy League a hit!

As the exhilaration for cricket matches reaches a crescendo, so does the excitement for Tripjack's Travel Agent Fantasy League that now has more than 3,000 contest winners. Interested agents still have a chance to participate, as the contest will continue till the end of the ongoing T20 season.



Hazel Jain

Tripjack believes in bringing the best technology to its travel agent partners and empowering them to best suit their needs, says **Hasan Patel**, Director of B2B travel portal Tripjack. "To increase



our engagement with them during these times, we conceptualised the Fantasy League for them. Cricket is the most popular sport in India and it is played and celebrated throughout the nation. Our innovative concept of the Travel Agent Fantasy League is now in the second phase,

and the excitement level has now doubled!" he adds. Tripjack.com is one of India's largest B2B travel portals offering hotels, flights, visas, insurance and various other travel products for travel agents.

Tripjack's exciting competition based on the ongoing IPL matches not only has

We started this campaign to engage our network of travel partners



Hasan Patel
Director, Tripjack

more than 3,000 winners till date but has also managed to engage its travel partners and create some buzz in the industry.

Patel shares, "We started this campaign to bring excitement and engagement to our network of travel partners with this unique concept. We are seeing more and more users

Tripjack Travel Agent Fantasy League winner

Sharing his experience on working with Tripjack, **Imran Ahamed**, Owner of Pride Holidays, says, "It's been a pleasure to work with Tripjack. I have been associated with them for the past one year since I started my company, and I have been getting really good support from them. It starts from the visa processing

inquiry to ticketing and then hotel bookings – Tripjack team is one step ahead of any other online service portal in India. Their recent launch of the Fantasy League contest is one more milestone in the Tripjack journey." Top winners get air tickets sponsored by AirAsia and hotel stays every week. Visit tripjack.com now!



Imran Ahamed
Owner, Pride Holidays

participate daily. Visit Tripjack.com and start playing now!"

He goes on to add, "Playing fantasy cricket completely depends on one's skill and knowledge of the game. Our engaging platform creates a

great experience of the game and I think the Tripjack team has done a wonderful job to make this a memorable and cool experience. We have received excellent response from our users; everyone plays it for free and has a

chance to win exciting prizes as well as brush up their cricket skills. With 30-plus years of experience in the travel industry, we have made this very innovative and interesting with awesome prizes and awards."

AARTI convention in January

Association for Agri & Rural Tourism in India (AARTI) is organising a six-day convention in January next year with INDeco Hotels Swamimalai, to promote this up-and-coming genre of tourism.



Nisha Verma

AARTI is a conglomeration of all organisations and individuals engaged in the rural tourism space, with the sole objective of mending its broken backbone and regenerate its poor economy with what the local communities know, have and do. The founding members of AARTI are Padma Bhushan awardee **SK Mishra**, IAS (retd.); **Sujit Banerjee**, IAS (retd.); **MP Bezbaruah**, IAS (retd.); **Jose Dominic**;



Steve Borgia
CMD, INDeco Leisure Hotels

Prof Nimit Choudhary; **Supratim Raj Basu**; **Pandurang Taware** and **Steve Borgia**, CMD, INDeco Leisure Hotels.

The association is now planning a six-day convention in January 2021, with INDeco Hotels Swamimalai, and Borgia is the Coordinator of the convention. He shares, "AARTI proposes to organise a global convention in January 2021 at Kumbakonam, Tanjore district in southern India. The association has also sought support of UNWTO and Ministry

of Tourism. May this initiative help AARTI to take rural tourism to pockets that have the potential to create tourism destinations for the world to experience, and regenerate villages, their culture, life, life-style and heritage."

Borgia adds that the convention will take attendees beyond lectures and speeches. "The core of this convention is the seminar on innovative, responsible, regenerative and sustainable tourism for rural development. This will be supported by related workshops, site visits, demonstrations and creation of rural tourism products aimed at propagating tourism for rural development. Numerous related events have been planned as a part of this convention to help identify and build rural entrepreneurship," he says.

The core of this convention is the seminar on responsible tourism for rural development

Self-drive tour reaches Mumbai



Indiatourism Mumbai, the Regional Office of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, for the western and central region, organised a reception and felicitation for a six-member team comprising travel agents and tour operators from Gujarat in Mumbai. They are on a self-drive car expedition across India to promote domestic tourism.

Tent City-Kutch opens from 12th



Comprising 350 tents, Tent City has been set up to host guests near Rann of Kutch, one of the most breathtaking locations in Gujarat. It will open to welcome guests from November 12. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of measures have been put in place in vehicles and throughout the area of Tent City-Kutch to ensure safety of guests.

Tourism: The crucial backbone

French author Marcel Proust once said, 'The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes'. Such is also the view of **Harmandeep Singh Anand**, MD, Jagsons Travels and Founder, Global Panorama Showcase, who says that the thought couldn't have been more apt than for the current COVID situation.

The recent COVID-19 situation has changed the lifestyle of every single individual. This pandemic reveals the strengths and weaknesses of every nation, from the first world to the most vulnerable ones. But, the most important thing is that it tells how a single virus can wipe out years of hard work and place us 20 years behind.



Industries and businesses worldwide have entered a perplexing situation, where they are trying to save years of efforts, and their employees who are no less than family to them. When we talk about industries, travel & tourism is one of those that is and will be the first industry

to be affected and the last industry to revive.

Travel & tourism consists 9.3 per cent of the total Indian GDP, which is about one-tenth. Not only is it an important, fun and attractive factor, but important for creating demand and for the growth

of many other industries, directly as well as indirectly, which in turn contributes to the overall development of a place. Tourism is not just about travelling to a particular place but also about nurturing and experiencing different societal, economic and cultural factors. Growth

of the travel & tourism industry is directly proportional to the overall socio-economic growth. From travel planning, transport and accommodation to sightseeing, travel agents and tour operators prove to be a crucial backbone, putting non-stop effort day and night to provide a quality experience, whether

for a four-night, five-day trip or that exceeding a month. The recent situation has hit the travel, tourism and aviation sectors with a solid rock. Although it has brought the industry to a standstill and induced a coma, rather than cribbing, it is time we as an industry said hello to the new normal. This situation is a good opportunity for the government as well, to strengthen, reimagine and reorganise its role and support towards the capabilities of this sector. With national borders still under the process of reopening, niche tourism will help build consumer trust and help discover domestic traits that were earlier spread across the globe. Now is the time to come forward and support

each other locally and gather local consumers. Life is all about exploring, dreaming and discovering, and now our industry has that opportunity to redesign and strengthen the family by covering these areas of utmost importance. There was a world before COVID-19 and there will be a world after it, but a refurbished one.

Rather than cribbing, it is time we as an industry said hello to the new normal



Harmandeep Singh Anand
MD, Jagsons Travels and Founder,
Global Panorama Showcase

(Views expressed are the author's own.
The publication may or may not subscribe to them.)

The magic of online experiences

Technology can help travel designers make offbeat art experiences mainstream by offering travellers a virtual one, which can be as creative and emotive as the real one, believes **Kartik Gaggar**, CEO & Founder, Rajasthan Studio - a platform dedicated to curating extraordinary art workshops with master artists from Rajasthan.

In the past decade, there has been a huge shift in how people perceive tourism. The massive transformation in travel behaviour of the people has led travel companies to reimagine destinations, itineraries and their marketing strategies. But, has it been enough? While there are a few newbies in the market around the world who are catering to the distinctive needs of the off-beat traveller, Indian travel service providers are yet to catch up on the trend and make the necessary changes.

As per recent data, more than 67 per cent of travellers are looking for outdoor activities, skill-enhancing, creative cultural experiences, and other emotive experiences than engaging in sightseeing ex-

cursions. Travellers are very clearly stating their needs. But, are service providers listening? India is home to diverse cultures, extraordinary



landscaping, and a bountiful heritage thanks to the multitude of religions, languages and traditions that it embraces. Travel companies, unfortunately, for years, have been placing all their bets and energies in showcas-

ing just one or two aspects of the country, completely ignoring the most important one that makes it unique: the culture and the local experi-

ences that make up the very fabric of India. It is time the travel and tourism service providers wake up to the cultural bounty of their country and make their itineraries truly enriching by including creative and

emotive experiences that give them a sense of local connection, artistic indulgence and most importantly, soul-replenishment. They can easily offer this even amidst the pandemic through online art learning workshops with native skilled artisans – something we at Rajasthan Studio have been offering since the last few months.

Connecting traveller to art experiences

The online mode is a refreshing way to connect the traveller and art enthusiasts with authentic art experiences. Year 2020 has been a year of disruption in every sense. Travel came to a complete halt, but the travel cravings couldn't be contained. Seeing this as an

Connect with people from across the world to learn and experience an art form

opportunity, many niche platforms around the world came up with virtual travel experiences.

Imagine connecting with people from across the world to learn and experience an art form of a destination! Wouldn't it be a great way, a new way of navigating through a new city, connecting with new people, indulging in fulfilling experiences?

This is one aspect that the travel organisations can really start digging into further and leverage something valuable and meaningful for the industry, the travellers and the artists around the world.

It could truly become the next 'in' thing in the travel industry, changing the entire scope of experiential travel. Think about it!



Kartik Gaggar
CEO & Founder
Rajasthan Studio

(Views expressed are the author's own.
The publication may or may not subscribe to them.)

A transition to domestic business

Sarvar Hans, National Sales Director, Amritara Hotels & Resorts, shares that the pandemic led them to transition towards domestic business. They are now working towards expanding their portfolio and exploring new business opportunities, while concentrating their marketing efforts on social media.



Nisha Verma

While COVID-19 struck every business, including the hospitality sector, Amritara Hotels sailed through by changing gears towards domestic business. **Sarvar Hans** shares, "The impact of COVID was very bad. We are lucky that our properties, owing to their location, picked up quickly. Earlier we were only doing inbound, but to suit the needs of the domestic market, we have reduced our rates and made sure that the Indian market knows our product and our USP, which is experiential."

In fact, currently, they are expanding their portfolio to



Sarvar Hans
National Sales Director
Amritara Hotels & Resorts

welcome domestic tourists in their properties. Hans adds, "We are expanding in India. We have added a new product in Thattakad, which is a jungle product, offering bird safari. Thattakad is near Munnar and houses Asia's largest bird sanctuary. We have come up with 20 camps amidst the forest, with 17 offering a river view

and three offering jungle views. Apart from that, we have a new addition in Kasauli at a prime location. There is another property in Mussoorie, which is spread over nine acres with only 19 rooms. It's a pure wellness destination and a super luxury product."

To create awareness about new properties, they are planning to organise Fam trips for the trade.

"We are organising one Fam trip to Kasauli and are planning one to Rishikesh as well. Apart from that our marketing team will be working with influencers and the media. We are focusing on social media

marketing and are promoting these two locations vigorously," he shares. While COVID-19 was a bad time for them as well, one of

We have reduced rates and ensured that the Indian market knows our product and our USP

the good things, according to Hans, which they did during the time was hiring good talent from the market.



"We were doing very well till February. Things turned upside down in March, which had a bad impact on business. However, when the market laid off so many people, we picked up good people for the company. We may be the only company to have

hired from the hotel industry during this time," he claims. One of the biggest learnings from COVID, according to Hans, is, "Instead of earning and spending, people will be more aware and concerned about funds and savings for such difficult times."

4 steps to adapting to the times

Angel Llull Mancas, Vice President and Managing Director - Asia Pacific, Booking.com, shares four key steps to adapting to the new reality so that business flourishes. From meeting a customer's booking needs to understanding their desire to make the most of a work-cum-vacation, businesses have to get more innovative.



Nisha Verma

Sharing his take on how COVID-19 has drastically impacted the travel industry, **Angel Llull Mancas** shares that people in APAC are willing to travel domestically and closer home. However, he feels that recovery is going to take years. For him, there are four key steps to adapting to the new reality.

Instil trust

"The first point is how to instil trust in the minds of our travellers. If we can do that, travel can be where it belongs— as a fundamental part of our lives," shares Mancas. "At the end of the day, they want to feel safe when they travel and understand the hygiene protocols and health measures that our partners are taking. As an industry, we have to make sure that we create that content and that information, and this is what we are doing on our platform – we are adapting to that type and the level of granularity in those topics, not only in the content but also how they can search and filter for different properties," he claims.

Make procedures flexible

The second factor of this

new reality is being flexible to customers, says Mancas. "We are living in an uncertain environment. A traveller might plan a trip and they might have to change on the



Angel Llull Mancas
VP and MD - Asia Pacific
Booking.com

go and the reason could be that you cannot predict when a second wave of COVID will hit and how the borders react. Hence, they want to have the peace of mind that if they want to cancel, they can. That's why it's im-

portant that we adapt our product to that mindset, offering flexible cancellations while making sure that we can adapt to the new booking windows," he shares.

Adapt to trends

According to Mancas, the third step in the process is adapting to and following the new behaviours of travellers.

"What we have seen is that due to COVID, people are looking for areas and locations to go that are going to be less populated, to enjoy nature and to relax. This is the reason we have innovated our search function to make it more intuitive and inspirational. We have created a think carousel where we can showcase those locations to adapt to the needs of our customers, while creating

1

Instil trust

Create content on hygiene protocols and health measures, and communicate it effectively.

Make procedures flexible

Offer flexible cancellations while making sure you can adapt to the new booking windows.

2

3

Adapt to trends

Follow the new behaviour of travellers and adapt to it.

Meet new customer needs

Working remotely is the new reality. Meet that demand the best way you can.

4

more visibility for the partners we have in those destinations," he says.

Meet new customer needs

The fourth and last factor of this reality is that COVID has created a new type of customer, says Mancas, adding, "Working remotely is the new reality. There are digital nomads that don't

want to necessarily work from home and are ready to travel and work remotely from any location. All they need is for the place to be laptop-friendly, have Wi-Fi, and blend with leisure. They want to find a location they can work from while they enjoy. It is going to happen in the years to come," he believes.



If we can instil trust, travel can be where it belongs — as a fundamental part of our lives

A RARE kaleidoscope of life

The journey of **Shoba Mohan**, Founder, RARE India, is not just another success story, but a vivid depiction of a small-city girl turning the tide in her favour and moving ahead, her passion intact and without compromising on family time or her love for the planet, its people and, of course, their stories.

Hailing from South India, **Shoba Mohan's** family originates from Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, a place she passionately talks about. She represents a hotel called Svatma there, under the famous 'RARE India' portfolio, which she came up with after years of hardwork.

Early years

Shoba shares that her father was in the Indian Railways. "My father was a signal and telecom engineer in Indian Railways and my earliest memories are from Madhya Pradesh, when he was posted in Bilaspur. After that he was posted in Vizag (Visakhapatnam), where I finished my school and college," she says.

Having grown up in Andhra Pradesh, Shoba reminisces about the good old days. "My mother knew Hindi as well as English very well, and she



would teach people there. That ensured we had some interesting people come over, even some actors, dancers and academicians," she shares. Shoba completed her graduation in zoology and wanted to be a doctor.

Other interests

"I wake up at 5 am, but instead of meditation, I am fixated on the tasks of the day. I believe in spirituality and karma, and have been practising yoga for over 15 years now. Sketching, birding, blogging, writing short stories and poems are some of hobbies. As an amateur birder, I like to take off into the Aravalis with my binoculars. In addition, I love to cook and find it therapeutic. When it comes to skills, I am very good at *rangoli* which I can draw with a free hand using powder or rice flour paste, often making very intricate designs. I always tell my family that if nothing works for me, I can make a living through *rangoli* or go back to teaching Biology."

"But, that's when the Mandal Commission happened and our reservations didn't allow us seats in government colleges, so I got a seat in a private college. However, we didn't have money to pursue it. Being a good science student, I decided to become a journalist, hoping to become a science reporter. I did my PG in Journalism and Mass Communication in 1990 and went on to intern at The Hindu in Chennai. There was a brief period when I was juggling

I got married and came to Delhi. My husband was into inbound tourism and that was my first window into this awesome world of tourism," she shares.

Initial tryst with travel

While in Delhi, Shoba worked as a journalist. "I was working for a photo agency called Fotomedia where corporate companies and even some tour operators would come to rent stock photos for their brochures and calendars. I used to write profiles for photographers and it was a happy twist of fate that many of the photographers who used to stock their photos at Fotomedia made wildlife and nature lodges which we promote under RARE India. Once a tour operator liked the way I wrote the profile for the photographers and asked me if I could join his company and write itineraries. I joined him and that was my first foray into the world of travel in 1994. Soon, we shifted to Gurugram which was quite isolated and things were tough," she says.

But, difficulties always meant opportunities for Shoba. "In 1997, I turned entrepreneur. I started a company called TS Travel Services with my neighbour. Even then I used

to promote offbeat places and would explore the mountains whenever I had the opportunity. The children were small and my ma-in-law was a great help. I travelled the hills of Kumaon, Garhwal, Himachal and Kinnaur in buses, trains and once even hitching a bike ride in Kumaon. My partner and I used to promote these offbeat places to MNCs and most of our clients were small business owners, MNC executives, expats from MNCs and embassies and media people. I remember organising stays for Vikram



Shoba Mohan, Founder, RARE India

Once a tour operator asked me if I would join him to help write itineraries. I said yes, and that was my first foray into the world of travel

Chandra and Jug Suraiya. Once I sent Jug Suraiya and his wife Bunny to a remote

Family

"My husband, Mohan, runs an inbound company called Travel Scope India. I have two daughters – Shruti, 27, is a graphic designer while the younger is Mohini, who has just graduated in Biology and Anthropology. They have taken their time to discover their interest. I always tell them that I did not know what I wanted to do till I was 32 years, and they should do what they love and take time to discover it."

little known place called Jilling Estate in Kumaon. He wrote a centre piece called "Jilling with Steve". This was a kind of turning point in my life when I realised that selling small, owner-run hotels is the kind of travel I would like to promote," she shares. Since then, Shoba has been promoting such hotels but, initially, "it wasn't a great

business model because when it comes to owner-run places, the clients and owners become friends and directly contact each other for future visits of friends and family," she adds. "Hence I was constantly looking for new clients. My collection was called '101 secret Retreats by Shoba Mohan' and we used to exhibit at the DLF Club on weekends and at Diwali *melas*. In 1999, one important travel publication listed many of my 'secrets' with address and contact information. From then on business was even more tough. I remember writing

a worthwhile business; we were just creating a market by referring them to travellers without being monetised by them. That is when the idea of a representation company took shape," Shoba shares.

Conceiving RARE

At a point in the early 2000's things were so bad that Shoba was on the verge of taking up a job in an MNC. "It was the September of 2003 and I was to give my final interview with the MNC. It was also the day I met the owner of a superb lodge in Bandhavgarh, MP. The owner asked me to help run their reservation and marketing office in Delhi and I promptly said yes. Within the first four months we had a collection of four hotels and lodges. Soon, many hotels of a similar concept joined in. Those were the initial days of RARE. One of my team members is with me till date and it is a matter of immense pride for me to see how he conducts himself with tour operators now," she says.



Guldeep Singh Sahni

(Guldeep Singh Sahni talks about the lives of travel professionals outside of work. Views expressed are his own; the publication may not subscribe to them.)



JLL reveals that Bengaluru has seen the sharpest decline in RevPAR among major Indian cities due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. RevPAR is expected to bottom out in Q4 2020.

WTTC plans a recovery strategy

Maribel Rodriguez, Senior Vice President, Membership & Commercial, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), shares that recovery of the tourism sector is paramount, and they have already started working on a plan. She even calls for international coordination and standard protocols across nations.



Nisha Verma

Maribel Rodriguez claims that the overall performance of the tourism sector last year represented 10.3 per cent of global GDP. "One out of 10 jobs on the planet are supported by travel and tourism. Last year, one out of four new jobs were because of us. It has been like that for the last 10 years, growing always in a consistent way. When it comes to Asia Pacific, GDP is 9.8 per cent of tourism and 5.5 per cent growth is shown by this GDP, which is above average economy, which is 4.2 per cent. Setting this context, we can know how important our sector is," she points out, adding that until now, 121 million jobs have



Maribel Rodriguez
Senior VP, Membership & Commercial
WTTC

been lost and if nothing is done now, 197 million jobs could be impacted, which means a loss of US\$5.5 trillion.

Learn from the past

Rodriguez claims that since COVID-19 has impacted the industry so much, they have been trying to learn from the past. "In 2019, we analysed over 90 crises (2001-2018)

and the time we took to recover. It is very different if there is a pandemic, a natural disaster or a political turmoil—all of them have a different recovery path. However, what we have right now is unprecedented. Hence, we need to join forces," she asserts.

"When the crisis of September 11 happened, the time to recover was the longest and the reason why it happened was because there wasn't any public-private relation and coordination. In other events like SARS, MERS and Ebola, we saw that the situation was different and we needed to learn from the past in order to have global collaboration and seamless travel experiences. It is important that we

have standard protocols to rebuild the trust of travellers. Also, we need to embrace new technologies because

can keep networking and keep travelling. Hence, we need to have global coordination," she explains.

Remove travel barriers

"To build confidence of the traveller," Rodriguez says, "we have found the Safe Travels stamp which is the recognition we are giving to destinations, regions and countries. More than 100 destinations worldwide have already got this stamp, and we still have in queue more than 90 destinations in the pipeline."

In terms of travel barriers, she adds, "We are working on creating international coordination to make sure that there is a test that is going to be defined and agreed to by

different countries as standard protocol. We don't want to have blanket quarantines but only isolated cases, and we are calling for global and international coordination."

WTTC has already begun working on a recovery plan, Rodriguez claims, concluding, "It was a unique opportunity that was presented in the G20 meeting between the ministers of tourism and the private sector under Saudi Arabia's leadership. Saudi Arabia had requested to put up a plan to recover 100 million jobs. We have started working on it and we are calling to have international destination protocols as well as international coordination." 🐦

We cannot stop our industry and economy, but we can keep networking and keep travelling

COVID-19 is still here and it will be here till a vaccine is found. However, we don't know how much time it will take to implement and we cannot stop our industry and economy, but we

Times call for shift in business

▶ Contd from page 6



Riaz Munshi
MD, N. Chirag Travels

"We used to do very little domestic business earlier, and we are doing it now as well. However, it's not a very lucrative market, as hotels try to reach the client directly and undercut the agent. They are also marketing themselves. I feel protecting the agent guarantees future business for hotels only, but I don't understand why they still undercut. It is the time to make money and nobody would say no at this time. It's not the customer spoiling the market, it's our trade which is unorganised and responsible for this. But, the market is such that you cannot survive on domestic alone."



SK Dewan
MD, Dewan Travels

"Domestic is not new to Dewan Travels, however, it is only 25-30% of what it used to be earlier. It will take time to develop because confidence in travel will happen when people start travelling, which will increase by word of mouth. Currently, people are avoiding travelling by train and air, especially for tourism purposes. We are seeing bookings from Mumbai to Matheran that can be reached by road. There is a phobia against travelling and it will take time to go. We have started educating our clients, but the result will not be 100%. It might take few months before they start travelling again by air."

"While we were doing domestic business in the past as well, it used to be only 30% of our business pre-COVID. We are creating some new products around it. Our website, traveengineers.com, features driveable destinations from Delhi to Rishikesh, Jim Corbett, Mukteshwar, Agra, Ranthambore, Udaipur, Jodhpur, etc. We are also selling Goa and are primarily focusing on luxury properties, while also selling a few boutique properties. Our forte was outbound, but now that the domestic product is doing well, we are not going to discontinue it."



Siddharth Khanna
Managing Partner, Travel Engineers

Inputs by Nisha Verma

jüSTa Mukteshwar opens doors



jüSTa Hotels and Resorts has expanded its luxury, leisure and wellness offerings with *jüSTa Dignitii Retreat and Spa, Mukteshwar*. With 35 cottage-style rooms, the luxury retreat and spa boasts uninterrupted valley views all around. It focuses on experiences and encourages guests to embrace active vacations.

EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



NOVEMBER 2020

Date	Event	Time
1-3	59 th ICCA Congress Virtual	03:30 pm
3	Thomas Cook India Webinar	03:00 pm
4	PATA India Motivational Webinar	10:30 am
5	IATO Art of Living Workshop	11:30 am
9-11	WTM Virtual	12:30 pm
11	CAPA Live	08:30 am
13	IATO Interactive Members Meet	04:00 pm
18	IATO Motivational Workshop	11:30 am
18	Ireland Tourism Webinar for Middle East	04:30 pm
19	Ireland Tourism Webinar	03:00 pm
23-24	Gulf Travel Show	1:30 pm
23-27	Kerala Travel Mart- Virtual	12:00 pm
25-27	Tourism Investor Summit (TIS)	2:30 pm
27	IATO Interactive Members Meet	4:00 pm

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

TAAI Chapter hosts physical event

After months of being locked down and meeting members virtually, the Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh Chapter of TAAI organised its first physical event on October 31 at Crescent Spa & Resort, Indore.

Hazel Jain

The Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh Chapter of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) is taking the opportunities of the first few Unlocks in the state to conduct its first physical event on October 31. Sharing details of this is **Hemendra Singh Jadon**, Chapter Chairman (MP & Chhattisgarh), TAAI. He says, "We organised our annual mem-



Hemendra Singh Jadon
Chapter Chairman
(MP & Chhattisgarh), TAAI

bers meet on October 31 at Crescent Spa & Resort just outside Indore for about 40-50 members, keeping all

health and safety protocols in mind. The aim was to not just conduct our annual meet but also to build confidence among our clients that we are ready to travel. How can we assure them that it is safe to travel now unless we do?"

The team posted live from the resort from their social media handles so that the message could go across to the travellers. Jadon adds that the event had two key presentations for the members. "We have invited the Assistant Director from MSME Department, Government of India, to talk about the benefits of MSME for travel agents as there is still some confusion about that. We also had representation from Star Air India airline

to inform us about the new routes, etc." Star Air India has started operations from Indore to Kishangarh near Ajmer, and from Indore to Belagavi in Karnataka.

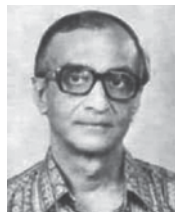
How can we assure people that it is safe to travel now unless we travel ourselves

About Star Air India

Star Air India is a non-IATA commuter airline based at Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru. It started operations in January 2019, offering flights within Karnataka as well as to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh as part of the Central Government's UDAN scheme. It will commence Belagavi-Surat service in November 2020.

Jadon adds that a lot of agents in MP, including his own agency (Overseas Travellers), who used to focus on outbound are now selling domestic packages.

In Memoriam



B. Venkataraman

A former IAS officer, **B. Venkataraman** passed away at the age of 95 on October 20. He had served as Chief Secretary Odisha and later as Secy, Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, New Delhi.

In Memoriam



Vijayant Kalra

It is with profound grief that we inform of the passing away of **Vijayant Kalra**, Director, Discover India Tours. He left for heavenly abode on the morning of October 28.

'Communicate, not campaign'

Anita Mendiratta, Special Advisor to Secretary General, UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), says that now is the time to build trust between both the visitor and the visited, so that each is aware of what to expect from the other, all the while ensuring that protocols are strictly adhered to.

Nisha Verma

A humanitarian crisis that has created a global economic crisis, is **Anita Mendiratta's** take on COVID-19. She says that there is no going back to normal now, but there will be a 'next normal'. "We are still living in the pandemic and are in the process of trying to understand the lifecycle of the actual pandemic, while everything about the vaccine is still unknown," she adds. According to her, we have to look at the next normal and determine how we can move forward cautiously. "Sadly, this year is going to be an absolute tragedy for travel and tourism. Our industry, which takes care of the employment of one in 10 people around the world, and is critical for



Anita Mendiratta
Special Advisor to Secretary General
UNWTO

lives and livelihoods, has economically suffered eight times the income loss of the 2008 economic downturn. We are losing a million jobs a day," Mendiratta's claims.

It is her belief that travel and hospitality will reach their momentum of 2019 only by 2023-24. "We have a long way to go," she says, adding, "At the height of the pandemic, there were 16,000

aircraft that were grounded around the world, which would now have to look for profitable routes - ones where they would see demand and stability to avoid grounding again. We need to look at which regions are going to be at the forefront of that recovery and momentum. APAC is at the head of the race since there is a lot of regional travel. Sadly, Asia was the first to experience the pandemic."

Planning for the new normal

"The future of travel is all about space and people feeling comfortable in being separated, maintaining safe distance with the freedom to move and freedom to stretch. It is about recognising that as much as we need to be together, psychologi-

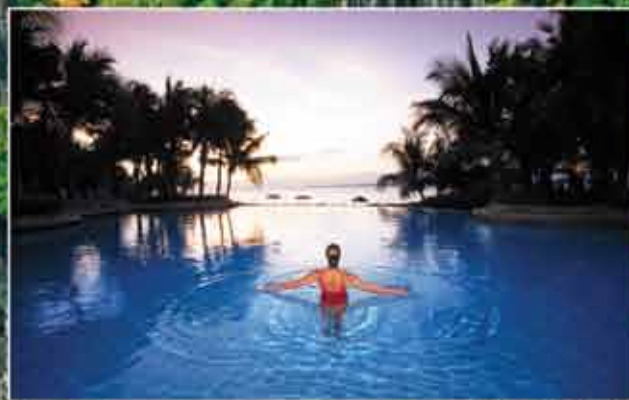
cally, we need space. The opportunity in this case is to unblock areas and destinations that may not have been discovered before, places that are remote, less dense

Speak to travellers on why they are travelling and not where they are travelling

in people and allow dispersion. We need to open our destinations to look at the seasons and to new opportunities they provide," Mendiratta shares.

She also asserts that there is a need to have a better understanding of the protocols and policies at destinations, even around delivery expectations. "This is because with protocols, a lot of emotion with travel and tourism is lost. It is imperative to be sensitive of not just the visitor, but the visited as well. Communication is critical and we must make sure to communicate with both our visitors and those being visited in terms of what they can expect. Now is the time of communication and not campaigns. Destinations, airlines, airports and attractions can all speak to travellers, focusing on why they are travelling and not where they are travelling. There is a need to create that connection now," she concludes.

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THE TRAVEL CORPORATION

Singapore

The Travel Corporation (TTC) has announced a leadership change for its Asia office. Incumbent Managing Director Nicholas Lim will pass the leadership baton on to **Anthony Lim**, who will take on a dual leadership role as both President for The Travel Corporation Asia and Managing Director, Asia for Insight Vacations and Luxury Gold. He will oversee the company's day-to-day operations and will work with TTC's global brand executives to steer the business transformation for Asia geared towards ensuring the organisation's resilience.



AKBAR ONLINE

Mumbai

Jitesh Poojari, Head – Sales & Marketing, Akbar Online, has now been promoted to Vice President – Business at the company. Poojari, who has been with the Akbar family for 12 years, has climbed the professional ladder with his experience and diligence. His influence and guidance in the sales department was substantial in developing the business at Akbar Online, and he shares an excellent record of customer and employee relations. Besides India, Poojari has experience of the UAE and Saudi Arabia markets as well.



HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS SECTOR 50

Gurugram

Gaurav Misra has been appointed as the General Manager for Holiday Inn Express Gurugram Sector 50. He will take on the dual responsibility of maintaining his current role of Portfolio Operations Manager for 10 Holiday Inn Express hotels and spearheading the team at the Gurugram Sector 50 hotel. Misra comes with around 18 years of rich experience in managing hotel operations, with expertise in rooms division and quality control. He has worked with brands like Oberoi Hotels and Hyatt Hotels.



It is now time to get ingenious

This pandemic has been a litmus test for the travel industry which has shown that innovation and enterprise can go a long way in surviving a catastrophe. From airlines and hotel chains to governments, the need to survive has given birth to remarkable ideas that many can learn from.

 Hazel Jain

Singapore Airlines

Singapore Airlines is offering a chance to dine on a plane on-board its A380 without having to leave the ground. Prices start at S\$50 for a three-course meal in economy, S\$90 for premium economy at SIA's Restaurant A380@Changi, and S\$474 for a private suite! It is now adding dinner service and extra days to what was supposed to be a two-day stunt.



Thai Airways

In Bangkok, the headquarters of national carrier Thai Airways was transformed into an airline-themed restaurant, where customers can enjoy in-flight meals. Diners are greeted by cabin crew in uniform at the restaurant, which has been decorated with airplane parts and seats. It is also selling time on its flight simulators, allowing guests to control an A380 for half an hour for US\$640.

Royal Caribbean

Taking a cue from this is the Royal Caribbean that will begin sailing with 'Quantum of the Seas' on round-trip cruises from Singapore with no port stops. The 3 and 4-night sailings will begin from December 1, 2020 and will be limited to residents of Singapore. The company claims the first sailing is almost sold out. These are pilot cruises that must meet all requirements for safe cruising.



South Korea

The South Korean government has unleashed US\$750 million in loans and subsidies to entice local travellers to vacation. It has subsidised domestic travel if booked through travel agents and allows the customer an equivalent of US\$30 coupon per booking. Travellers can download the coupon and redeem them at designated travel agencies.

Marriott International

Marriott's new initiatives and brands like Homes & Villas may find success during the pandemic, especially in China which continues to be its market leader in terms of revenue recovery. The hotel company also has global potential in newer business lines like its Homes & Villas short-term rental brand and even a work-from-hotel initiative.



Hilton Hotels

Hilton spent the last decade largely focused on business hotels, but it is now adding resort amenities to its business hotels. It is even retrofitting hotels aimed at single business travellers by adding connecting rooms to accommodate families and expanding F&B outlets to handle more people. Hilton even tweaked brand standards to adjust to this new expectation.



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Recovery through technology

Providing detailed insights and statistics, **Jason Clarke**, Chief Commercial Officer, Agency Sales, Travelport, helps us understand what the recovery trend looks like, adding his perspective on reconnecting the world via technology.



Manas Dwivedi

“We will have to adopt,” asserted **Jason Clarke**, adding, “We all want this industry to prosper and thrive for the better. We have to maintain the ability of free travel that allows people to experience the culture, the diversity, the beauty and the joy of travel, be it for leisure or for business,” as he shared his opening remarks during his keynote speech at the CAPA Live event. Clearly, he was ready with data insights and statistics to show how recovery would pan out and the role technology would play in reconnecting the world.

To do so, Travelport created a purely statistical evidence-based model which only deals with facts or what has occurred. Working this way allowed the company to build a model based on actual specifics which occurred in the industry and in their business. For statistics, Travelport took data from pre-COVID January down till September, to show multiple facets from across



the global market comparing domestic and international travel, leisure and corporate travel, shopping and booking patterns, and number of other areas for air, car travel and hotel stays.

and Mexico are markets which have shown positive booking trend. As restrictions were imposed, reversal in trend was seen for a short period of time,” Clarke said.

International travel has also shown some positive trend in the last few days. A seven-day trend has been positive since the end of July. Prior to this date, the industry was in net-negative position with cancellations outnumbering new bookings since the middle of March. “Recovery is slower but bookings are showing sustained growth in some markets. China, United Kingdom, Japan, France, India and Italy have shown improvement. Couple of standout markets have been Mexico at 32% and UAE at 31% of the 2019 levels,” according to details shared by Clarke.

Need for government intervention

“Looking at the role of technology in reconnecting the world, it is clear that our industry has taken the brunt of impact of this pandemic and it is clearly visible on the data we have shared. International

travel, which is critical to this industry’s full recovery, still looks fairly depressed. Without intervention on government policy and policy-makers removing some of the restrictions, we are not seeing an evident base to return to previous levels. We clearly need an alignment on that issue for the industry’s health,” Clarke further added.

He concluded saying, “I would like to reiterate that we need to remove friction from the customer experience, from shopping and bookings to the in-travel and post-travel experience. It is more important that we do not add more roadblocks in booking for travellers.”

India, Canada, Spain, France and Mexico have shown positive booking trend

Recovery pattern

Currently, recovery is led by domestic travel, and hotel recovery has been faster than air travel recovery. “Overall, domestic bookings have shown constant positive trend in the last three months. India, Canada, Spain, France

A Travelport study reveals...

- ❖ 71% of the respondents say that enhanced cleaning programmes during and between flights is very important and influence them to book a flight.
- ❖ Almost half (49%) the people said that they will take a business trip in 2020, and the remaining said that they will consider both domestic and international travel if better safety measures are in place.
- ❖ Two-third of the people talked about social distancing at the airport and in the flight very important to them.



Jason Clarke
Chief Commercial Officer - Agency Sales
Travelport

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