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Industry vying for repeat visits

The Indian traveller is evolving and making repeat visits to a destination they want to discover in a different way, for a different reason. Industry leaders share their views.



Neil Patil
Founder, CTO & COO, Veena World

“ Repeat travel has become an increasingly popular trend for us, especially to destinations like Australia and Japan. A crucial factor contributing to this is the streamlined visa process, particularly the provision of multi-entry, multi-year tourist visas for Indian travellers in many

cases. These visas offer unprecedented flexibility and ease, allowing for multiple trips. ”

“ Destinations around the world must focus on adding new attractions and experiences to lure travellers, so that they revisit them. Luxury need not be solely about pampering the senses with high-end brands and pricing; it can be affordable while still providing a personal touch to guests. Leisure is the future, surpassing all other segments of travel purposes. ”



Valmiki Harikishan
Founder & Managing Partner
Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions

Contd. on page 10 ▶

Bidding farewell to our Chairman

DDP Group bids a solemn farewell to its esteemed Chairman, Vikramajit, as the organisation mourns the profound loss of a visionary leader, who left for heavenly abode on 21 January 2024.

The late Chairman, a distinguished Industrial Management Pool (IMP) officer, leaves behind an illustrious legacy marked by his instrumental role in steering the success of various public sector enterprises such as the Bhilai Steel Plant, Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals (IDPL), and spearheading impactful social marketing initiatives for the Ministry of Health. He was an alumnus of Modern School, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi and Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi. His remarkable career trajectory reached its pinnacle when he retired from the Ministry of Health and undertook a new chapter by founding Durga Das Publications Pvt. Ltd.

As we bid adieu to our leader, the entire DDP family pays homage to the life and contributions of Chairman Vikramajit.



Late Shri Vikramajit
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Online booking tools create buzz

DDP Group organised the ‘Travel MICE & Corporate Show’ at Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre in Jaipur recently. The event, which saw over 1,600 meetings, provided a platform for the industry titans and corporate leaders to discuss important issues, with focus on the utility of Online Booking Tools (OBTs).

 Janice Alysius

Corporate travel management has become a complex web of choices and challenges in today's fast-paced, technology-driven business landscape. Travel MICE & Corporate Show, held recently in Jaipur, facilitated an exchange of ideas and laid the groundwork for implementing innovative strategies and solutions in the corporate travel



Panelists at the Travel MICE & Corporate Show in Jaipur

Travel MICE & CORPORATE SHOW

management. The event provided a platform to discuss various topics in the industry, including the adoption of Online Booking Tools (OBTs), which have risen to prominence as a necessity rather than a luxury. Industry leaders,

including **Rajdev Bhattacharya**, Global Head-Travel & Hospitality, Wipro; **Dr Sanjay Pai**, Vice President & Head-Corporate Travel, Aviation, and Facility Management, Larsen & Toubro; **Rikant Pittie**, Co-founder, EaseMyTrip.com, and **Devendra Saraiya**, Director, Deloitte, shed light on whether OBTs are merely a marketing strategy or genuinely create value for businesses.

The imperative of integration
Bhattacharya emphasized on the need for a unified platform. “We need to get into a platform where everything comes together, right from the user to all the other stakeholders that we have. That may be the CHRO, who would be looking for compliance, employee experience, that can be the CFO who’s looking for saving reports and sustainability,” he said.

Tech evolution & adaptation
Dr Pai thinks Online Booking Tools are an evolution from traditional booking methods. Highlighting the significance of technology in the wake of COVID-19, he said, “People are talking about voice technology, AI, blockchain management, or non-fungible technology. It’s an evolution; some have incorporated it, while others are yet to get on the bandwagon. Peo-

ple are adopting the technologies based on their needs and gaps.”

Customer experience
Pittie shifted the focus from marketing to technology’s role in enhancing customer experience. He stresses on the importance of leveraging technology beyond marketing strategies. “In today’s technology-driven world, the travel industry is undergoing rapid

changes, especially in corporate travel management,” he said.

Empowering employees
Saraiya underlined the use of technology. “When it comes to technology, undoubtedly, there

The event provided a platform to discuss various topics in the industry, including the adoption of OBTs, which have risen as a necessity rather than a luxury

is no choice but to incorporate both technology and Self-Booking Tools (SBT) into the system,” he said.



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India sees new horizons

The last one year saw a plethora of destinations making their presence felt in India and grab their share of the ever-increasing Indian outbound pie. While the new ones are going all out to attract the travellers, the already popular destinations are resorting to offer unexplored territories to lure repeat visitors, as well as new. While all parts of Europe are busy preparing themselves for the summer surge, there are more experiences awaiting Indians.

Other than Europe, UK and USA, which have been all time favourites for Indians, destinations in Caribbean islands are being explored in combination with USA. Cuba hosted a huge delegation of Indians with MGM Muthu Hotels late last year. Australia, with its easy visa and increased connectivity has been receiving a huge chunk of Indian tourists. UK is also following the same strategy with itineraries not restricted just to London. Of course, that doesn't change how much Indians love South Asian countries. Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia remain hot-selling destinations. The recent ones getting huge numbers from India include Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

We all can agree that emirates like Dubai and Abu Dhabi have been selling like hot cakes. At the same time, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia are turning heads with their luxurious offerings.

Airlines too are riding the tide, and offering connectivity to all these destinations, some with multiple connections every day as well. DGCA revealed that the total number of international flyers travelling from and to India at 3.14 crore in April-September in 2023 was higher than 3.13 crore passengers in the corresponding six months of 2019. Overall, India's outbound potential is unmatched. Recent projections have indicated a substantial surge in travel spending among Indians, reaching an impressive US\$410 billion by 2030 from \$150 billion in 2019. This means that the market is getting bigger, and the world is getting smaller for Indians.

Green spending in travel rises

Organisations in India are increasingly embedding environmental and social sustainability initiatives across the travel industry, finds a research by Amadeus. Technology can help the industry achieve its sustainability goals faster, it says.



Around 58 per cent of travel companies in India plan to increase Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investment in 2024, reveals a report by Amadeus. This finds reasons in the fact that travellers are increasingly demanding that their experiences align with values and expectations when it comes to sustainability.

Amadeus commissioned research among 80 senior sustainability decision makers across India and seven segments of the travel industry to gain insight on ESG ambitions, priorities, and challenges.

The study revealed optimism for the global travel industry hitting the UNWTO-proposed goal to reach net zero by 2050. 79 per cent of ESG decision makers believe the industry can reach its target. Of the total 79 per cent, 43 per cent believe it is possible to reach without any adjustments, while 36 per cent believe it is possible, but progress needs to be accelerated urgently.

Key to this is a focus on action. 92 per cent of those surveyed have a step-by-step strategy in place to help them achieve environmental sustainability objectives or are planning to implement one in 2024.

95 per cent of respondents are either currently active or plan to be actively involved in social sustainability initiatives that impact beyond their organisation. This commitment was matched



by increased investment, with 58 per cent of respondents anticipating investing more in 2024 than last year.

Despite the optimism, the study identified barriers to deliver on environment, social and governance initiatives:

- ❖ 41 per cent cited cost as the biggest barrier for environmental commitments, followed by C-suite buy-in (40 per cent), and then lack of technology and knowledge (26 per cent).
- ❖ For social initiatives, the biggest barriers include lack of knowledge (35 per cent) and C-suite buy-in (34 per cent), and lack of technology (30 per cent).
- ❖ For governance initiatives, the barriers highlighted include lack of knowledge (40 per cent), complex legal obligations (31 per cent), and not enough guidance from industry bodies (29 per cent).

The study highlighted a clear and recognized role for technology to help the industry reach its ambitions. 91 per cent of respondents indicated technology is important to help organisations achieve environmental sustainability objectives, with 89 per cent saying the same for social objectives.

❖ 34 per cent of respondents highlighted technology solutions that help remove CO₂ from the atmosphere as the technology with

the highest potential to accelerate environmental sustainability.

❖ 31 per cent said access to data to allow for true personalization across all stages of the

Of the total 79%, 43% believe it is possible to hit the target without any adjustments, while 36% believe it is possible with faster progress

Jackson Pek, SVP and Group General Counsel, Amadeus, says, "As the travel industry continues to navigate the complexity of delivering on ESG targets, I'm encouraged by the optimism and the commitments being put in place – from investments to strategic planning to technological solutions. At Amadeus, we are working to embed ESG at the core of our business, supporting travel players on their journey to becoming more efficient and enabling travellers to make more informed choices. Together, we can make travel more sustainable."

Mani Ganeshan, SVP - Travel Distribution Engineering and Centre Head - Amadeus Labs India, says, "We are pleased to see the growing emphasis on ESG investments within the Indian travel industry. Surveys like these are crucial benchmarks for assessing our industry's progress and identifying areas for improvement. At Amadeus, we look forward to continue supporting our customers and partners across the region on their ESG journeys, fostering sustainability through innovation and collaboration."

Highlights of the report

- ❖ 58 per cent of travel companies in India plan to increase their ESG investment in 2024, with technology seen as a key enabler.
- ❖ 79 per cent of ESG decision makers believe the industry can reach the net zero goal by 2050, but 36 per cent of them think progress needs to be accelerated urgently.
- ❖ 92 per cent of respondents have or plan to have a step-by-step strategy to achieve environmental sustainability objectives, and 95 per cent are active or plan to be active in social sustainability initiatives.



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Durga Das Publications Middle East (FZE)
Z1-02, PO Box: 9348, Saf Zone, Sharjah, UAE
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DDP is printed, published and edited by Sanjeet on behalf of DDP Publications Pvt. Ltd., printed at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd., C-52, DDA Sheds Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi-110020 and published at 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110 001
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Widen insurance cover for events

India's share in the global event insurance market is limited with companies offering insurance mainly to larger events, leaving a void in coverage for the MICE industry. Industry experts underscore the adoption rates across cities.

Janice Alyosius

According to an event insurance market research report by Allied Market Research, the global event insurance market was valued at US\$726.9 million in 2022, and is projected to reach US\$2.3 billion by 2032, growing at a CAGR of 12.7 per cent from 2023 to 2032. The increase in demand for event insurance is a key driver for the growth of event insurance market. **Naveen Kundu**, Managing Director, Ebixcash Travel services, said, "In India, event insurance is only available for large-scale events, making it the only country where such insurance is limited to larger events within the industry. For the MICE industry, there is a lack of insurance coverage available. When an organisation cancels an event suddenly citing any reason, it becomes exceedingly difficult for travel companies to claim refunds and navigate between airlines and DMCs. Corporates often find it challenging to pay for these cancellations, desiring protection from such occurrences. Therefore, I believe, it is time to develop an insurance product specifically designed to safeguard the event industry."

Sunaina Chatterjee, Chief Executive Officer, ICON Planners, shared, "Conferences, particularly large-scale exhibitions, are



Naveen Kundu
Managing Director
Ebixcash Travel services



Sunaina Chatterjee
Chief Executive Officer
ICON Planners



Sudeep Sarcar
Chief Executive Officer
India Exposition Mart

In India, event insurance is only available for large-scale events, making it the only country where such insurance is limited to larger events

common in some of the metro cities due to the involvement of numerous stakeholders."

Lack of awareness regarding the types of available insurance and their significance is one of the key reasons why event insurance is not widely used in the industry. "The educational gap persists in India, affecting both

40-45% events in major cities like Mumbai or Delhi incorporate insurance. However, the numbers drop significantly in smaller cities

(PCOs) often lack knowledge about event insurance. "The percentage of adoption increases when foreign committees are involved in organising events in India, as they are already aware of the importance of insurance," she said.

The perception that insurance is an additional cost and the prevalent 'jugaad' mindset contribute to the

Although there are insurances available to protect against event cancellations, the associated premiums are exorbitantly high

drop significantly in smaller cities like Kolkata or Jaipur, ranging between 2 per cent and 5 per cent. The challenge lies not in the lack of knowledge but also in the industry's general unawareness," Chatterjee shared.

Emphasising on the high insurance premiums, **Sudeep Sarcar**, Chief Executive Officer, India Exposition Mart, said, "When dealing with international event organisers, there seems to be a level of doubt and uncertainty about choosing India as a host country. This hesitation often stems from the country's vast size, which presents numerous opportunities, along with unforeseen challenges during the event. Any uncertainties that arise during this critical period can jeopardize the entire event, resulting in substantial losses for the entire community involved. Although there are insurances available to protect against event cancellations, the associated premiums are exorbitantly high. It's crucial to address this issue and explore potential interventions to make the process more feasible. By implementing softer interventions, we can encourage both domestic and international organisers to consider the inherent uncertainties in organising events in a vast country like India. Despite the challenges, they can take calculated risks that might offset potential losses."



taken quite seriously, necessitating insurance coverage. However, for regular conferences, such as domestic or smaller-scale ones with around 2,000 to 3,000 participants, the adoption of insurance in India remains relatively low. However, insurance is more

conference organisers and participants. Despite its importance, event insurance is not uniformly embraced across the country," Chatterjee highlighted.

She emphasized that even professional conference organisers

reluctance to adopt event insurance in India.

"In terms of percentages, approximately 40 per cent to 45 per cent of events in major cities like Mumbai or Delhi incorporate insurance. However, the numbers

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- Tourist spend in UP to surpass ₹4 trillion by end of 2024 with the inauguration of Ram Mandir: SBI
- UNWTO rebrands itself as UN Tourism, reaffirms status as global leader tourism for development
- Hahnair kicks off anniversary year with a new brand identity
- MoT's new Coastal Odyssey expedition promotes sustainable, eco-friendly tourism
- Developing tourism in Vidarbha region will create immense potential for growth in hospitality sector: HRAWI
- WTC and Biosphere enter into a partnership to promote sustainability in the hospitality industry

'Wed in India': what about high GST?

Pradeep Shetty, President, FHRAI hails Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Wed in India' call. He, however, lists out what is required in order to achieve the larger goal. Shetty requests the government to look into the high GST that is driving business outside India.

Hazel Jain

Pradeep Shetty, President, FHRAI, is not one to mince words. India hasn't reached 2019 levels in the scheme of things, especially in terms of foreign tourist arrivals, he says. But all in all, 2023 was a good year for hoteliers with much better Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) and occupancies despite the challenges of air connectivity and high airfares.

He adds, "One must take note of the fact that 2024 and a few years following that are going to be revolutionary for the hotel industry with the ambitious target of US\$3 trillion tourism economy that we are looking at by 2047. Towards that, we will be working aggressively alongside the government on the latest campaign about doing weddings in India. We already have a document underway on this that we will present to the PM



Pradeep Shetty
President
FHRAI

on what is really required in order to achieve the larger goal, as well as to ensure that Indians do not travel abroad to get married."

Revolutionary fiscal measures

Outlining some issues, he says that air connectivity is a challenge, and there are many pockets within the country still where air connections have not been established and there are fewer operators in the air now. "Moreover, there are

only about 170,000 hotel rooms in the country and if you plan to invite 100 million tourists to stay in India we really need to add rooms. For this, we need ease of doing business, and a special tourism policy to encourage this and make it happen in an easier way rather than the normal bureaucratic way," Shetty says.

Revolutionary fiscal measures will be required to ensure that long-term lending and favourable interest rates are available to this industry, he adds. "Weddings can be done in India at a much lower cost and with much more ease. Yes, there may be small bottlenecks, but I really don't feel that they are so critical so as to drive away weddings away from India. There are certain taxation matters like GST and licensing issues and local level permissions which become an irritant. These are some of the issues that we intend to flag at the state



and central levels. Once these are removed, India can be ready to host weddings. And in the coming years if favourable policies are introduced, and more rooms are added, then the issues of unavailability and high rates will be resolved. The room rates right now are actually not the problem, it is the high GST levied. This price will not be available anywhere else given the quality

of service and amenities India offers," Shetty explains.

He is confident that the cost of weddings being held outside India is two times of what one spends in India. "It is just the glamour of taking guests to some destination abroad, else there is no real advantage. We offer better food, better service, and amazing amenities. Even when they go abroad, they have to carry chefs from India. So, again, we need reforms in the GST regime to make it affordable. The 18 per cent bracket must be done away and bring everybody into 12 per cent," Shetty says.

HRAWI signs MoU with Ingram Micro

HRAWI has signed an MoU with Ingram Micro in order to co-create and lead technology seminars for the hospitality industry. The collaboration is to harness new-age tech solutions and expertise for the betterment of members. The association aims to empower members with the latest advancements in the sector and create a global circular economy through responsible disposal and reverse logistics.

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Gen Z investing in travel

► Contd. from page 3



Birju Gariba
Founder
ISKRA Events

“The new mantra of this generation is ‘Travel Explore, Eat, Repeat’. Indeed, the power of Instagram has opened the floodgates of international travel. The Goa of yesteryears has become Dubai, Thailand, Bali and so on for long weekend getaways and special occasion celebrations. Travel is the new currency and investment of Generation Z. Singapore, Dubai and Bali are classic destinations which have successfully decoded what the traveller needs.”



Sameer Karnani
Managing Director
Arunodaya Travels

“People are always looking for new places to explore. I feel they may travel to same destination only after a long gap like revisiting the destination as an adult to relive your childhood unforgettable memories or revisit with your children. Short-haul destinations get repeat travellers, but again they tend to stay in different hotels or visit new attractions. People tend to relate luxury travel to staying at expensive hotels or eating at good restaurants.”



Anshu Tejuja
Managing Director
Ashoka Dream Holidays

“Repeat travel for international destinations is indeed a reality. Many factors contribute to this phenomenon, including positive past experiences, unique attractions, cultural appeal, and the desire to explore more aspects of a destination. Effective marketing strategies, ongoing developments, and a welcoming atmosphere play crucial roles in encouraging travellers to return. For this, destinations must offer unique experiences.”



Sheetal Munshaw
Director India
Atout France

“While people love discovering new places, they also love revisiting and visiting places that they are fond of. We have seen many travellers revisit different destinations in France over the years. We have visitors who prefer going back to the same city again or discovering a different part of France such as the verdant Loire Valley, Burgundy, and Normandy. We have had many repeat travellers who have chosen to revisit Paris multiple times.”



Muhammad Patel
Director
Atlas Tours & Travels

“Yes, repeat travel is a reality now. Our clients are always looking to enjoy different experiences like cultural activities, adventure and nature lovers are always drawn to particular international destinations and choose to explore them repeatedly. To encourage this, countries must develop and promote exclusive experiences that are unique to the destination. For example: private tours, personalized services, or opening up a restricted area.”



Nishant Patel
Managing Partner
The Grand Vacationist

“Once a vacationist, always a vacationist. Only their travel needs, reasons, and expectations mature over time. We have observed that once their travel goals reach to around 60 per cent of their bucket list, the traveller reaches maturity and starts to repeat the destinations, and there can be considerable reasons for it, but in a nutshell - a repeat destination provides the traveller with the comfort of familiarity.”

► Contd. on page 14

Cricket unites trade in Ahmedabad

‘Tourism Cricket Premier League 2024’ was organised in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, from 10-11 January. Eight teams took part in the tournament being held annually for the travel trade since 2018. More than 250 travel trade partners from across the country participated in the event, which aimed to bring together the trade partners and hoteliers and boost local tourism and business.



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Guwahati trade connects @GPS

Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) last instalment for 2023 came with its debut in Guwahati at The Hotel Palacio, which saw the travel trade from the city and across the Northeast region come together to connect with service providers from across the country. The exhibitors got an overwhelming response from the market, which they claim holds huge potential in all respects.



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CONSECUTIVE DAYS PASS

DAYS	1 ST CLASS		2 ND CLASS	
	ADULT	YOUTH	ADULT	YOUTH
04 DAYS	469	330	295	209
06 DAYS	602	424	379	268
08 DAYS	665	469	419	297

RATES ARE IN CHF

FLEX PASS (WITHIN 01 MONTH)

DAYS	1 ST CLASS		2 ND CLASS	
	ADULT	YOUTH	ADULT	YOUTH
04 DAYS	539	379	339	240
06 DAYS	644	454	405	287
08 DAYS	697	492	439	311

RATES ARE IN CHF

Rates are valid for 2024. *T&C Apply.

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Experiences key to repeat visits

▶ Contd. from page 10



Srijit Nair
General Manager - EMEA & India
Rail Europe

“Rail Europe has strategically observed a consistent trend of repeat travellers drawn to Europe's distinguished destinations—Switzerland, France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The key to attracting luxury and leisure travellers repeatedly lies in offering an experience that goes beyond the ordinary. Our customers appreciate the experience of exploring these countries through regional trains which conveniently transport them.”



Bhavesh Oza
VP - International Market
Blue Star Air Travel Services

“The world has so much to offer – so many countries, multiple cities, so many attractions and experiences to see and witness that it becomes difficult for a traveller to repeat a destination. There are a few set of countries like Dubai, Thailand, Singapore in the Asian region where passengers tend to repeat their holidays, but by and large a large percentage of our client base don't repeat the destination after having visited once.”



Beena Menon
Partner, Beautiful Planet
Destination Marketing

“Certain leisure travellers may visit international countries repeatedly. However, they may not travel to the same state or county within that country again. The affluent and experienced Indian traveller is hungry for new experiences and is also strapped for time. They prioritize their travel so as to experience new destinations, cuisines, accommodation options and more, and may not travel to the same destination more than once.”



Varun Godia
Manager - Product Development
Varun Worldwide Vacations

“Repeat travel is very much a reality, especially for short-haul destinations like Thailand, Maldives, Sri Lanka and for destinations where VFR is big, such as the USA, the UK and Australia. We have definitely seen a trend where families are keen to return to a specific resort, as it becomes a comfort zone. For a destination to attract repeat customers, it needs to reinvent itself frequently with new attractions, resorts or F&B offerings.”



Tejbir Singh Anand
Founder & Managing Director
Holiday Moods Adventures

“Any business which does not have a repeat travel or any destination which does not have travellers coming back might face the challenge of survival. To be sustainable, it is key to have loyal travellers coming back to the destination and similarly for the agents to have a firm set of clients who believe in their services. Aspiring to be a luxury destination is a strategic decision and can only be attained with the long-term vision.”



Rajat Sawhney
Director
Rave Tours & Travels

“Repeat travel is not exactly the reality now. People are essentially looking for newer options and destinations, exploring various places, whether domestic or international. For luxury travels, if a person desires true luxury, they must opt for different kinds of accommodations—more luxurious ones. This is a crucial element. Regarding leisure, there should be more activities in that area.”

Compiled by TT Bureau

PM opens nine-day 'Bharat Parv'



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 9th edition of 'Bharat Parv 2024' at the Red Fort in Delhi on 23 January 2024. The nine-day event was organised by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in association with the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC).

The event showcased a rich cultural experience, featuring spectacular performances by the 3-Armed Forces bands, cultural showcases by Zonal Cultural Centres, State/ UTs cultural troupes, and regional associations in Delhi. A food court with 60 diverse stalls and a crafts bazaar offered a journey through India's culinary and artistic landscape.

Helping agents through UN

Sachin Mehta, Founder, Stuti Tourism, who is also the Travel & Tourism Domain Coordinator for UN-CEFACT, proposes several projects that aim to help travel agents, hotels, and the tourism industry at large to have systems that can help millions of businesses globally.

Hazel Jain



Sachin Mehta
Founder
Stuti Tourism

Sachin Mehta, Founder, Stuti Tourism, who is also the Travel & Tourism Domain Coordinator for UN-CEFACT (United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation & Electronic Business), recently attended an UN-CEFACT forum at UNESCAP Bangkok where he made several project proposals that aim to help the travel and hospitality industries in India and across the globe. “These forums take place twice a year. The team across the world has been working on various projects. Among them are those that will help travel agents, hotels, and the tourism industry at large to have systems that can help millions of businesses. It's a privilege to work on projects that can help the tourism industry have systems in place that will help millions of businesses and entrepreneurs,” Mehta explains.

White paper on sustainable tourism

Mehta says, “The projects that we have in UN-CEFACT is with the intent of creating tourism opportunities in lesser-known places. For instance, we had created a project called Small-scaled Lodging Houses (SLHs). They are hotels or any type of lodging facilities where people stay primarily for leisure rather than business. This

is already on the UN platform for everyone to participate in. This is something like what Airbnb does; it is free for the travel industry to take on. Anyone who wants to build such platform can take our help. It's an open source and available for all.”

One project he completed was on standardising and labelling sustainability. “The travel industry is heading towards sustainability. We recently completed a white paper on this. We have jotted down points in each of the sectors like restaurants and hotels, travel agencies that help them in assessing themselves on certain parameters under 17 sustainability goals,” he adds.

API transformation

Another project that he is working on proposes to make API available to the trade for experiential tourism. “We have completed an API transformation of EPs (Expe-

rience Programme) technical artefacts with sustainability claims. What we are attempting is the way we can trade hotel rooms and airline tickets online. Once this becomes a commercially viable project, we can have local experience providers (like bird-watchers and artists) across the world,” Mehta adds.

Package tour project

Explaining a third proposal to the forum, Mehta says, “We have one more project for the travel trade proposed to the UN. It is the Travel Agency and DMC-DMO Package Tour Project. Today,

operations is a big task. This will help standardise formats for itineraries and quotation. This project enables replacing the current emails and spreadsheets used to exchange tour package data between travel agencies, mostly SMEs, and DMC and Destination Managing Organization (DMO) with harmonised data and comments. It will help agents share itineraries and quotations. These projects will help across the world and not limited to India. As you know, India's travel industry is very fragmented which is why we are going through the UN route.”

Projects proposed by UN-CEFACT

- ❖ White paper on sustainable tourism
- ❖ Encourage use of technology
- ❖ API transformation of EPs technical artefacts with sustainability claims project
- ❖ Travel Agency and DMC-DMO Package Tour Project



STARRY NIGHTS

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GARDENS BY THE BAY

Paris beyond the Eiffel Tower

As Paris gets ready to host the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games this year, it is hoping to create a buzz in India too, not only for the games but also for showcasing that there is a lot more to see and experience in the city than the Eiffel Tower. Paris Region, led by its President Valérie Pécresse, met key tour operators in Mumbai to discuss this.



Hazel Jain

As part of her visit to India this month, **Valérie Pécresse**, President, Paris Region, met key tour operators in Mumbai to promote the new tourist attractions of the destination beyond Eiffel Tower. She was accompanied by **Alexandra Dublanche**, Chairwoman of Choose Paris Region, the Paris Region attractiveness agency. The Paris Region has been preparing to host the first Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Speaking about the purpose of her visit, Pécresse said, "Indians love Paris. We really want now to make a Charm offensive, to win the hearts and minds of Indian travellers. This is the purpose of our visit. We are here to discover the India market and understand it." She visited three Indian cities of Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. She also met with key fashion de-



(L-R): Jean-Marc Séré Charlet, Consul General, France; Alexandra Dublanche, Chairwoman, Choose Paris Region; Valérie Pécresse, President, Paris Region Regional Council & Sheetal Munshaw, Director, Atout France India, in Mumbai

signers, and film producers and directors. They will open a bureau in Mumbai, which will be one of the three worldwide.

She discussed what Indian tourists want to see and do in Paris and the challenges they faced. "The tour operators shared a lot of points with us. For example, Paris did not have enough vegan

and vegetarian food options. I reassured them that this will be resolved as veganism is a growing trend in France. We also discussed Indian weddings in Paris," she said.

Touching upon Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Wed in India' call, she joked that she hopes Paris will be an exception!

"We have already seen a few celebrity weddings in France. Paris has beautiful venues, whether for weddings or special occasions like anniversaries, diploma ceremonies, and engagement parties. So leisure, weddings, and bleisure are key target segments for Paris. The aim is to encourage Indian visitors to discover destinations and attractions in Paris

Paris is the gateway for Indian visitors into France and the focus now is to discover different facets of Paris, showcase different areas of the city

they have not already experienced – showcase Paris beyond the Eiffel Tower – since the city receives many repeat visitors," Pécresse adds. She said France is also working on improving English language, making special English courses at a Master's Degree level.

Sheetal Munshaw, Director India, Atout France, said, "There is a renewed focus of Paris Region

on India, and the fact that they will have a presence in Mumbai goes to show their commitment to the Indian market. Paris is the gateway for Indian visitors into France and the focus now is to discover different facets of Paris, showcase different areas of the city, including Notre-Dame, which will reopen this year. The message is that Paris is so much more than what is already known."

Estimated number of Indian arrivals to France

- ❖ 2015: 473,730
- ❖ 2016: 507,820
- ❖ 2017: 531,830
- ❖ 2018: 640,650
- ❖ 2019: 698,280
- ❖ 2020: 343,450
- ❖ 2021: 333,380
- ❖ 2022: 405,930
- ❖ 2023: 549,770

TAFI TALKS about biz challenges

TAFI Western India Chapter recently organised an event for members, showcasing a wealth creation opportunity with the Nuvama Wealth team. Apart from going over regular business matters, the association also discussed some challenges faced by members such as paying cash for certain visa applications. The event ended with a networking session with VFS and airline officials.



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📍 Jumeirah Saadiyat Lobby

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MH credits tie-ups for India growth

With its growing middle class and increased investment in the aviation industry, India remains an important market for Malaysia Airlines, claims Dersenish Aresandiran, the Chief Commercial Officer of the airline. In calibrated response to the evolving dynamics of the Indian market, the airline focuses on the expansion of its network.



Nisha Verma

Sharing details on India as a market, **Dersenish Aresandiran**, Chief Commercial Officer, Malaysia Airlines, says, "India has emerged as our leading international market, a testament to the robust travel demands it commands. Moving forward, our strategic focus entails a gradual expansion of our network and an increase in flight frequencies, thoughtfully calibrated in response to the evolving demand dynamics within the Indian market."



Dersenish Aresandiran
Chief Commercial Officer
Malaysia Airlines

load factor stands at 83 per cent year-to-date."

Year that was

Claiming that the last one year has been remarkable for them, Aresandiran shares, "We continue to witness robust travel demand, witnessing a 90 per cent increase in overall passenger traffic year-to-date compared to pre-COVID levels. Globally, most of our routes have registered a steady increase in load factor performance and strong forward booking."



Network check

Currently, Malaysia Airlines offers 67 weekly flights to nine Indian destinations, comprising New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Kochi, as well as Amritsar, Trivandrum and Ahmedabad, which was launched in 2023. "Notably, we have already surpassed our pre-pandemic levels of operation in the country. Furthermore, fol-

lowing a positive response and load factor performance, we will also increase our frequency from Kuala Lumpur to Amritsar from two to four times weekly. This will raise our weekly flights to India to 69. Our target is to transport approximately 2 million passengers collectively from Indian destinations," he says.

He further adds, "Malaysia Airlines boasts a healthy load factor in the India market. Our average

Following a positive response and load factor performance, we will also increase our frequency from Kuala Lumpur to Amritsar from two to four times weekly

Expansion plans

The airline has recently announced expansion plans for several key markets, including India, China, Australia, and ASEAN. "We have also recently announced an addition of 248 flight frequencies in our domestic and international routes in anticipation of the surge in demand due to upcoming festivities. We will be ramping up frequencies from Kuala Lumpur to Cochin (COK) from 6x to 7x weekly from 31 Oct 2023 to 27

March 2024," he informs. Adding further, he reveals, "As demand continues to recover, our plan is to gradually increase capacity over time. Our aim is to recover fully to pre-pandemic levels by May 2024. Furthermore, as an airline subsidiary of Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG), we are committed towards implementing our Long-Term Business Plan 2.0, outlining our trajectory up to 2025. Our long-term strategy involves transforming MAG from

a pure-play aviation business into Asia's leading travel and aviation services group."

Partnerships galore

Throwing light on codeshares and partnerships, he says, "Specifically, for the Indian market, we have interline partnerships with Air India and Vistara, which offer passengers with seamless travel options through connecting flights operated by both airlines."

Operational efficiency through tech

The travel industry is on the cusp of a transformational period, with 2024 set to bring significant changes that will revolutionize the way we travel. From the fintech revolution to digital IDs and passports, biometrics, cloud and open platforms, and the growing metaverse, technology is rapidly changing the landscape.

Technology is not just a buzzword in the hospitality industry; it's a game-changer that is revolutionizing the way we do business. By embracing the latest technological advancements, we can enhance guest experiences, streamline operations, and increase revenue.

Personalization has become the key to success in the industry, and with the integration of IoT, Virtual Reality, Robotics, and AI/ML, we can facilitate this transition seamlessly. The use of data analytics and artificial intelligence allows us to gain insights into guests' preferences, enabling us to tailor services accordingly and provide recommendations that lead to higher guest satisfaction and loyalty.

In addition, technology improves operational efficiency by automating tasks, reducing human error, and freeing up staff time for more critical tasks like guest service. It creates



new revenue streams and opportunities for upselling, like mobile apps that offer guests additional services and upgrades. In this industry, there are many hotels that are owned by franchisees, as well as a long list of hotel chains, ranging from medium-sized to small and boutique establishments. Our solution brings innovation to this industry by offering Hospitality Solutions that operate on the Cloud. This means that all franchise owners, as well as those in the

long tail, can access the same solution simultaneously. This is a significant development that will change the game for everyone involved.

The travel industry is on the cusp of a transformational period, with 2024 set to bring significant changes that will revolutionize the way we travel. From the FinTech revolution to the emergence of digital IDs and passports, biometrics, cloud and open platforms, and the growing meta-

verse, technology is rapidly changing the landscape. At the same time, sustainability is becoming an increasingly important focus for the industry, with companies adopting eco-friendly practices to reduce their carbon footprint and promote responsible tourism.

Sustainability through technology

Amadeus recognizes the importance of sustainability in this evolving landscape. Through our Green Program, we have implemented measures to reduce our environmental impact and promote sustainable business practices. Additionally, we have joined the Green Software Foundation as the first travel company, enabling us to connect and collaborate with other businesses, academic institutions, start-ups, and non-profit organisations to develop common sustainable engineering practices.

We support sustainable tourism through our technology solu-

tions, including our collaboration with Microsoft Azure to reduce our environmental impact, and our partnership with climate tech company choose to provide accurate emissions figures and ways to mitigate carbon footprints.

With Hospitality Solutions, which operate on the Cloud, franchisees and those in the long tail can access the same solution simultaneously

We are committed to investing in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and blockchain to provide more personalized and efficient

travel experiences. Numerous technological advancements are taking place, with many innovations now reaching the production stage. We are currently investing heavily in biometrics, utilizing technologies such as fingerprint and facial recognition as a means of identification to facilitate seamless travel through airports without the need for paper documentation, including passports.



Mani Ganeshan
Global Head of Engineering, Travel Distribution and Centre Head, Amadeus Labs

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

Chandni Travels celebrates 30 years

Chandni Travels celebrated its 30th anniversary with aplomb at The Lalit - Great Eastern Hotel, Kolkata. Md. Allauddin, MD, Chandni Travels, along with Ziauddin and Zakauddin, Directors of the company, greeted the guests, coming from across the country, including representatives from prominent airlines, hotel chains, corporate entities, and renowned personalities of the city.



MTF Team does it again!

A fantastic yearly event, with a sport that unites the nation, for a travel fraternity that loves to work hard and play hard! The second season of MTF Premier League 2024 held recently was a resounding success. Take a bow Team MTF – you have done it again, and this year it was bigger and better! It truly epitomized the spirit of camaraderie for the Mumbai travel fraternity.





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1 IN CIRCULATION & READERSHIP SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

EVENT TALK

Published from : India Middle East

FEBRUARY 2024

Date	Event	Time
1-2	GPS-Nagpur	10:00 am
3-5	India Travel Mart-Ahmedabad	9:00 am
8-10	OTM- Mumbai	10:00 am
8-10	Dhaka Travel Mart	10:00 am
12	South Africa Roadshow- Jaipur	9:30 am
13	South Africa Roadshow-Delhi	9:30 am
14	South Africa Roadshow-Ahmedabad	9:30 am
14-15	GPS-Pune	10:00 am
15	VisitBritain Training Workshop-Chandigarh	6:30 pm
15	South Africa Roadshow-Bengaluru	9:30 am
16	South Africa Roadshow-Mumbai	9:30 am
16-18	Travel & Tourism Fair-Bengaluru	10:00 am
19	Morocco Tourism Webinar	11:30 am
19-21	AIME-Melbourne	7:30 am
22-24	SATTE	10:00 am
26-29	SITE Global Conference 2024	12:00 pm
29-01 Mar	GPS-Chandigarh	10:00 am

Ebix' experience centre in Delhi

Ebixcash Travel Services and Sheraton Travels have tied up to inaugurate a cutting-edge experience centre in Delhi's Connaught Place. The centre aims to create a nationwide platform for travel agent community of India.

Janice Alyosius

Ebixcash Travel Services and Sheraton Travels recently joined hands to open a new experience centre in the heart of Delhi, Connaught Place (CP). The centre aims to empower travel agents across the country, particularly small, medium, and micro-sized businesses.

Enthusiastic over the development, **Naveen Kundu**, Managing Director, Ebixcash Travel Services, said, "The newly established service centre will serve as a hub for travel agents, providing them with valuable insights into various aspects of the travel industry, including technology utilization, customer support, and business development." The primary goal of the collaboration is to create a nationwide platform for approximately 450,000 travel agents in India, enabling them to compete with large Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) by leveraging the aggregating power of Via, Ebixcash's travel platform.



Naveen Kundu, Managing Director, Ebixcash Travel Services & Ashwani Sharma, Chief Executive Officer, Sheraton Travels

Ashwani Sharma, Chief Executive Officer, Sheraton Travels, expressed also his excitement about the collaboration and said, "We have forged a strong connection. We eagerly look forward to becoming an arm for Ebix Travel to generate new types of business. With this collaboration, I believe we can both grow."

Highlighting the expansion plans, Kundu said, "We are excited to announce that we plan to open

approximately 30 experience centres like this in tier II, III and IV cities in the country."

Both Kundu and Sharma emphasized on the importance of collaborations in the industry keeping in view the continuous evolution of travel products and services.

The collaboration also aims to leverage the growth potential of the MICE industry and tap into

the rising trend of Indian travellers exploring both domestic and international destinations. "With India on track to becoming the third-largest economy, the travel industry anticipates a prosperous future fuelled by a growing middle class boasting the highest disposable income," Kundu said. Talking about the industry prospects, he said that the outlook is highly positive and optimistic not just for MICE business but the entire travel industry.

'Dynamics of travel changing'

Parvesh Dhull, MD, Maitri Visa and Travel Service, highlights emerging trends in the travel industry. It's essential to understand and adapt to the changing dynamics, he suggests.

Janice Alyosius

Parvesh Dhull, Managing Director, Maitri Visa and Travel Service, sheds light on the significant changes poised to shape the world of travel in the coming years. He acknowledges the diversity in preferences among international tourists. "As we stand in the modern era of tourism, it is an increasingly intensive, commercially organised, business-oriented set of activities. At the cusp of a new year, the world of travel is poised for significant changes, and our travel habits, like everything else, are not immune to the winds of transformation. The preference of international tourists involves relaxation versus activity, familiarity versus novelty, dependence versus autonomy, and order versus disorder. A sociologist of tourism classifies tourism into four types: individual tourists, mass tourists, the explorer, and the drifter," he says.

Research indicates that travellers are increasingly open to new and



Parvesh Dhull
Managing Director, Maitri Visa and Travel Service and Holidays

innovative technologies, with 30 per cent expressing excitement about tech solutions that can reduce problems during trips. This presents a substantial opportunity for the hospitality industry to embrace and prepare for the hotel guest of the future. European destinations are gaining popularity among tourists, driven by various factors such as culture, architecture, gastronomy, infrastructure, landscape, events, shopping, and more.

Dhull observes significant modifications in travel itineraries, attributing these changes to mass tourism and the impact of the pandemic in recent years. "Having spent a few years in the tourism industry, it's essential to understand and adapt to these changing dynamics. I have noticed many significant modifications in

The preference of international tourists involves relaxation versus activity, familiarity versus novelty, dependence versus autonomy, and order versus disorder

travel itineraries, probably due to mass tourism and pandemic situations in past years. Though people have become more cautious about travelling in groups," he says.

Away Chiang Mai eyes events

Katerawee Thepprachum, GM, Away Chiang Mai Thapae Resort, shares the agenda for 2024, including expansion plans, queries of Indian guests, culinary and wellness offerings.

TT Bureau

Away Chiang Mai Thapae Resort, a premium property of Cross Hotels & Resorts located in the heart of Chiang Mai city of Thailand, is an ideal destination to stay. The 39-key boutique property, surrounded by ponds and gardens, has various temples and cultural points in the vicinity. Airport, night bazaar, and walking street are just 5-10 minutes away.

Talking about the Unique Selling Points (USPs) of the property, **Katerawee Thepprachum**, General Manager, Away Chiang Mai Thapae Resort, highlights,



Katerawee Thepprachum
General Manager
Away Chiang Mai Thapae Resort

"The resort is surrounded by private balconies where you can feel

the nature's hug. Another major USP is that the resort also has organic vegan and plant-based meals at Moreganic Restaurant, which serves Indian guests well." She says that they have plans to expand their portfolio in 2024. "We will increase the number of keys for our guests probably by the second half of 2024. Indian partners are key to us, as we are proactively working with them to provide best and quality accommodation and hospitality. We see a huge potential in the destination as far as Indians are concerned," she shares.

Focus on wellness & relaxation Thepprachum says that there has been a complete change in people's lifestyle after the pandemic, as they focus more on their health. "We have well-being activities such as yoga, therapy, and meditation," the GM says. The property is ideal for small-size events. "We encourage them to book our buy out package, so that we can create tailor-made service based on the guest's preference," she shares.





Invitation to join the **South African Tourism Roadshow** in India

12

February
at The Lalit
Jaipur

Scan to register



13

February
at Shangri-La Eros
New Delhi

Scan to register



14

February
at Hyatt Regency
Ahmedabad

Scan to register



15

February
at ITC Gardenia
Bengaluru

Scan to register



16

February
at ITC Grand Central
Mumbai

Scan to register



Registration time: 9:30 am followed by lunch

RSVP

Jaspreet Kaur: +91 96501 96532, jaspreet.kaur@ddppl.com

MOVEMENTS

SABRE

Mumbai



Sabre Corporation has appointed **SAMUAL MACHADO** as Managing Director to oversee the company's agency business across India and South Asia. With his experience in the field of technology and a proven record of success across the travel ecosystem, Machado is uniquely positioned to drive customer experiences and insightful innovation in the region. He is returning to Sabre, having joined Sabre Hospitality Solutions in 2011 as head of account management in India.

FINNAIR

India



Finnair has appointed **TURKKA KUUSISTO** as the CEO of Finnair. He will start the new assignment on 11 July 2024 at the latest. Kuusisto joins Finnair from Posti Group Corporation, where he has served as the CEO since 2020. Prior to that, Kuusisto served in senior leadership positions at Posti Group Corporation and Lindorff Group. Welcoming Kuusisto, Sanna Suvanto-Harsaae, Chair, Board of Directors, Finnair, said, "I am happy to welcome Turkka Kuusisto."

THE LALIT ASHOK

Bangalore



VISHAL JAMUAR has taken over as the General Manager at The Lalit Ashok, Bangalore. A hospitality professional with more than 32 years of rich experience in the industry, Jamuar is a proven leader with a track record of success in leading hotel operations. He has worked with prestigious brands like ITC, Taj and Radisson Group. He is extremely well regarded in the industry for his expertise in leadership, strategic management, and driving significant growth in various assignments.

MOXY BENGALURU AIRPORT PRESTIGE TECH CLOUD

Bengaluru

ANURADHA VENKATACHALAM

has joined Marriott International as the Pre-opening Hotel Captain for Moxy Bengaluru Airport Prestige Tech Cloud, poised to be the first Moxy Hotel to launch in India. After an extensive international experience in the hospitality industry, Venkatachalam is set to take on her new role from her home ground in Bengaluru.



DOUBLETREE BY HILTON BAANI SQUARE GURUGRAM

Gurugram

DoubleTree by Hilton Baani Square Gurugram promotes **ASHISH TIWARI** to the position of F&B Manager. With an impressive tenure within the hospitality industry, Tiwari's appointment signifies a strategic move to further elevate the hotel's dining and beverage experiences. Tiwari brings with him a wealth of experience, having been an integral part of the DoubleTree by Hilton Baani Square family since January 2020.



THE WORLD HOTELS AND RESORTS

Bhubaneswar

The World Hotels and Resorts has appointed **DHIMAN MAZUMDAR** as their new Chief Operating Officer in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. He will be responsible for the operations for two brands - WGH and Lyfe Hotels. He has over 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry. Prior to this, he was associated with The Mayfair Group of Hotels as Vice President Sales. He will oversee the hospitality wing's growth and play a key role in executing the brand's vision.



FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON NAVI MUMBAI

Mumbai



Four Points By Sheraton Navi Mumbai has appointed **NIVEDITA TIWARI** as Cluster Marketing Manager. She will oversee the marketing endeavours for Four Points by Sheraton Navi Mumbai Vashi, The Resort Mumbai, and The Dukes Retreat, Lonavala. She will lead the cluster's marketing initiatives, leveraging her expertise to build awareness, elevate brand presence, and drive strategic campaigns.

LYFE HOTELS

Bhubaneswar



Lyfe Hotels, part of The World Hotels and Resorts, appoints **PRAKASH SHANKAR** as General Manager for their recently launched hotel property in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Shankar has around 22 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He has been associated with globally renowned hotel brands with a proven track record of successfully pre-opening, rebranding, and managing operations across India. He will be overseeing a wide range of tasks aimed at ensuring the efficient functioning of the hotel.

CONRAD

Pune



Conrad Pune, the flagship luxury hotel for Hilton Worldwide, welcomes **RAMANDEEP SINGH KAPUR** as the newly appointed Director of Operations. With an illustrious 16-year career in luxury hospitality, Kapur brings a wealth of experience and expertise to his new role. He has worked with prestigious hotel brands such as Hyatt hotels, Marriott International, DLF Super Luxury real estate developer, and the Oberoi Group. His extensive expertise spans leading teams in world-class business hotels and resort properties.

CROWNE PLAZA GREATER NOIDA

Delhi NCR

Crowne Plaza Greater Noida, an IHG hotel, has promoted **REMANK GOEL** to Director of Sales & Marketing. With a career span of 13 years in the field of sales, Goel will continue overseeing the strategic aspects of sales and marketing. Prior to this, he was the Director of Sales at Crowne Plaza Greater Noida since 2022, wherein he spearheaded the sales team performance, analysed sales data, monitored rates with the revenue team to maximize the revenue, and looked after budgeting and forecasting.



HYATT CENTRIC MG ROAD BANGALORE

Bengaluru

Hyatt Centric MG Road Bangalore has appointed **RIDHIMA NAGPAL** as the Marketing and Communications Manager. Nagpal has been a part of the Marketing and Advertising domain since 2016 and started her journey in the hospitality industry with Hyatt Regency Pune. During her time in marketing and advertising agencies, she has acquired a diverse skill set in marketing, encompassing areas such as content marketing, media relations, and crisis communication.



NOVOTEL VISAKHAPATNAM VARUN BEACH & THE BHEEMILI RESORT

Visakhapatnam

Accor has appointed **SAHIL ANAND** as Cluster Revenue Manager for Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach & The Bheemili Resort. With over seven years of experience, Anand brings a wealth of expertise and talent to this strategic role. He will play a pivotal role in driving e-commerce. His approach will extend to regularly monitoring competition pricing and offerings and constantly adapting business strategies to meet market requirements.



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Emirates spreads joy of cricket

Looking at the success of Emirates Travel Agents Cricket Tournament, held recently in Mumbai, the Dubai-based airline plans to hold matches in Delhi and Chennai as well, and may look at engaging trade in other Indian cities too.



Hazel Jain

The Dubai-based airline has historically been quite prodigious in its sponsorships, cherry-picking from an array of sporting, arts, and cultural events. This strategy directly supports the carrier's corporate objectives, primarily to be 'a global lifestyle brand'. Towards this end, Emirates allocates a slice of its marketing and advertising budget for such sponsorships, sponsoring many sports teams and other events.

One such event, albeit on a smaller scale, is the Emirates Travel Agents Cricket Tournament that it organises in India. It recently concluded the 5th edition of this tournament in Mumbai. And now the industry eagerly awaits the next edition of the cricket tournament for agents and frontline staff



The Emirates team, which worked hard towards organising the cricket matches and bringing the trade together, pose with the tournament cup

over the past few years. This year saw a total of 18 teams and over 400 registered players/ agents. The prizes included eight trophies, Man of the Match award for Semi Finals and Final, Best Batsman, Best Bowler, and Player of the Tournament.

Explaining the idea behind this, Sunil Kallyat, Regional Manager, WI at Emirates, says, "Cricket is a religion in India and we see a lot of enthusiasm from the travel trade to be part of this. The idea behind organising this tournament is to bring together the travel agency frontline staff.

We wanted to do something special for them and after years of planning and ideating, we came up with this event and they love it! They are our core business associates and they have

been contributing a lot towards our success."

Expanding to 5 cities soon

Kallyat adds that it is difficult to accommodate everyone but the

Cricket is a religion in India and we see a lot of enthusiasm from the travel trade to be part of this. The idea behind this tournament is to bring them together

team does its best every year. The first year saw 32 teams, which was reduced to 24 teams, and

eventually 18. There was a request from 1,200 players in the beginning, but due to logistical reason, Emirates brought it down to 400 quality players this year.

Looking at the success of this year's tournament, Emirates saw a desire to ensure participation in this tournament from other cities as well. "We, therefore, decided to hold matches in Delhi and Chennai as well. In future, we may look at replicating this in Hyderabad and Bengaluru too to engage the travel trade in these two cities. We are trying to accommodate everyone since the registrations are quite high. We had over 32 teams and 600+ players registering this year for the tournament in Mumbai alone. We have big plans going forward – that is the way Emirates looks at it, be part of big sporting events," Kallyat adds.

Emirates Travel Agents Cricket Tournament

- ❖ This year (2023), the Emirates Travel Agents Cricket Tournament saw participation of 18 teams and over 400 registered players/ agents.
- ❖ The prizes at the cricket tournament included eight trophies, Man of the Match award for Semi Finals and Final, Best Batsman, Best Bowler, and Player of the Tournament.

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