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TTJ Travel Trade Journal

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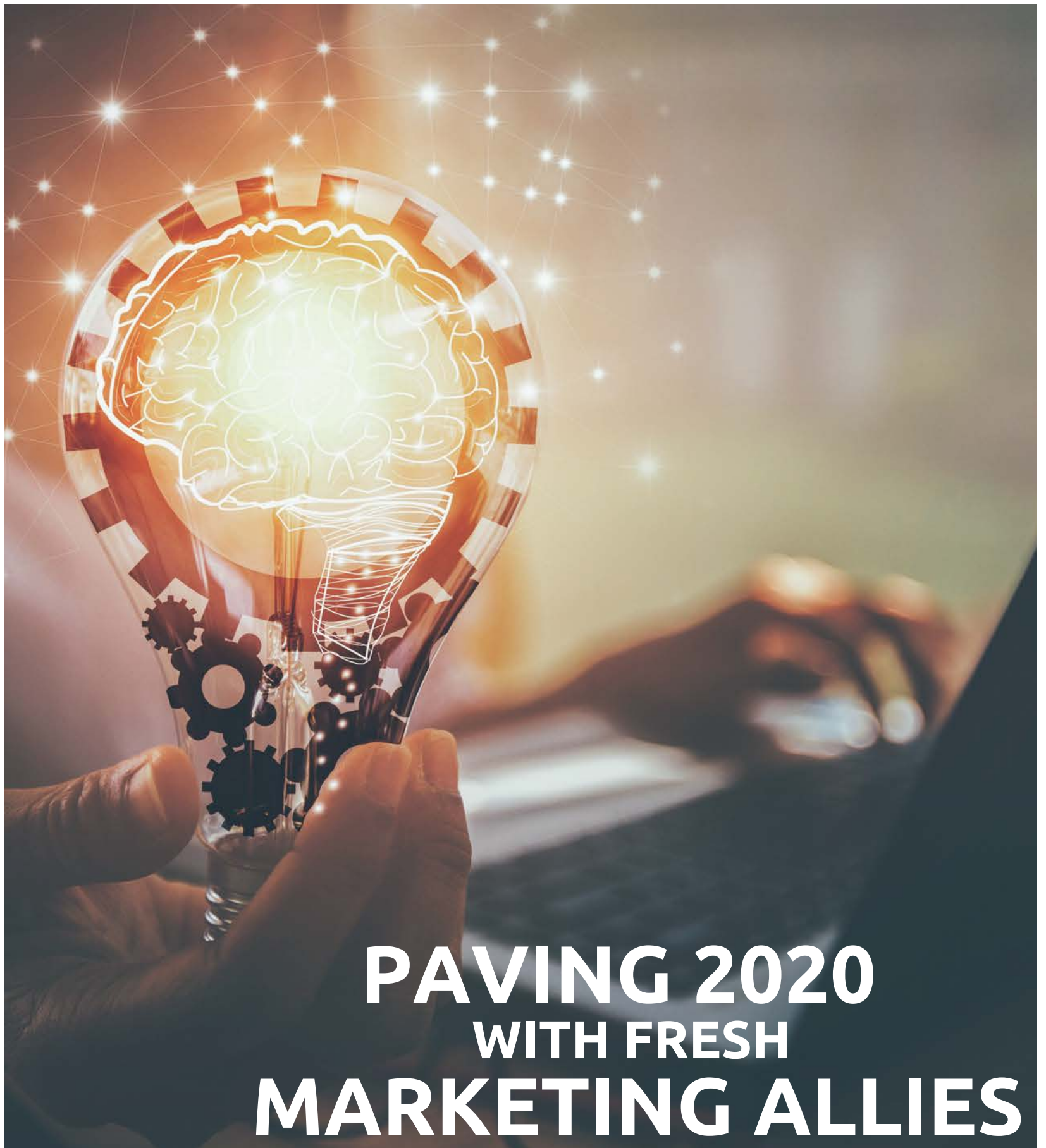
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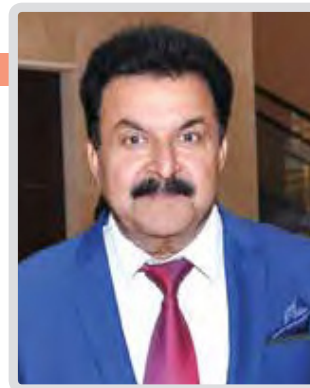
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Dear Friends,

Amid the pandemic, travel and tourism marketers are finding new landscapes and channels open to exploration that can both comfort and meet a client's need for perfect service. So while personal meetings are out for the moment, there has been a paradigm shift in marketing and communication strategies and most of them are going digital as their primary target audience is constantly online or on social media platforms. So this is the time to rethink your content and strategy plan and how you can best utilise each online platform to solidify relationships with your followers.

Digital marketing strategy has always required a perfect mix of content, art and science, and to get that mix right is difficult and heightened in times of uncertainty such as this pandemic. However, the ultimate goal is simple—to tap into emotion and connect with your audience through compact and innovative storytelling.

Our focus of TTJ August 2020 issue is all about how travel and tourism bodies like NTO's Hotels, cruise, travel operators, etc. are adapting and simplifying their marketing efforts in these difficult times while further adjusting to the new trends in digital behaviour while keeping their brand alive and active.

While it is interesting to read their insights and perspectives,

Take Care and Be Safe!

Happy Reading again!

Ravi Sharma

Ravi Sharma

ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

Editor's Desk

Honeymoon Travel

- Beautiful Greece (8 Nights)
Greece | Athens | Mykonos | Santorini
- Exquisite Italy (9 Nights)
Rome | Naples | Amalfi Coast | Florence | Paris | Venice
- Idyllic Maldives (4 Nights)
Maldives

Family Travel

- London, Switzerland and Paris (10 Nights)
London | Paris | Basel | Interlaken | Lucerne-Zurich
- Astounding Dubai (5 Nights)
Dubai | Abu Dubai
- Singapore with Sentosa Island (4 Nights)
Singapore | Sentosa Island

Friends Travel

- The Natural Treasure, Indonesia (6 Nights)
Bali | Ubud
- Epic Land of Spain (9 Nights)
Barcelona | Ibiza | Palma | Madrid
- Splendid Towns of Amsterdam (10 Nights)
Amsterdam | Berlin | Prague | Budapest

Solo Travel

- Splendorous Turkey (6 Nights)
Istanbul | Cappadocia | Antalya
- Scandinavia (7 Nights)
Copenhagen | Aarhus | Stavanger | Bergen | Oslo | Stockholm
- Mesmerizing Central Europe (8 Nights)
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It's time to UNLOCK the future of TRAVEL NETWORKING



TravelGyaan launches VTM 2020 – A Virtual Travel Mart scheduled on 15th and 16th September 2020. Pre-Registrations are now open. Travel Professionals can register on 'www.

virtualtravelmart.com'. VTM2020 is powered independently by TravelGyaan with an aim to initiate and rebuild travel. Visitor profile include buyers who are in the category of Domestic, Inbound and Outbound Tour Operators, Travel Agents, MICE Specialists and Wedding Planners.

The Exhibitors will get a chance to meet Buyers from across India and the platform will serve as an excellent opportunity to connect and network with fellow travel industry professionals. VTM2020 has immersive content and the event is planned to enable engagement to a much wider audience base.

VTM2020 will have features such as Branded Exhibitor Booths, 1:1 and Group video meetings between Buyers and Sellers, Speed Networking Lounge, LIVE Knowledge Sessions and an Awards Evening to giveaway Prizes to selected participants.

With multiple features like pre-setting appointments to customising a virtual booth with the brand's look and feel, the exhibitor will be able to create an experience similar to a physical exhibition. Attendees can access the virtual networking lounge to connect with fellow attendees from the travel industry, download marketing collaterals from the resource section, watch LIVE sessions such as webinars, talk shows, panel discussions, and more.

The highlight of VTM 2020 includes a speed networking lounge where the attendees' video meet and discuss business virtually with the exhibitors from around the world whilst also networking with industry professionals. This will be an altogether new experience for the attendee as well as the exhibitor. There are also prizes worth hundreds of dollars waiting to be won.

VTM has collaborated with Travel Trade Journal (TTJ), a highly acknowledged travel industry media brand from the house of Sampan Media. TTJ is the Knowledge and Marketing Partner for Virtual Travel Mart. UTEN is also one of its marketing partners.

TAAI to investigate the allegation against its office-bearer in VBM issue

It may be recalled that The Travel Agent Association of India (TAAI) is closely looking into accusations made by Air India and its management messaging on its platforms about travel agents allegedly over-charging on Vande Bharat Mission flight tickets.



In a recent incident, a recording allegedly involving the voice of an office-bearer of TAAI's Northern India Chapter, in conversation with another agent in relation to the Vande Bharat flight tickets has come as a shock for the association. In the voice recording, the office bearer is heard assuring the person at the other end that tickets to the VB flights are being released in connivance with officials in the Air India system. So, according to TAAI, there seems to have been speculations and confusion which is being created on a so-called sting operation initiated by a TAFI committee member from Gujarat Chapter against TAAI Northern Region, Treasurer.

Of the latest, clarifying the same, TAAI President, Jyoti Mayal stated that its National Office Bearers have taken swift action and have initiated an investigation into the allegations of the same against the Hon. Treasurer of Northern Region TAAI, Manish Saxena of Century Travels. Manish has since resigned on moral grounds from the post, pending the outcome of the investigation.

International passengers arriving in Mumbai can skip quarantine process

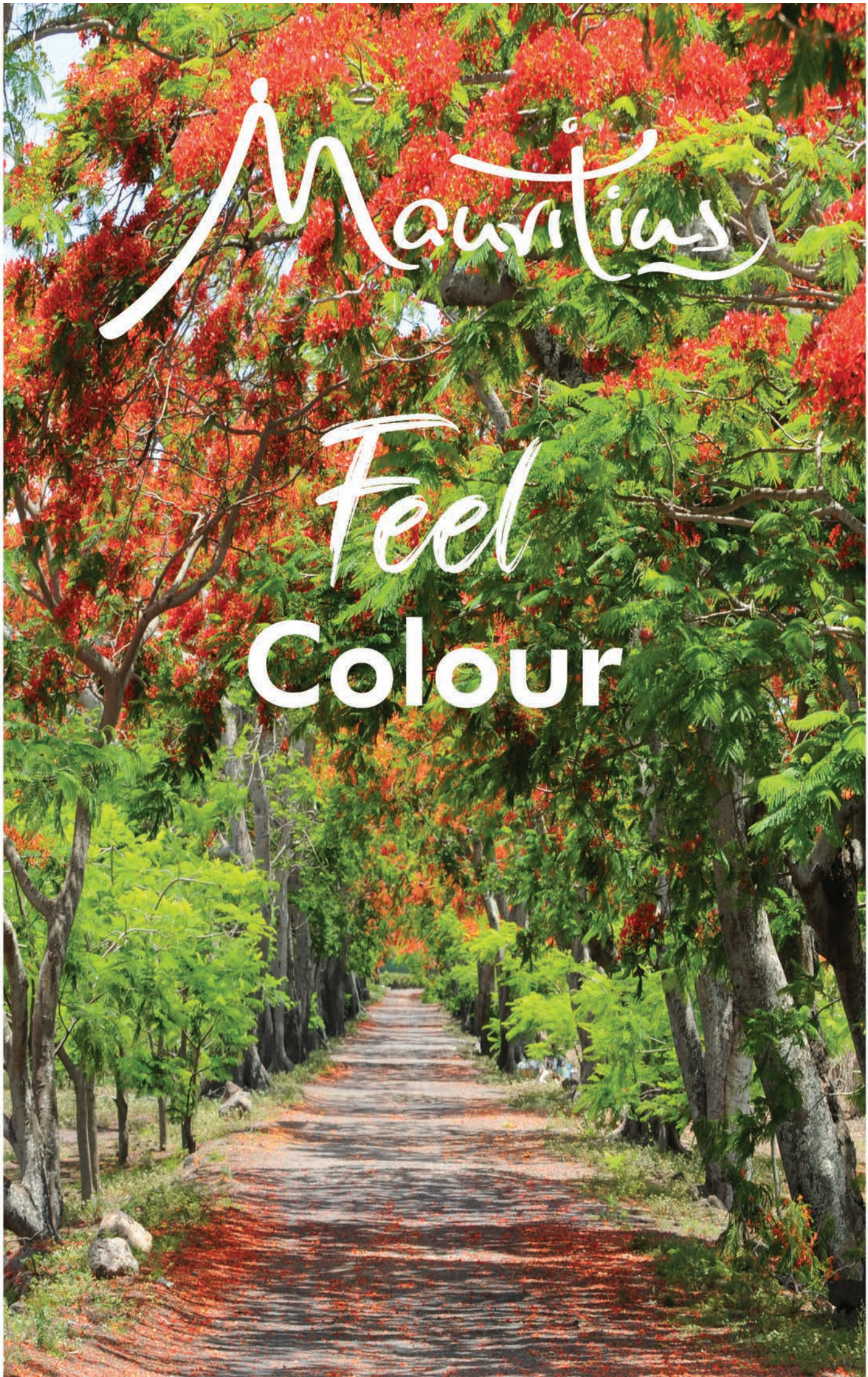
Earlier, according to the state government's directives, all inbound international passengers have to undergo two stages of quarantine on arrival. The passengers have to undergo a seven-day institutional quarantine followed by seven days of home quarantine. However, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Maharashtra government on August 13, relaxed quarantine norms framed to prevent further transmission of COVID-19 in the state. The move is aimed at abating the stress for passengers arriving at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) and reduce the time taken by them to leave the airport.



Some international passengers arriving at the airport can now skip the compulsory institutional quarantine, CSMIA said.

"Concessions on quarantine regulations have been made for international passengers travelling because of an emergency and those who have undertaken an RT-PCR test within 96 hours of their journey. The initiative enables arriving passengers to fill the self-declaration form online at least 72 hours before their scheduled travel to be exempt from institutional quarantine," said CSMIA.

Thus, the eligible passengers can now bypass the institutional quarantine by filling in the self-declaration form 72 hours before their journey. Passengers will have to upload proof of the negative RT-PCR test undertaken within 96 hours of the journey. In the event of any emergency such as pregnancy, death in the family, serious illness, and people with children below 10 years of age, home quarantine of 14 days will be considered legally sufficient, said CSMIA. Moreover, CSMIA, along with the Airport Health Organization (APHO) team, has created a green channel for all arriving passengers who have filled the applications on the online portal. In the absence of an emergency or timely submission of the negative RT-PCR test on the portal, passengers will be subjected to the mandatory two-stage quarantine.



Mauritius

Feel
Colour

Heritage Aarah and Adaaran Resorts Maldives reopens its doors to international travellers



Adaaran Resorts' properties- the premium all-inclusive luxurious five-star resort Heritage Aarah, Adaaran Select Meedhupparu, Adaaran Prestige Water Vilas, and, Adaaran Club Rannalhi are all set to re-open doors for guests from September 1, 2020. The extravagant Adaaran Prestige Vadoo, the first of the Aitken Spence Hotels' Maldivian properties, re-opened its door to guests on July 27, 2020, with the highest safety protocols.

In order to provide the best in standard safety and hygiene, the group has announced #SpenceSafe, a program to ascertain guests of their safety measures and immediate first-aid protocols to ensure an undisturbed pleasant stay.

Upon arrival, all guests will have to undertake mandatory temperature checks and will be required to adhere to the health and safety protocols on a daily basis during their stay. As an add-on, the basic amenities in the hotels will now include hand sanitizers and safety gear. Sanitisation stations will be available readily and social distancing will be practiced in all communal areas comprising restaurants, pools and gyms across all properties. To minimise the risk of contact, based on the occupancy, the guests will be offered a-la-carte dining instead of buffet meals to promote safety. Menus will be available via scanning QR codes. Floor markings indicating proper physical distancing and breakfast will be served via in-room dining on demand of the guests. All available facilities and common areas will be frequently sterilised and disinfected.

Dubai Tourism partners with Microsoft to streamline services for stakeholders through cloud solutions



Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) has partnered with Microsoft to further streamline data-driven services offered to stakeholders, enhance the e-learning platform for Dubai College of Tourism (DCT) and adopt an innovative approach towards showcasing the city as a must-visit destination.

The wide scope of collaboration between Dubai Tourism and Microsoft is largely based on leveraging the Azure cloud platform, which provides a range of services from computing to networking, databases to analytics and artificial intelligence designed to help organisations run their digital systems and processes more efficiently. Dubai Tourism's goal is to create a strong data analytics platform on the cloud that will help it share valuable business insights via online dashboards to facilitate managerial decision-making and to constantly update public and private stakeholders with critical industry-related information.

Driven by the need to make data processing faster and aligning with its vision of progressing from data analytics to artificial intelligence products, Dubai Tourism became one of the first government entities to migrate multiple online dashboards to the state-of-the-art Azure architecture developed by Microsoft within the UAE cloud regions including a dashboard that regularly tracks and provides data on visitor arrivals from key source markets. These dashboards will be hosted on Microsoft's Middle East cloud regions, based in the UAE, that provides organisations with access to scalable, highly available, and resilient cloud services while maintaining data residency, security and compliance needs.

Virgin Atlantic announces its return to India

Following the airline's resumption of services from London Heathrow to Hong Kong, New York JFK, Los Angeles, Shanghai and Barbados Virgin Atlantic has unveiled its planned passenger flying restart to India.

All customers eligible under the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs as per the Air Bubble scheme will be able to travel onboard Virgin Atlantic's direct services to London Heathrow and the US. The airline plans to operate three flights a week from Delhi to London Heathrow from September 2, 2020. Mumbai service restarts from September 17, 2020, and will operate four flights a week to London. Both the destinations will provide connections to New York JFK and will operate on 787-9 Dreamliner.



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Pay 02, Stay 03

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KERALA TOURISM

On a strong path of revival



P Bala Kiran

The state of Kerala looks forward to start off by reviving local tourism. An action plan for the revival of the tourism sector is being drawn and several support schemes are under the consideration of the government, including assistance to tourism stakeholders and employees. P Bala Kiran, IAS-Director, Kerala Tourism, positively hopes that by October this year, the situation would improve considerably and will ease travel. In the meanwhile, they too are working hard to get tourism on the path of revival.

Prashant Nayak

With the COVID-19 pandemic giving a sledgehammer blow to the entire tourism industry, luckily the state governments and the Centre have been taking excellent steps to contain the detrimental effects of the pandemic.

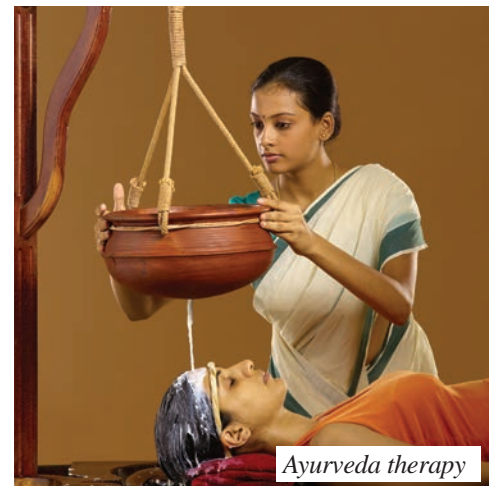
Today, everybody acknowledges that the travel and hospitality sector is going through a great deal of turbulence as it navigates new waves every day. However, one has to be prepared to take on the challenge and emerge on the right and bright side of it. P Bala Kiran says, "In this backdrop, Kerala is also formulating a string of plans. For starting its tourism activities, we first concentrated on facilitating the return of the stranded tourists. More than 3000 foreign tourists and several domestic travellers were repatriated who were stranded in different parts of Kerala when the pandemic struck. Now, we have taken up the relief and rehabilitation measures for the entire tourism industry which has suffered a huge beating in the last seven months or so. We are fervently hoping that the season would become better in the coming months."

Kerala Tourism's initial plan is to kick-start

tourism within the state and to encourage inter-district travel. Later, based on the prevailing situation in other states, inter-state travel may also take place. If the skies are opened for international flights, they will consider inviting foreign guests. But the priority for them is to create a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for various stakeholders.

"In the wake of the pandemic, we have to provide a safe operating procedure for various stakeholders, such as hotel and accommodation industry, Ayurveda centres, adventure tourism, transport operators and houseboat operators. SOP has already been approved for transport operators and hotel operators. SOP for the transport operators was important as people would be travelling in buses, cars, and taxis, even two-wheelers. There are SOPs for other activities for which are under the active consideration of the government. We are expecting their approvals very soon. Once it is done, we will be providing tourism services with appropriate COVID social distancing protocols," assures the Director.

The SOPs are to be mandatorily followed by tourists, transport operators, hotels and all other stakeholders. Such measures are aimed at boosting confidence among the tourists coming to Kerala in the post-COVID scenario.



Ayurveda therapy

On tourism products or offerings that they plan to promote in the initial stages, P Bala Kiran shares, "The first tourism product which will be opened is the one where social distancing is inherently possible. One example is houseboats, which provide an exclusive experience for a group. It is not a mass tourism product. So is adventure tourism, where a lot of social distancing is possible. Likewise, Kerala's resorts and Ayurveda centres don't attract group congregation. Even Kerala's beaches can be opened with adequate safety protocols. Thus, beach tourism, canal tourism, houseboat tourism, and Ayurveda wellness tourism are among the products where social distancing is inherently possible and can be taken forward with social distancing."

Ayurveda would be promoted in a major way, considering the importance of healing and wellness in the current COVID-19 scenario. Eco-tourism and adventure tourism are the other two sectors for Kerala to get tourism back on its feet. Kerala Tourism is looking forward to collaborating with other state tourism boards as well as the union tourism ministry for the promotion of domestic tourism.



Cruising in a houseboat on the backwaters of Kerala

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The Big Bang of 'New Marketing strategies'

Moving your brand online will keep you connected to your customers and enable a unified customer experience. Three key areas to focus on: your story, website and data. One must revisit their current content marketing and keyword strategy. Stay relevant to the consumer's needs today which means reassuring them about how your company/brand is responding to the pandemic.

Rachita Sehgal & Prashant Nayak

The world as we once knew has definitely changed, the term 'new normal' is indeed the latest drift in the ecosystem, while we still try to combat with the enemy (COVID), we must take a minute and appreciate the few certain changes this pandemic brought along. Even though we are compelled to adapt to the new normal, we are also introduced

to a fresh canvas to start and initiate practices/strategies we always wanted to. This new ground has given us an opportunity to define new-fangled terms in our respective areas of work.

Among the first few trick changes that all the professions witnessed during the pandemic crisis was the introduction of new marketing strategies. The new marketing mix is all about awareness and responsiveness of the brands, a lot

of brands took the untraditional route and went for more innovative and out-of-the-box approach to reach out to their respective customers and build a strong PR for them, the marketing concepts shifted from selling services to building content based stratagems.

Read on as we bring you few insights on the new marketing strategies adopted by our industry trailblazers...



‘Constantly engage with your core audience’



Kerrie Hannaford

VP Commercial, Accor India and South Asia

COVID -19 outbreak has brought evident changes in the customer behaviour, needs and expectations and we must accommodate with the guests accordingly.

We saw an exponential jump

towards digital engagement amongst the consumers during the lockdown. Accor has evolved marketing strategies to suit the market conditions.

We leveraged all our owned digital channels to drive customer engagement with the help of our global digital campaign ALL@HOME. We wanted our guests to continue living their passions in the comfort of their own homes through the unique digital experiences and content brought together by ALL [Accor Live Limitless]. Accor has always had a customer-first approach and customer's demands form the nucleus of all our marketing efforts. We have gone all out with our panel of experts to help people try new routines while they were at home. Our ibis brand launched ibis Music #GigsAtHome wherein artists performed live on our Instagram handle every Friday through the month of May.

Some of our hotels individually hosted live sessions such as Novotel Ahmedabad hosted several culinary sessions by Chef Jamal and Chef Ravi Shankar and a virtual yoga class with Camelia Oberoi. Novotel Chennai OMR also hosted virtual cooking sessions by Chef Muthu. Mercure Goa hosted a live yoga session as well.

Additionally, we are communicating about our hotels which are providing takeaway as well as delivery services through

partners like Zomato, Swiggy and Dunzo. Few hotels are also providing doorstep delivery and catering to bulk orders as well. Some of our properties are providing DIY kits giving guests an opportunity to explore their culinary skills with fresh and rare ingredients.

As we moved in the unlock phase, we have introduced intensified hygiene and prevention measures to ensure the safety of our guests and employees under ALL SAFE label to ensure people feel more comfortable traveling again. Our marketing teams are in the process of rolling out various stay, work and FnB offers and incentives for our guests.

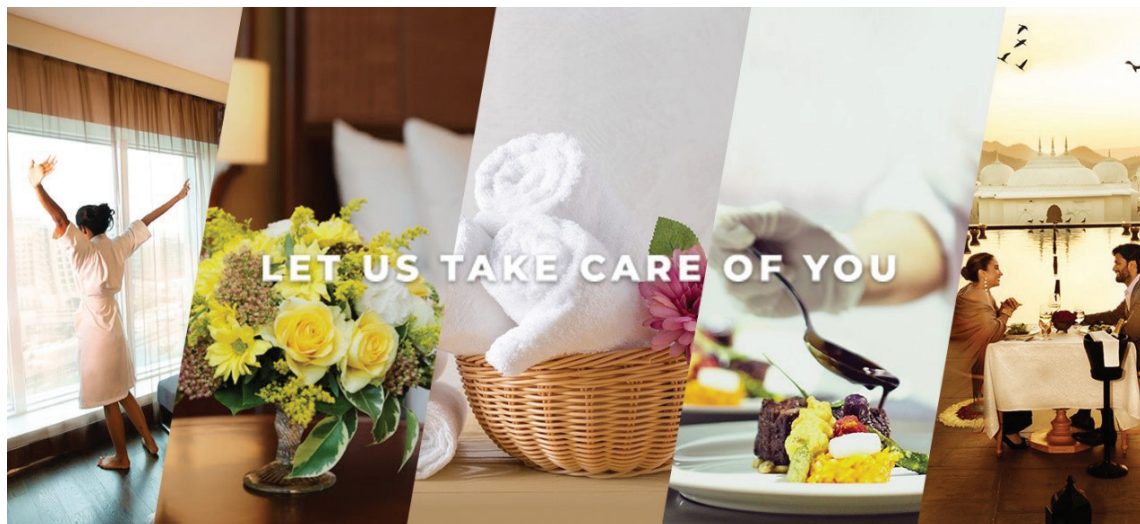
We announced our first offer to provide our friends and family discount offer for healthcare professionals across our hotels in India and Sri Lanka. It is a 30 per cent discount on the usual rate of the hotel room. We are additionally offering great deals and discounts for our guests and loyalty members. Accor has also introduced 'Holiday Plus Vouchers', these are prepaid vouchers to welcome back our paid loyalty members. We have also launched our 'Let Us Take Care of You' campaign, wherein we are promoting staycations, weekend travels and relaxed holiday time.

We have forayed into newer avenues like 'Work from Hotel'. The co-working space has huge potential in our country as many organisations find them very cost-effective and it is also an alternative revenue stream for hotels. 'Work from Hotel' gives you a complete change from the monotonous working from home schedule with additional benefits of being in a hotel.

At Accor, we have a detailed strategy suited for each of the phases as we slowly return or say adapt to new normal. Additionally, we are basing our approach on consumer insights.

As the world temporarily pressed the pause button during the lockdown, we aimed at being there for our guests and effectively communicating with them. As shared earlier, our global digital campaign #ALLatHome played a crucial role in this and helped us in staying connected with our guests remotely. Being a global brand, Accor is present on all leading social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc, and we utilised

all these channels by fuelling them with entertaining content. Our focus has always been to constantly engage with our core audience by providing inspirational, curated and relatable content. We also see this is an important listening tool to understand the market sentiments. The hotels also utilise the platforms for driving business in their feeder markets as well as the hyperlocal markets.



‘Boosting positive sentiments for future travel’



Seema Roy

Area MD for South Asia, Middle East & Africa,
Preferred Hotels & Resorts

In recent months industries across the world, especially hospitality and travel, have witnessed setbacks at various levels due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This time has also created a significant

window of opportunity to evolve, think ahead and recognise that we can be adaptable as well as resilient. I am hopeful that the industry will flourish again, but the interim period is critical from rebuilding and recovery perspectives. Clear and consistent messaging is paramount, and it is also important for hotels to continue to inspire confidence in travellers and work with other key stakeholders, like airlines and government authorities, to effectively represent and promote their destinations.

At Preferred Hotels & Resorts, we have been committed to supporting the world's finest independent hotels, resorts, residences and unique hotel groups for more than 52 years. As true champions of the independent hotel space, we believe in travel, and inspire a collective passion for experiential travel and extraordinary service with our portfolio of member hotels. We have continued to actively engage with our hotels, partners, and consumers with varied campaigns as well as guided efforts to boost positive sentiments for future travel.

In March, we were one of the first travel brands to announce that benefits linked to our loyalty program I Prefer Hotel Rewards would be protected throughout this pandemic. Since then, we have made a series of valuable updates to the program, extending greater flexibility and value-based offers to more than 3.5 million loyal members globally. Initiatives include the new Flexible Member Rate, which offers access to savings of 10 percent or higher on top of the best available rate for stays booked at more than 300 participating hotels. This new rate is also fully cancellable up until the day of arrival, providing travellers with peace of mind if their plans get disrupted. We also announced an extension of points expiration date for all I Prefer members globally through December 31, 2020, protecting members' hard-earned loyalty status and points.

Preferred Hotels & Resorts launched the second annual International Pineapple Week 2020 in June. This social-media-driven campaign celebrated independent hotels around the world, connecting them to a global community of interrupted travellers seeking inspiration for future adventures through the symbolism of the Preferred brand pineapple logo – the universal icon of hospitality. This year's edition featured the brand's first-ever I Prefer gift card offering, a digital postcard contest, and pineapple-themed activities.

We also launched Loving Local – The Open Road Series in June, a global travel campaign that facilitates highly localized, luxury hotel experiences in 21 regional markets, including India, as consumers prepare to hit the open road for rediscovery of destinations close to home. This offer reassures travellers to enjoy memorable hospitality along with value-rich amenities at more than 200 participating hotels worldwide. It is valid for two nights or more and features daily breakfast for two, a hotel stay



The Leela Palace Bengaluru

credit, special benefits like car rentals and guided tours from partner brands, and fast track to Elite status for I Prefer Hotel Rewards. We received a resoundingly positive response for the campaign and in response, extended the booking period to September 2, 2020, for stays through December 31, 2020.

Our role has also been to provide our loyal guests with the best advice for safer hotel stays, and to continue to connect with them via our digital channels. We are including each member hotel's approach to safety across our channels, including our brand website. We want our guests to feel safe when choosing their next independent hotel experience. Further, a global partnership with Bureau Veritas was recently



announced to allow our member hotels to have their health and sanitation programs certified by a respected global authority. Since the onset of COVID-19, we have ramped up our client and consumer outreach via social media, building content and sharing targeted offers with #ThePreferredLife community.

‘A leader in the use of digital platforms’



Wilhelm K. Weber

Vice President Global Revenue and Digital Strategy,
Kempinski Hotels



Kempinski we put four strategic topics to the heart of our marketing actions:

Focus on health and safety, where we communicate all actions taken with the Kempinski White Glove Services program to ensure our guests are having a healthy and safe stay with us.

Empathy for those who were affected by the regulations and could not travel as planned. We introduced highly flexible cancellation procedures and added additional resources to assist our guests to amend their itineraries if needed.

Support for the local communities and health care workers. With initiatives such as supplying lunch boxes to local

No doubt, COVID-19 has led to unprecedented measures that are highly affecting our industry. With government restrictions and reduced airline capacity, it is obvious that we could not continue marketing as usual. At

communities or ‘a heart for heroes’ we show our support and connection to the community.

Focus on the domestic market: With the current travel restrictions in place, we focus on the domestic and nearby markets. A range of great new offers from ‘Make a travel promise’ to staycation packages, ‘Escape in style’ and recently ‘Your 5-star road trip’ were created and found overwhelming acceptance.

Kempinski has always been a leader in the use of digital platforms, which has helped us to adapt fast. New formats like ‘virtual site inspections’ through which you are taken on a tour of the house while sitting at your desk at home were made available within a very short time. Our sales teams around the world were in constant exchange and participated in numerous online meetings. We increased and strengthened our social media activities and tried out many new initiatives. The ‘virtual escape’ for example follows our concierge in Portoroz in real-time on his bike tours, the online yoga sessions provided by The Apurva Kempinski Bali or the virtual tour to visit the local craftsmen in Mongolia provided by the team of the Kempinski Khan Palace Ulaanbaatar are among our best practices, which we shared on a weekly basis with our global internal audience. With the Kempinski typical culture to support local initiatives, we went above and beyond to motivate employees and received fantastic feedback from stakeholders and guests alike.

‘All our attention is directed towards the digital front and improvisation in terms of complying with the new normal’



Bjorn Fernandes

Director of Sales & Marketing,
Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet,
Mumbai - Marriott Executive Apartments

At Renaissance Mumbai, Hospitality has always been about the connection and bond one share with a guest and associate alike, and with a pandemic, each day is learning in itself. The more the challenges,

the better the understanding of how we need to deal with them, we are taking each day at a time and for those that we have found a solution for, we are dwelling and practicing to just make ourselves better in that paradigm.

All our attention is directed towards the digital front and improvisation in terms of complying with the new normal. It is a given fact that the pandemic has impacted our revenues drastically and conventions being the major revenue generating driver, have faced losses; however, we have identified alternate measures to recover and build on this gap created. There are numerous takes on how we can best move forward and adapt to the changing circumstances. We focused on our prime and strongest factor - the conventions with its spaces can comply with the government norms of social distancing.

In the forthcoming future, domestic tourism will be the peak of the

hospitality industry; as travellers would prefer to stay within the state and country. We have worked on garnering deals and packages on staycations to let families choose when they would want to come and stay with us, while we have given them the flexibility of booking at discounted rates with our Save Now, Stay Later offer. While resorting to luxury even, safety plays a key role and guests will tend to prefer in-room dining to sitting in a restaurant with strangers from different domains, there is a need to ensure a seamless contact-less experience. To not only regain the confidence, but also assure them at the same time that we care and we will do everything in our spectrum to ensure the delivery of the same.

Being a cluster property, at Renaissance Mumbai as well as Marriott Executive Apartments, we have aimed at adapting new Standard Operating Procedures and protocols. We have resorted to using our home delivery through Marriott's IP 'Marriott On Wheels' and have recently started safe and contact-less home delivery to ensure that our guests are seamlessly connected with us. We have also identified virtual tours and site inspections for guests as an option to view our majestic complex property. The R.E.N Meetings App, which is a digital Meeting Services App has been created to ensure the meeting experience is a success. The app connects you simply and discreetly to our team of R.E.N. Meetings Experts at the drop of a hat before, during, and after your event; anytime, from anywhere.

Hygiene and sanitation were ideally sought after in the hospitality industry from the very beginning, but our Commitment to Clean is a promise to ensure the life of each guest and associate coming in is looked after and taken extreme care of.

‘Guests are regularly inquiring about our hotel on various digital mediums’



Rishi Kumar

Director of Operations
Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway

The spread of COVID-19 has led to an unparalleled need to adapt to the 'New Normal'. All the printed collaterals were shifted online or were converted into QR code linked creative; be it in room collaterals or the menus displayed at the restaurants. We launched and effectively marketed the all-inclusive 'New Normal wedding packages', catering to 50

guests which was a huge hit among the city audience. The rooms and suites at the hotel have been converted into a safe haven for 'Gourmet In-Suite' experiences. Guests can celebrate exquisite flavours in the comfort of their very own room and indulge in an exclusive 3-hour intimate experience in our luxurious suites.

Not just that, the various all-inclusive room offers at the hotel including the 'Self Isolation package', where one can stay socially responsible and self-isolate themselves in the comforts of the specially curated rooms, making the most of a host of luxe amenities extended. Guests can book their special stay for 7 nights or more and keep themselves away in the luxurious, clinically sanitised rooms along with exclusive offerings like an unconventional in-room restaurant dining experience and much more.

All these activities, executed over a period of time helped to elevate the brand's visibility and have been taken very positively by our customers.

On social media, we hosted weekly fitness sessions with trained experts from the hotel featuring LIVE on the Instagram page during lockdown, helping our customers work out from home with some insightful fitness and health tips. We also frequently posted new and unique recipes during the lockdown to showcase new food trends and hacks. The hotel collaborated digitally with other Marriott hotels in the country and launched a series in association with Malay origin, International Master Chef Kuan Lai, hosting weekly sessions on 'The Far East Cuisine' LIVE from Cape Town, South Africa.

Marriott's 'Commitment To Clean' initiative videos showcased how equipped we are to welcome you to the premises, the social distancing in restaurants, removal of in-room collaterals by going completely digital, contactless check-in and more was posted on Facebook, Instagram, Google my business. We also posted it on various online travel portals because our guests regularly are checking about our hotel on various digital mediums.



Master Chef Kuan Lai, hosting weekly sessions on 'The Far East Cuisine' LIVE from Cape Town, South Africa.

‘We used the lockdown months to keep Brand Fern alive in the minds of our travel trade partners’



Noshir A Marfatia
Senior VP - Sales & Marketing,
The Fern Hotels & Resorts

During the national lockdown and thereafter under Unlock 1.0, 2.0 and now 3.0, our traditional sales connect with our corporate clients and travel trade partners are all no longer available. Our sales associates remained working from home right through this period. We used the lockdown months to keep Brand Fern alive in the minds of our travel trade partners by holding zoom webinars with our Consolidator agents for their B2B partners and also with trade associations like IATO, ADTOI, etc, the theme being 'Dekho Apna Desh with The Fern Hotels & Resorts'. This actually gave us great visibility because agents who traditionally used us in a few select locations suddenly became aware of our reach of 75+

hotels in over 60 locations in India.

For our corporate clients, we kept in regular touch through weekly emailers, email updates on our hotels, regular tele-calling, WhatsApp posts, etc.

As our hotels started reopening under Unlock 1.0, we have started an aggressive social media campaign of posts and videos, which continue on WhatsApp and through weekly e-mailers to our database. As corporate business is still to kick off, we have launched our Fern Self-Drive Holidays - 2-night packages at 24 of our Fern and Beacon hotels in select leisure destinations, covering beach holidays, hill resorts, temple towns, jungle safaris and forest resorts. And with more of our business city hotels reopened, we are now launching our Weekend Staycation Packages at these hotels as well.

These are all daily promoted both on social media and through our pan-India sales teams, those working from our offices and hotels and those working from home. All these have been well received by our clients and trade partners, with regular enquires daily and some package bookings starting to come in. Staying connected like this all through the summer has helped keep us in touch with our clients, and this will translate into a faster pick up once their travel restarts.

‘In this era of growing scepticism well-curated and emphatic digital campaigns are the need of the hour’



Nishant Kashikar

Country Manager (India & Gulf), Tourism Australia

Through these unprecedented times, we have adopted several practices to engage and interact with our end consumers and travel partners.

To support our commercial, distribution and

airline partners - in Australia and in market – we are ensuring they are up to date with requisite information and are a key part of our recovery plans. We also continue to engage with and educate front-line sales staff in our key international markets including India via the Aussie Specialist Program. Throughout the crisis, which has brought so much change and uncertainty, our industry and operators have remained top of mind for us. In fact, we have stepped up our communications, including launching weekly webinars, to keep the industry informed on public health measures, travel restrictions as well as the various Government support packages being made available, which have been deeply appreciated.

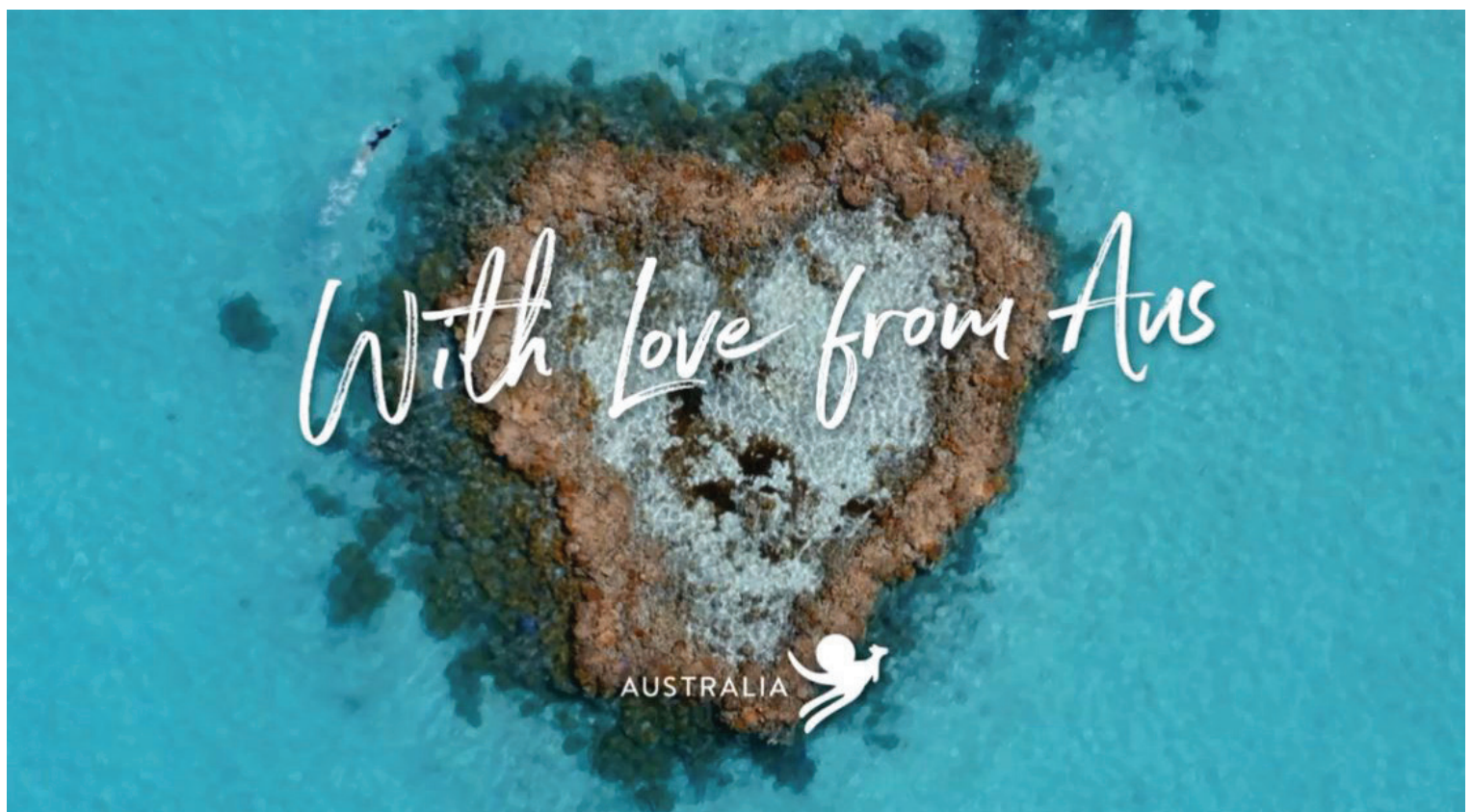
We also continue to engage with our customers by helping them daydream of their next holiday while they're at home. In line with this, we released our new 'With Love from Aus' video

across our social media channels, which we hope will inspire people to think about visiting Australia in the future. In addition to this, we have curated virtual tours and entertaining online events that help us remain top-of-mind among target audiences.

The underlying goal for us as marketers in this industry has always been to establish high brand resonance and positive recall with our audience that will eventually translate into visitation to the destination. While customers are confined to their homes now it is essential to build high recall for your product, service or destination.

Specifically, for tourism, we must look into propelling this sense of resonance by promoting experiences and activities that align with the prevalent market sentiment and one that will take precedence in the future. For instance, we are increasingly seeing a rise in the hyper-vigilant and eco-conscious traveller who would prefer to partake in activities that can accommodate for seclusion and isolation. Therefore, at Tourism Australia our 360-degree virtual tours and live events have been curated bearing these trends in mind.

Through this phase of restricted travel, we have engaged our customers on a continuous basis through digitised content formats that remind them that all of Australia awaits them on the other side of this pandemic. To engage customers further, amidst the lack of travel, we've also collaborated with new age and regional platforms to create interesting and interactive content for our audiences. Thus, in this era of growing scepticism and customers becoming increasingly varied, well-curated and emphatic digital campaigns are the need of the hour.



‘Singapore Tourism continuously engaging consumers by leveraging technology and digital medium’



GB Srithar

Regional Director – India, Middle East & South Asia,
Singapore Tourism Board

Although travel restrictions are still in place, it is an important time for travel authorities to drive higher consumer engagement than ever before. Over the last few years, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has promoted our

from stand-up comedians to music and culinary artistes, through lively interactive sessions with like-minded talent from Singapore.

One of Singapore's key tourism players, Sentosa Development Corporation (SDC), also launched an initiative which recreates the popular Sentosa island within the Nintendo Switch game 'Animal Crossing: New Horizons'. In May 2020, SDC invited people to visit #VirtualSentosa and explore a recreation of Sentosa – from beach bars to nature trails and even a spot for some yoga by the beach. SDC even hosted a virtual wedding celebration in the game for a Singaporean couple who had to postpone their physical wedding ceremony.

This year, the 'Singapore Food Festival (SFF)' will also engage audiences virtually. Themed 'Rediscover the Foodie in You', SFF 2020 - an event dedicated to Singapore cuisine and F&B talents - will see more than 25 F&B partners serving up gastronomic experiences for festival goers to enjoy at home.

We also ramped up our trade engagement efforts through a series of update sessions on Destination Singapore with our partners to upskill their leisure and MICE product knowledge. STB India has also undertaken the #UnitedWeStand trade initiative and shared a video message to show solidarity and unity with the travel fraternity in these trying times. We also organised a webinar titled 'Singapore Tourism Connects – Panel Discussion and Product Update' in May 2020 to share updates on the various initiatives and efforts in Singapore.

destination brand 'Passion Made Possible' and increasingly used digital marketing to present Singapore's diverse offerings to audiences across India.

In April 2020, we launched an online edutainment series 'Try this at home, Tips from Singapore' which features Singaporean personalities such as sneaker artist Mark Ong; cook, food writer and television host Sarah Huang Benjamin; artist Tan Zi Xi; and Peranakan kebaya makers, brothers Raymond and Edmond Wong; mixologist Vijay Mudaliar and Teochew Opera artist Tan Wei Tian. The six-part series released on STB's YouTube, Facebook and Instagram have these personalities completing various tasks assigned to them in a fun and insightful way. Through these videos, we hope to inspire viewers to explore and develop their passions.

Another interesting activation that we did was with Asia's iconic nightclub Zouk Singapore to organise Zouk Phuturescapes – a series of virtual parties for audiences across many countries including India. We took virtual parties to the next level by reinventing the existing entertainment and nightlife concept, engaging audiences at home through a curated line-up of local and international DJs and musicians, as well as innovative technology elements such as augmented reality filters and 3D virtual backgrounds.

Continuing our efforts on innovative and effective ways to reach out to the Indian consumers, we partnered with Zomato for 'Zomaland@home' - a digital weekend festival which featured renowned artists from both India and Singapore showcasing their talents and passions across food, music, stand-up comedy and more. As a part of its promotions, we also collaborated with a few social media personalities in India,

‘TAT Mumbai building and publishing content around ‘armchair tourism’ with PR and media partners’



Cholada Siddhivarn

Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand, (TAT) Mumbai

At TAT, we believe that there is light at the end of every tunnel. Thus, even throughout these challenging past months, our teams have put our best foot forward to continue engaging with our partners and consumers.

We have seen the exponential growth of digital marketing prospects in India a couple of years ago and witnessed its boom during the lockdown period. TAT Mumbai team had reached out to several partners in trade and media wherein they conducted several webinars, destination presentations and situation update sessions through various platforms. Additionally, the team reached out to different travel communities, bloggers, media outlets to share situation updates and also throwback posts of travel in Thailand.

Moreover, our social media team has been working consistently during the lockdown on every platform we have on a daily basis, Facebook: Tourism Authority of Thailand India, Instagram: tat_india, Twitter: tat_india and the blog: tourismthailand.in, to share contents including VDOs and E-book which match consumers' interest and to interact with our followers through contest driven content. Our PR team works with our media partners to publish content around 'armchair tourism' by sharing the VR tour of the destinations in Thailand.



In order to strengthen our reach and engagement, we segregate our activities in groups' vis-à-vis consumers and trade partners.

For the consumers, as I mentioned, we have our social media platforms through which we communicate with our followers through posts, stories and videos. We conduct online activities as well as contests whenever it's suitable. Recently we carried out the #khaothai campaign with Seefah Restaurant led by India based Thai chef, Chef Seefah wherein the winners were gratified with Thai meals. The other was a #Thaiventure contest. We let the consumer show us what activities are on their bucket lists for their future visits to Thailand. 4 winners have won a chance to travel to Thailand following the resumption of international travel.

For our trade partners, we have just conducted the first-ever Indian Luxury Virtual Connect (ILVC2020) on 15-16 July, 2020 across key metro cities in India through a virtual platform. This event provided the opportunity for Indian and Thai luxury partners to connect, and understand the scenario of both India and Thailand. Through this virtual interface, we shared the experience of a roadshow while maintaining social distancing in our respected homes. We are certain that this initiative will help us drive traffic to Thailand shortly after travel permissions are granted. In addition, we frequently communicate to our trade partners via email, webinar, WhatsApp to update them on the situation in Thailand at regular intervals.

‘Online marketing has become essential, since people are at home and spend most of their time on the internet’



Sunil Menon

Country Manager-India, Tourism Fiji

COVID – 19 has totally changed travel and there is no doubt that this is a challenging time for everyone. Online marketing has become essential, since people are at home and spend most of their time on the internet. Though digital and social media marketing was always part of our core strategy, during these times it has proved more important than ever. We at Tourism Fiji have laid extra emphasis on these platforms to reach

out to our customers and to keep them engaged with the destination during this lockdown period. Even for our travel trade fraternity this year we have invested in virtual and online trainings and look forward to partnering in multiple virtual travel shows to keep them engaged, updated and vested in the destination.

Various brands have only just begun to unlock the full power of digital and

social media platforms. Channels like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter aren't just for promotion; they are also an excellent way to connect with your customers. We continue to engage with consumers through our social media activities. Some of our activities include having our customers virtually travel to Fiji via our rich media assets of videos and imagery on our social and digital channels, communicating our initial message of 'Sota Tale – Stay safe and we will see you soon' which gradually advanced to our message of 'Our Bula Spirit Awaits you' as we still wait in anticipation of the reopening of our borders. Also initiated was our 'Happy Hour TV' it's a YouTube series that shines the spotlight on some positive news stories in Fiji. It is designed to share stories of optimism and resilience from across Fiji and put a smile on the viewer's faces through this time. We are also looking at keeping our customer and travel trade abreast with the latest happenings with our newsletters and our COVID-19 webpage, having up-to-date information on the ongoing developments.



‘It is extremely crucial for to put the confidence within the travellers’



Shikha Mishra
Account Director, MMPRC India Office

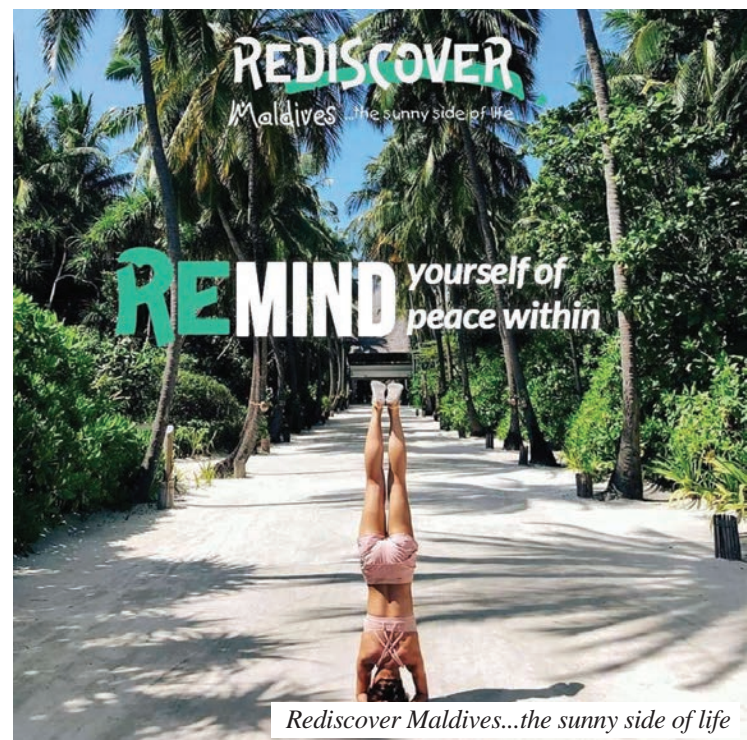
In the time of this unexpected crisis of the COVID-19 Pandemic, MMPRC has revamped and reimagined its marketing strategy. With travel at a standstill initially and now picking up slowly, we have

In the recent survey conducted by Conde Nast Traveller India, Maldives was rated as the most preferred destination to travel as soon as all the restrictions open up. Several other media houses have rated the Maldives as the top international tourist destination that will be most frequented by Indians once air-restrictions are opened up thanks to its naturally 'self-isolated' islands and resorts. The government is also working to establish an air-bubble between India and Maldives.

The traction we got has now resulted in all consolidators and sellers of Maldives reporting that consumers have begun booking holidays to the Maldives.

evaluated and moved towards innovative ways to keep our consumer engaged. We began all communication by putting out the message of 'Visit Maldives...Later' via all our social media platforms to ensure that travellers took care of their own health and safety by staying home and safe.

We then reached out to travel agents virtually with extensive webinars and online trainings to update and enhance their knowledge about Maldives. Additionally, as digital initiatives we also organised a Facebook Live event and an online press conference that was very well attended by the media, social media influencers and travel agents. India's biggest media journalists and social media influencers spoke of their experience during the FB Live of having visited the Maldives or what they are looking forward to experiencing once travel begins. We also organised a webinar with the Maldives Embassy in India to ensure the right messages are conveyed to the media.



‘Taiwan has a greater focus on action rather than words’



Dr. Trust HJ Lin

Director-India, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore & Middle East,
Taiwan Tourism Bureau

It's impossible to discount the long-term impact of the absence of physical, and real offline marketing. The absence of trade events, business conferences, meeting potential travellers are not the only challenge. In the 'post-COVID'

world, in addition to the increasing barriers on face-to-face business, prospective clients/customers are going to be hesitant in walking through a door and shaking your hand or sharing a cup of tea – and in the absence of a direct medicine or vaccine, we cannot estimate how long this will last.

However, the other side to it is that digital consumption has seen an unprecedented increase, and we have chosen to focus specifically on social channels and the Internet to work on reputation building, and ensuring any information coming from Taiwan is available for interested readers/consumers. SEO and PPC, digital marketing, social media, content, and email marketing have acquired a strong focus. That said, we have consciously chosen to stay away from the webinar means of communication, unless we are certain that there is a timeline in sight for a potential opening up of tourism-based relationship between Taiwan and the country hosting the webinar.

Taiwan has a greater focus on action rather than words. Businesses and Schools in Taiwan remained open through the entire first-wave of the virus period, and infection numbers have not crossed 500 in spite of Taiwan being the earliest to report a case. We recently resumed domestic cruises, as well as a series of open-air festivals and celebrations. And continue to ensure this information is available to all our partners, operators and potential travellers.

This has also led to an adjustment in our outlooks - from a quarterly focus, the planning is more mid to long-term for now with both investments/budgetary outlines, response analysis and actionable plans.

As a Tourism Board, we are heavily impacted by the closing of international borders between countries, and have had to refocus strategic interactions and visibility. Typically, a promotion - whether commercial or driven editorially via media - always has a follow-up component in the form of a possibility of a visit or actual booking. The uncertainty due to COVID implies that any conversation we have with potential travellers, does not have the follow-up mechanism to convert it to an actual booking.

We have shifted our communication in two ways:

Focussing on reputation management: At this point, it is important to instil a sense of security and confidence in potential travellers - both tourists and business/MICE segment and we have ensured that regular information flows, which clearly elaborate upon policies, infection numbers, measures and future outlines, are maintained with necessary stakeholders

Accepting the challenging situation and thereafter coining, Holiday for Healing: It is important to acknowledge the virus has affected the way we travel, especially as long as its global impact without direct medicine and vaccination remains. Countries that have created travel bubbles or blocs have seen a surge or a second wave. Therefore, it's important that itineraries and travel reflect the actual situation, and consider that those travelling must be put on a path of 'healing' which allows them and countries to plan holidays that are mentally and physically 'healing' and don't cause unplanned waves.

WIN 10 AMAZON VOUCHERS WORTH INR 1,500 EACH!

Contest ends on 20 June 2020.
Winners will be announced on 22 June 2020.

#HolidayForHealing
#Taiwan

Holiday for Healing Contest on Facebook

‘The ongoing pandemic has drastically changed the way businesses operate’



Arvind Bundhun

Director, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA)

Almost all businesses faced challenges during COVID-19 but the travel and tourism industry was the worst hit. To connect with our customers we used social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, online

restricted movement, there has been a sudden shift to digital platforms. During the lockdown, to maintain a presence, we launched our #MauritiusUnwavering campaign with a destination video to showcase the island's natural beauty and remind consumers of its stunning landscapes as well as the healing power of nature. We have ensured that we were always present in the mind of consumers and maintained a digital presence through sharing our partners' stories in the press and on social media and communicating the various stages of our recovery plan and reopening

To strengthen our relationship with our target audience we are also engaging with the tour operators, MICE operators, wedding planners and golf operators through online webinars, online product presentations and regular updates through social media and newsletters. These include video content as well. We also hosted live sessions on social media with top magazines such as The Man, Stardust, and famous singers like Kailash Kher and Abhijeet Bhattacharya. Sessions were conducted with influencers, media persons and top bloggers who have been hosted in Mauritius by MTPA over the last few years.

media, content creation, and email marketing for promoting Mauritius. To elevate brand visibility our strategy was to be digitally present, reach and interact with our target audience as much as possible using various digital platforms for conducting destination trainings and webinars.

The ongoing pandemic has drastically changed the way businesses operate. Due to social distancing, lockdown and

‘Our primary aim is to keep the destination alive and top of the consumers mind’



Ryna Sequeira

Country Manager-India, Tourism & Events Queensland

While consumers are adapting to the new normal in this pandemic, so are businesses. Currently, in the lockdown stage, we have had to adapt to suit the consumer sentiment by targeting the consumer who is

that launched on August 1, 2020, that are ready for international visitors once borders open. Engaging with consumers through content focussed on themes like nature and wildlife, virtual self-drive journeys, virtual Gold Coast Marathon, food and wine and through mediums like live sessions with real-time interaction with the products has been successful in keeping the aspiration high for Queensland, Australia. The key opinion leaders we have worked with pre COVID -19 have been sharing content from their past visits to Queensland as throwbacks that have also had high engagement.

Our key distribution partners have played a crucial role in enabling us to reach out to our TG through their social media platforms. Thomas Cook, SOTC, Pick Your Trail, A Travel Quest, Pathfinders Holidays and Custom Holidays have innovatively connected with their customers and played an active role in getting our message out.

While consumer-targeted marketing was undertaken, it was important to utilise this opportunity to engage with the travel trade virtually with the demand for knowledge sharing while working from home, Tourism and Events Queensland has trained 3058 travel agents through this lockdown through Queensland focussed and Tourism Australia initiated webinars. The travel trade has been extremely supportive and engaging through our trainings.

still dreaming about their next holiday and serving them inspiration through channels they are actively engaging with. Our primary aim is to keep the destination alive and top of the consumers mind while borders remain closed. Targeted content promotion on social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram have seen high engagement for Queensland. Queensland has opened for domestic business at this stage and we have had new innovations in products with COVID-19 safety protocols, new experiences and developments such as the Museum of Underwater Art in Townsville

‘Our approach is simple - we are looking at maintaining a consumer-centric approach’



Neliswa Nkani

Hub Head – MEISEA, South African Tourism

Brand-building is a long term prospect and brands have to look beyond immediate business implications while communicating and marketing. We have an obligation to place our consumers and their well-

Even before the pandemic, we realised the importance of localised, targeted and relevant content, and thus, increased our digital presence in India.

Indian travellers today, mostly millennials, rely heavily on social interaction for recommendations when considering a new destination and activities for their voyage. Hence, to tap into the pulse of this growing traveller segment, we forayed into the world of social media in 2017 with a dedicated Facebook page, especially customised for the India market. We also launched our Instagram India handle early in 2018. South African Tourism is one of the very few international tourism boards in India to have a standalone digital presence in the market.

Our approach is simple - we are looking at maintaining a consumer-centric approach, while also building trust and aspiration, and instilling confidence in consumers intending to travel. Consumers will seek assurance and human guidance, as they consider and plan to travel. They should be made well aware of all processes and requirements by the destination or transfer facilities, in order to avoid a mismatch in expectations and allow for smooth journeys. We plan on educating consumers through owned and earned, digital, print and electronic platforms, in engaging easy-to-consume formats.

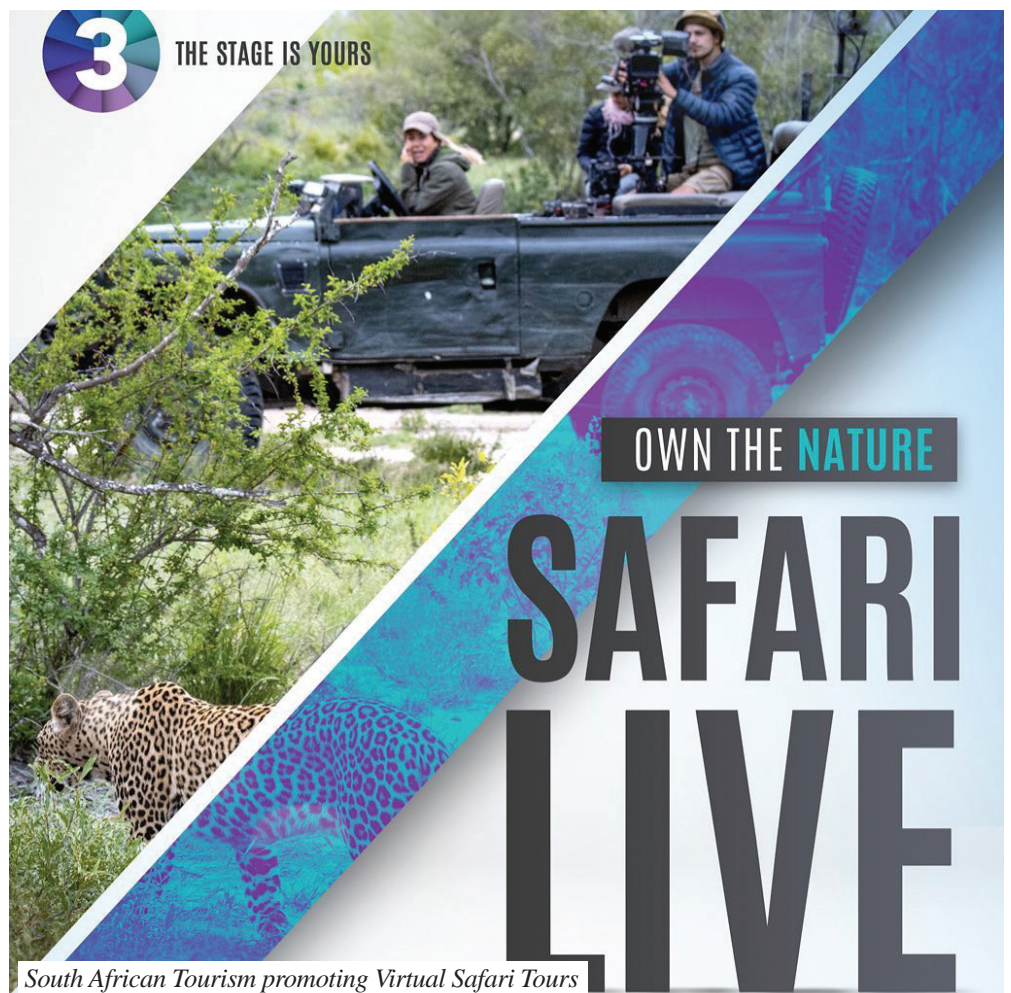
being first.

South African Tourism is an organisation that primarily promotes travel to South Africa. However, business takes a backseat in times of crisis – we have, instead, used this period to build aspiration and awareness. We have also used responsible tactics by integrating ‘do not cancel, postpone’ or ‘plan now, to travel later’ into our content.

We have seen exponential growth in the number of Indians availing smartphones, cheap data packages, and shifting to digital mediums to consume content. During the lockdown period, we also noticed an increase in screen time by our consumers, and hence promoted virtual tourism in a big way in order to continue to remain top-of-mind. We believe that virtual reality can be used as an effective destination brochure. It allows consumers a look and feel of the product and aids in building aspiration.

For example, Kruger National Park, Ulusaba Private Game Reserve and several other national parks are offering virtual LIVE safaris to viewers from across the world. These virtual shows enable you to interact with an expert game ranger in real-time! Safari vehicles, guides on foot, drones, balloons, rovers and remote cams all roam the terrains of South Africa, to bring the best possible safari viewing experience to homes.

We have also used digital mediums to educate our trade partners, who ultimately sell the destination. SA Specialist, our fun and interactive online learning programme, has witnessed an increase in the number of Indian travel trade undertaking the training, as trade agents are using the lockdown period to upskill and reskill themselves.



‘Tourism Malaysia ongoing joint promotions with travel partners work very effectively’



Mohd Hafiz Hashim
Director, Tourism Malaysia Mumbai

In today's ever-evolving travel landscape, the road to recovery will undoubtedly be a long one. Irrespective of the international border opening dateline, Tourism Malaysia stayed connected with our travel trade partners via

video conference sessions, and product briefing sessions for travel partners, etc.

Tourism Malaysia's ongoing joint promotions with travel partners work very effectively and give us maximum mileage in promoting the destination. Videos promos like #staysafestayclean, #wearewaiting have also helped us to sustain our visibility in the Indian market via Facebook and Instagram platforms.

Joint promotions with travel trade partners have been very fruitful and are gaining momentum to encourage Indians to travel to Malaysia when our borders reopen. Online product briefing sessions too helped us in briefing our travel agents regarding our new products and destinations. All these verticals helped Tourism Malaysia and our stakeholders to strengthen their bond with the Indian traveller.

various online platforms like webinars for travel agents, internal

‘The travel trade in India is very important and priority for us when it comes to communication’



Vachirachai Sirisumpan
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)
New Delhi Office

Before the pandemic also, the world witnessed various other calamities, but the impact of COVID-19 is one of the worst affected. The global tourism industry including Thailand had to bear a severe

For India market, our TAT India Offices, Mumbai and New Delhi, are focusing on maintaining and promoting Thailand as an all-time favourite destination for all Indian travellers. Since the start of lockdown in India from late March 2020 and travel restrictions applied in many countries, we continue to communicate with our travel trade partners as well as with the consumers directly in India to enhance Thailand as a 'Top of Mind' destination. This is done by our online channel, we are also working with all potential partners to reach out to all our target groups here in India such as Family, Millennial group and of course the wedding and honeymooners.

The travel trade in India is very important and priority for us when it comes to communication. All messages we send out are to ensure that we, TAT, are here and stand with our partners during this challenging time as we have come a long way with great success in promoting tourism to Thailand from India, which would not have been possible without our partners support as 'Friends of Thailand'.

All our communication related to both travel agents and consumers is to ensure that they feel confident about safety and hygiene when they travel to Thailand and have a good time in the Kingdom. More important is the way we communicate, which needs to be in consideration of the sentiments of the market.

brunt because of the lockdown situations around the world. Every country and businesses in travel and tourism are inevitable to change and adapt to changes for survival. Tourism Authority of Thailand's (TAT) main goal is to continue to focus on enhancing Thailand as a 'Preferred Destination' for domestic tourists and international tourists as well as our strategic objectives are to expand into quality markets, and to create value for experience for 'Amazing Thailand' brand awareness. However, to execute these strategies we have to shift to online or digital promotion and marketing activities.

‘CzechTourism trying to reach out to the Indian trade and media in a more focused manner’



Arzan Khambatta

Head-Czech Tourist Authority, CzechTourism India

The current situation of COVID-19 has significantly affected tourism worldwide which has once again made us think and act differently. During this trying period, we have adapted our strategies

and focused on staying connected with the travel trade and media to keep them abreast about the developments in the Czech Republic through various digital platforms.

While the country waits for India to recover, CzechTourism India is making the best out of the current situation by educating and informing the travel trade about the various facets of the destination, which are still new to India market. This is being done via Czech E-Classrooms, which include destination presentation, videos, questions and answers round, and ends with a short quiz. This online training platform also informs on the places with natural surroundings and are less crowded, as this is expected to be one of the priorities in the post-COVID-era. We have also rolled out an E-Learning module for travel trade partners in India. Through completing and passing this e-module successfully, agents in India can be certified as the Czech Republic Specialist. Such programmes are of

long-term benefit for our destination and the OTAs/TAs/TOs, aiding them with knowledge, which shall be useful for the time after we together overcome this disruption.

Apart from the above training programs, we have been in touch with Indian Travel Trade via WhatsApp Promotions, where we keep them posted on the destination and its products' information and updates. Due to the low travel business, the trade and media are quite receptive to new destination information, for which we share newsletters and press releases every month, apprising on various updates and developments.

To reach out to the Indian trade and media in a more focused manner, India specific Instagram handle, [visitczechrepublic_in](https://www.instagram.com/visitczechrepublic_in) (www.instagram.com/visitczechrepublic_in), has also been launched.

CzechTourism has pursued several initiatives to stay connected with Indian B2C market. Several options of experiencing the fairy-tale atmosphere, preserved architectural styles, and natural resources in the Czech Republic from the comfort of your home are available. The country can be travelled to virtually through www.czechtourism.com/p/us-virtual-travel-prague-and-czech-regions/, or its gastronomical delights can be experienced via www.czechspecials.cz by trying a hand at cooking the famous Czech cuisines. Apart from this, India specific Instagram handle, [visitczechrepublic_in](https://www.instagram.com/visitczechrepublic_in) (www.instagram.com/visitczechrepublic_in), has been launched to reach out to the Indian community of travellers in a more focused manner.

‘Israel adapting advertising strategy to include the new travel requirements highlighted by the WHO’



Sammy Yahia

IGTO Director of Tourism, India and Philippines

Israel Government Tourist Office (IGTO) India is working on adapting our advertising strategy to include the new travel requirements highlighted by the WHO, in keeping with Israel's requirements as well. While some of our activities have been restricted, the IGTO continues to maintain contact with our partners in the industry. The IGTO continues to host training seminars with travel partners,

webinars and panel discussions to make all stakeholders aware of the current development in Israel as well as sharing vital information regarding tourism to/ in Israel

When the tourism landscape in both countries start returning to normal, we plan to execute targeted 360-degree advertising campaign in tier I and tier II cities. Through this campaign, we plan to showcase the destination of Israel

as well as the new tourism initiatives introduced by the Israel Ministry of Tourism.

Israel Government Tourist Offices (IGTO) around the world are focusing on maintaining relationships with our partners to continue to build the connection Israel, as it is in India. IGTO India is in touch with trade and media partners to keep them apprised on developments in Israel, as well as sharing diverse content about the destination.

The India office has utilised digital mediums to stay connected with our partners by hosting interactive activities, webinars, participating in panel discussions, finalizing marketing agreements and working on potential campaign materials. In addition to these initiatives, the Israel

Government Tourist Office in India has kept constant contact with our partners in the travel trade, hospitality and airline industries keeping them apprised on the progress of the current situation, in both India and Israel.

Israel offers a plethora of things to do and see to cater to the discerning traveller.

Tourism to Israel has steadily grown with 2019 seeing a record of 4.5 million international tourists. From the historical city of Jerusalem to the beach city of Tel Aviv; the lowest point on earth - Dead Sea, to the marvellous underwater marine life of Red Sea in Eilat and the World UNESCO Heritage sites all across the country, Israel is truly a dynamic destination.

‘It is important to create a recall value for the destination’



Huzan Fraser Motivala
India Representative, Visit Victoria

Melbourne and Victoria is a perfect playground for adventurers and wildlife lovers, foodies and road trippers. Wherever you go, you're never far from spectacular nature and fabulous food and wine. Tourism

promotions and marketing are crucial during the time of pandemic when the appetite to travel is low. It is important to create a recall value for the destination. Visit Victoria is keeping the interest in the destinations alive during the time of the pandemic so that consumers have a desire to travel once the restrictions are lifted. We are doing this through PR, social media and working with the travel trade. The current lockdown has given Visit Victoria an opportunity to train and educate a large number of travel companies and updating them on tourism products/attractions/services at Victoria.

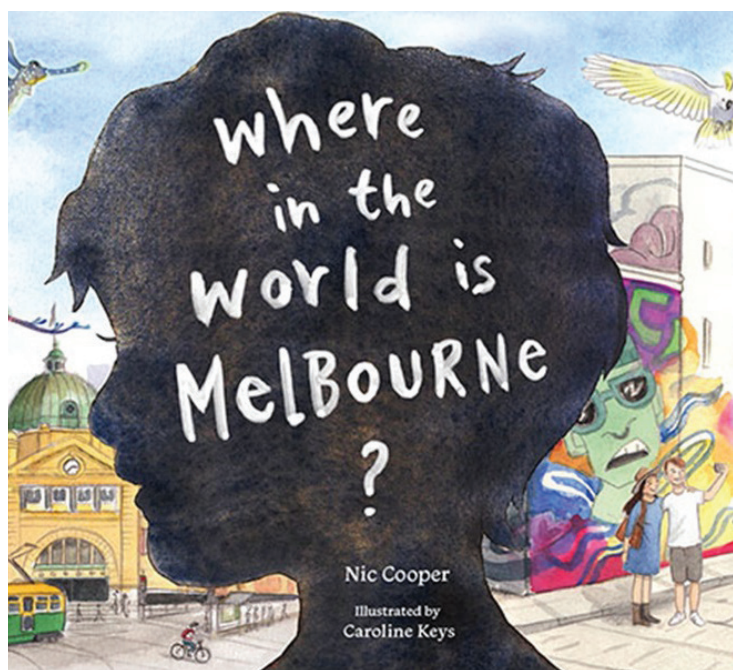
Digital platforms have turned out to be an effective and influential way of promoting a destination during the pandemic. Since people are stuck at home and; digital and social media usage has gone up significantly (1.4 per cent increase), this is the right time to get people's attention and get them to dream about visiting Melbourne and Victoria. Travellers can be inspired to travel once the situation is back to normal.

Visit Victoria is active on various online platforms and promoting the destination through social media. Many of Victoria's iconic attractions including museums, art galleries, sanctuaries and zoos are offering virtual walkthroughs, tours and talks. To encourage virtual family fun, many of Melbourne's family-friendly attractions have offered fun and

also educational experiences for children such as Melbourne Legoland, science-based programs for kids over the radio, and online by Museums Victoria.

Visit Victoria has also launched a free-book – ‘Where in the World is Melbourne?’ designed for families to enjoy together which highlights many of the states iconic attractions including Melbourne's Laneways, the 12 Apostles, and of course Aussie animals in the wild.

To promote World Penguin Day we had garnered an opportunity with a consumer travel magazine, Travel + Leisure India on their official Instagram account through a static post and a story. The stories highlighted the charm of cute waddling penguins on #WorldPenguinDay. It talks about how researchers at Phillip Island Nature Parks (@phillipislandnp) have started tests to future-proof the adorable animals against climate change. For this, they have created artificial burrow designs, to assist the penguins in coping with increasing temperatures, especially during their moult in late summer and autumn.



‘The goal is to keep the destination alive in the minds of the travellers’



Beena Menon

India Representative, Tourism Ireland

The current lockdown has given us an opportunity to showcase the various tourism products that Ireland has to offer. Tourism Ireland, India is conducting regular trainings to educate a large number of travel companies about the breathtaking landscapes, rural

idylls to buzzing urban hubs, amazing festivals, mesmerising castles and cathedrals, Irish distilleries and breweries and many more. Familiarising the agents about the world's longest, clearly defined coastal self-driving route, the Wild Atlantic Way, which is in Ireland that stretches across 2,500 km of sensational journey of soaring cliffs and buzzing towns and cities, of hidden beaches and epic bays. We are also educating the agents on bustling cities of Belfast and Dublin, historic city of Derry Londonderry and some of Ireland's most incredible sights like the Causeway Coastal Route, Ireland's Ancient East.

Due to the pandemic, Ireland's annual workshop, Meet The Buyer (MTB) and Meitheal 2020 could not take place in March. Hence, last month Tourism Ireland conducted Virtual Meitheal and MTB for its global travel partners. The two events received an overwhelming response from the Indian operators. Virtual Meitheal programme which took place across the span of seven days witnessed participation from 350 Irish suppliers. The Indian operators got an opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge about the destination making the best use of their time

under current circumstances. Virtual MTB that ran over four days had 141 Northern Ireland industry stakeholders. The Indian operators found this event extremely meaningful and gained insight on the destination along with e-networking with the Irish operators. The events gave a platform to the Indian operators to prepare themselves and gear up for when the travel resumes.

In addition, Tourism Ireland is sending out newsletters updating the travel trade on Irish products and services and, current COVID situation in the island of Ireland. To keep the recall value of the destination, Tourism Ireland is also posting regularly on social media platforms.

Besides the training programmes and webinars, Tourism Ireland is keeping the interest in the destination alive through online activities so that consumers have a desire to travel once the restrictions are lifted. In keeping with the trend and the new normal, we are virtually showcasing the picturesque island of Ireland through our unique campaigns. The revival campaign #FillYourHeartWithIreland has a series of posts promoting unique experiences in Ireland through videos and photographs. Tourism Ireland, India is also promoting a unique campaign, #DreamNowandTravelLater, encouraging travellers to connect with the destination. We have also created a beautiful poem by a local poet 'I will return' and paired it with breathtaking visuals of Irish landscape and music to form a short video that leaves the viewer longing to return to Ireland. We have also come up with a series of serenity videos, which emphasises the natural beauty of Ireland with mesmerising music.

Tourism Ireland promoted unique days such as World Whiskey Day and World Cheese Day. Furthermore, we have been disseminating content regularly on traditional Irish recipes, virtual tours of museums, gardens and castles, virtual concerts of favourite Irish musicians. The goal is to keep the destination alive in the minds of the travellers. Tourism Ireland is also hosting regular watch parties with influencers of movies/shows shot in Ireland, particularly Game of Thrones and Stars Wars.

‘People consuming content over digital platforms are at a constant surge’



Jurgen Bailom

President and CEO, Jalesh Cruises

The exponential spread of coronavirus has been the catalyst for the inevitable innovation change our world has been experiencing. The pandemic has done devastating things to the planet but it has also united us and pushed us closer to the state of the art technology. We have surpassed Industry 4.0 and have already come far ahead in Industry 5.0. We as a brand believed in Karnika's onboard one of a kind experience and customer's word of

mouth - our biggest, organic marketing tool, additionally, we practiced a little Influencer Marketing, Digital Marketing, and Public Relations. However, now the tables have turned - the philosophy of marketing going digital is not the future anymore but a present reality.

We have realised that a lot of brand building and communication by new-age marketing matters far more in a time when

on-ground engagement with stakeholders is not possible. In such a time, when the tourism and travel sector is on hold, how can the brand still maintain visibility and recall? This brought us to the doorstep of innovative marketing such as social media and digital marketing. For the very first time, we conducted a Webinar for our travel stakeholders such as travel agents, etc., we witnessed over 2000 attendees, this also helped us give hope to our industry. Being digitally active with all our audience has helped us find the right share of voice and brand recall amongst the travellers - our primary focus. We also practice traditional PR, considering mainline media is covering COVID related stories, we have made an effort to be in touch with our audiences with trade and hybrid media.

The marketing dynamics are changing and people consuming content over digital platforms are at a constant surge, this was not

common previously but now consumers of all age groups and social settings prefer digital platforms and online portals for information and content consumption. This made it imperative to have an active presence throughout digital platforms. Like I mentioned earlier, the traditional PR approach was also modified for a more digital PR route, constant practice has helped us gain brand visibility among important travel stakeholders apart from our consumers as well.

Moving on, we have been active on all our social media platforms to create a bond with our audience during these difficult times. InstaLive sessions and Webinar sessions are just the beginning. A social media calendar is made to schedule posts and keep our audience entertained. We have also API integrated our bookings to make the online booking process simplified and completely automated.

‘We definitely see the digital space growing exponentially’

Naresh Rawal

VP Sales - India and South Asia,
Genting Cruise Lines (INTL MKTG)



Travel businesses have faced unique challenges caused by COVID-19, which has led to a paradigm shift in consumer behaviour: change in the way a consumer thinks, works, shops and communicates. It

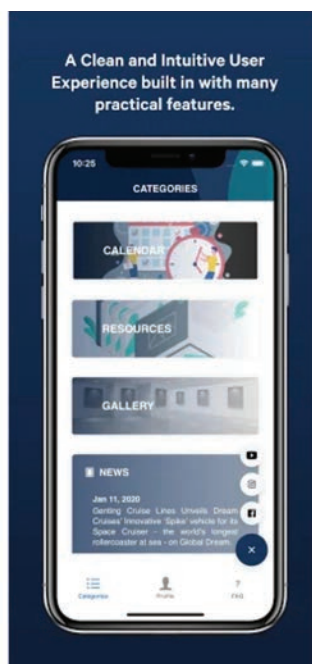
Agents' Portal can be effortlessly downloaded by android or iOS users. It is a very easy to use application, fostering a better work experience for the users. With a simple 4 steps registration, the users can have access to all the latest information from Fare sheet, Itineraries, Cruise calendar and other marketing collateral's with just a click of a button. We have also been very fortunate to have strong support from the trade media; we consider them as friends to our brand thus bringing us more closer and connected with the travel trade fraternity in such difficult times.

During this period, social media has been one of the key channels of communication that we have been actively using to stay connected with our consumers. In fact, with most of travel seekers being at home during the lockdown online activities have increased manifold. Our social media marketing campaigns have been very informative and focused on reaching out to our large target audience. With each platform having a different style of content and catering to different types of consumers, creativity has been to its fullest.

has also led brands across the globe to be more agile in their strategies and approach.

I truly believe, with disruption comes opportunities for growth and mechanisms to overcome challenges. In times of crisis, businesses have become sharper, more creative, and extra efficient. I am happy that we have a resilient team along with our incessantly supportive travel partners, who have been our extended arms in all sorts of situations. We share common values and principles and move in the same direction. We strive together to overcome the crisis and work towards finding opportunities in partnership and collaborations, to take our businesses to higher levels of success.

With the aim of providing updated information to all our travel partners, we at Genting Cruise Lines have recently launched our cutting-edge mobile app. This unique B2B app named 'GCL India



GCL India app

While we are creating some marvellous content simultaneously we are focusing on sharing factual information and educating our audience on the innovative and proactive approach that the brand has taken towards safety and well being of our cruising guests. Timely information such as 100 percent fresh air circulation, Online check-in, Cruise as you wish assurance are a few measures implemented for our future cruising guests, which have been actively promoted and disseminated to our partners and guest through various digital platforms. We definitely see the digital space growing exponentially, which will help to bring the end consumers closer to our brand.

‘Our major communication is removing misinformation and misunderstanding about Air Travel’



Justin Nyaga

Country Manager, India, RwandAir

As we prepare and re-open skies; RwandAir has been engaging our customers on our various platforms including digital about our intentions to return to the skies, subject to the lifting of travel restrictions.

The feedback has

been very much mixed with a level of high uncertainty in regards to the future in general, either be it economic uncertainty or just overall concerns caused by this ongoing COVID-19 health crisis. What are consistently coming up in discussion are the health and safety concerns in particular with air travel.

It appears that there has been a lot of negative public sentiment towards health and safety issues regarding air travel in particular, as the enablers or propagators of the Covid-19 virus. This has been driven partly by misinformation and misunderstanding. This has been very damaging to consumer confidence in passenger air transport and it will have long-lasting effect in air travel recovery if not addressed soon.

That said, it is not all lost as it gives us the opportunity to correct the narrative by communicating to the public real facts on how relatively safe passenger air travel is. For example, aircrafts are installed with High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters that supply clean air into the cabin and the filters trap 99.9+ of particulates such as microscopic viruses and bacteria spreading through the cabin. For this, we circulate videos from Boeing and Airbus aircraft manufacturers demonstrating the supply of clean cabin air through the action of HEPA filters where one can notice the cabin air flow safety and other enhancements.

Thus, we are jointly working together with our travel partners and counterparts, on improving consumer confidence through a strategic approach that allows us to share full details on the safety measures we have put in place as an airline. This will give us a better chance of stimulating demand sooner and resulting in a quicker recovery.

We also share guidelines by IATA and ICAO to help us educate our markets on the measures put in place by the industry and which RwandAir has enhanced it further with our very own plans in place as shared in the updated RwandAir Health and Safety Manual. We believe it will be beneficial for us to keep engaging each of our markets with such valuable information as we prepare to re-open. It is also very encouraging to hear that the willingness to fly again, either for business or reconnecting with family is still there and ready.

‘Relying on digital models to build consumer confidence and keep travel on top of mind’



Abraham Alapatt

President & Group Head - Marketing, Service Quality, Value Added Services & Innovation - Thomas Cook (India)

In the current context of the pandemic and lockdown, our marketing communications focus has seen a significant shift from traditional to digital modes with extensive use of social media, not merely as an advertising platform, but also towards inspiring consumers, with active engagement on a daily basis.

Hyper-local communication via WhatsApp and social media is being leveraged by us to maximum advantage. For today's consumers, digital platforms are increasingly the preferred mode for both information and transaction, and we have empowered our teams with digital models that ensure contactless services to all our

customers- via virtual/video interactions, WhatsApp calls, chat, etc.

We are keeping a close and ongoing watch on market responses and trends and accordingly creating our promotional plans. Basis customer feedback and responses to our Holiday Readiness Report, we have created a range of unique products (Workations, Staycations, City Breaks, Affordable Luxury) with inbuilt flexibility like free rescheduling, cancellation 5 days prior to departure etc. coupled with attractive offers like upgrades, child stays free, etc. and communicating these propositions aggressively through digital mediums like our websites, e-mailers, web notifications, WhatsApp etc.

Our holidays business across Thomas Cook & SOTC have reopened in phases post May 4th (177 outlets across 78 cities pan India) together with a unique Virtual Outlets and Virtual Agent Network model to ensure a contactless customer experience basis customer requirement in the COVID environment. Over 100+ new holiday packages have been launched at affordable price points with attractive offers. We've been able to tap into the pent up travel demand, clocking bookings for over 1630 customers since reopening - with a focus on domestic and short-haul outbound breaks. Holiday booking run rates for the upcoming festive season right through to summer 2021 have been doubling week on week since June and both brands are seeing a healthy pipeline of enquiries.

The use of audio-visual communication has been a key addition to our digital strategy to communicate with customers seamlessly especially during the lockdown. A strategic combination of communication (emails directly from our senior management together with ongoing newsletter updates) and marketing has been deployed to reassure, build consumer confidence and keep travel top of mind.

Interactive social media initiatives deployed include our Travel Trivia quiz, Travel Memories series, travel photography contests, lockdown recipes by Chef S Johri, a memorable Lockdown Travel Awards- a 2-week long campaign inviting customers to submit their holiday pictures, with awards announced over a live Zoom session with the much loved Boman Irani as host; storytelling sessions with regional influencers like the Marathi star Subodh Bhawe, etc.

In addition, we have created a three pronged strategy to benefit customers like affordable pricing, attractive offers and value adds:

upgrades from 3 to 4 star and 4 to 5 star hotels, a special loyalty bonus, child stays free for our family segment and finally the flexibility of date changes at zero cancellation till 5 days pre-departure; also minimum booking amount, easy payment and

EMI options. From a Health and Safety perspective that is critical in the current scenario, our 'Assured Safe Travel Program' in partnership with Apollo Clinics was introduced to ensure health and safety protocols at every step in the customer journey; also our COVID-negative certification services – with accredited ICMR labs- simple and convenient with doorstep services and our overseas medical insurance (cover includes COVID-19 related hospitalisation).



Travel Trivia-Yas Island contest

‘We have always been a big believer of digital data driven spends’



Manoj Nair
Products & Market Leader, FCM Travel Solutions

The spread of COVID-19 has hastened the adoption of a digital and contactless conversation. The focus of conversation for us has been more towards the duty of care and ensuring that we provide a safe, seamless travel experience with minimum disruptions to our customers. Keeping them informed at all times, pre-empting changes on ground and providing flexible solutions are some of the things that customers always look for and that is what we strive to provide them with. This epidemic has brought into sharp focus the need for an omnipresent travel partner who can help navigate them through the rapidly changing world.

Our marketing spends have completely moved online as we conserve cash for the long term. We have always been a big believer in digital data-driven spends and now we have shifted our focus to

reach and engage with our customers online. We have been at the forefront in publishing whitepaper on travel risk management, organising webinars with key partners in aviation, hotels and cab aggregators, conducting customer research and sharing the voice of customers with suppliers and vice versa.

With all this, we also constantly aim to create products and services that ensure that all expectations in terms of travel safety and information are being met. Our AI-enabled global news hub is one such platform specifically created to keep travellers up to date of what's happening in the world with real-time information. It's not only about giving them a safe experience, but being with them every step of the way as they get back to business.

Our approach has always been to communicate the right information and support our customers as their travel partners. While we do this through various platforms, the key is to present them with relevant products that are useful in the current scenario like our global news hub, and which will set the stage for future when things get back to normal like a robust risk management strategy.

Similarly for leisure, apart from the holiday deals, we have been focusing on relatable content in travel and throwback pictures of our customers to take them on a trip down memory lane. We understand that the demand has only been postponed and not diminished and our marketing strategies are now focusing on the long haul.

‘Personalised communications with our guests is something we believe in’



Smita Srivastava
Co-Founder & Director, Chalo Africa Tours

Subtle advertising has always been our hallmark. We have never used any overt marketing strategies. We continue to use what we had before the pandemic and I am happy to say it has given us sufficient visibility. We spend a lot of our time updating our website which includes writing new content, newsletters, blogging, reviews etc. Since we are continually designing new itineraries and venturing into unknown spaces, some amount of social media advertising has worked well. My suggestion would be not to go overboard with advertising just now, since there is a lot of nervousness

around and not many people are ready to put down their money. Of course, you always have the intrepid travellers who are already itching to travel and that include me!

Personalised communications with our guests is something we believe in. We keep in touch on email and social media. We do send amusing newsletters - ones that read like stories so that people are interested in reading and look forward to the next edition. We also communicate new protocols and policies so that the guests know that we care about their health and safety.

‘Presently, focused on updating and managing client database’



Manoj Saraf
Managing Director, Gainwell Travels

As we enter the fifth month of the Coronavirus menace, the travel business is showing very little revival. The business for travel companies is down by as much as 90 per cent.

Needless to say, travel companies like us have cut down travel and marketing budgets drastically. We are currently focused on updating and managing our client database. This will enable us to reach out to our existing and prospective customers through Whatsapp, Facebook and other direct marketing tools.

Our in-house team at Gainwell churns out at least three such messages per

week to enable us to inform customers about changes in airline policies, flight schedules and domestic getaways. Gainwell has been servicing our customers 24x7 during this difficult period. Our staff are working from home and/or office and taking that extra step to inform the customer about the new normal. A detailed guideline regarding what to expect at the airport and during the flight post COVID is digitally sent to customers who book with us. We are also very sensitive to customers regarding cancellation charges, etc. which is quite frequent.



Time-travel for the Aviation Industry

The pandemic has altered the way we look at life. This article gives an industry overview of the aviation sector, as we adapt to the new norms of the post-COVID world.

Karthik Viswanathan



Karthik Viswanathan

conversations that not only engages with the customers but also makes them trust us again.

Travel is gradually and steadily being revived, and airlines are quickly adapting with major changes and initiatives both on the ground and on board – from logistics to management, all to ensure safe travel. Another influence that the pandemic has left us embracing is changing consumer trends – travel will not stop, but the way people will or want to travel will have new definitions.

That said, to cater to post-COVID travel, the aviation industry needs to be at the cusp of rapid change, and this article sets out major trends that will revolutionise the way one travels.

The new-norm for travel

Customer preference is evolving by the second.

Therefore, monitoring consumer sentiments and acknowledging their needs becomes critical at every level. While safety has always been a priority for airlines, customers are also voicing for an assurance of the latest hygiene protocols to navigate the pandemic safely. Customer journey will mainly revolve on three aspects – safety, hygiene and seamlessness. Wearing of masks and sanitisers may prevail and be termed as “must-haves” for travelling.

Offers to make you want to fly again

Customer expectations will revolve around safety and hygiene, and as we aim to revive the travel space, attractive offers for travellers can be seen as one of the tools to win back their trust.

Airlines to undergo Digital Transformation

The pandemic has led the world to fast-forward into the future - reinvention is imperative and some new trends are

on the rise, some of which have already seeped into the aviation industry to revolutionise the customer experience and cater to their changing needs.

Automation across sectors began a few years back but its full potential will only be put to optimal use today. Biometrics and artificial intelligence have been making constant rounds in the aviation industry for a while now for identity verification making physical fingerprint and hand scanners fade away. More touchless options such as iris and face recognition are set to take its place.

From the moment one enters the airport, check-in, boards the flight and goes through the security and baggage processes, the airport experience will have subtle yet noticeable changes. Contactless travel, passenger health-checks and social-distancing will be pivotal.

Health passports could be the future of travel, which would eliminate the social-distancing norm to some extent. These health passports would confirm the status of the passenger's health and be considered an essential document as that of your travel passport.

To monitor passenger health, thermal screening can be at multiple checkpoints and one can be seen wearing tracking devices such as a barcode wristband to ensure social distancing norms. Also, fully autonomous roaming mobile disinfectant robots will be a common sight at airports, as is the case in Hamad International Airport in Doha, Qatar, that has invested in and acquired disinfectant robots and advanced thermal screening helmets

In conclusion, the resilience and adaptability of the aviation industry has revolved around customers and their ever-evolving needs, and these will continue to play a vital role as we move towards a post-pandemic era, with technology and innovation continuously on the rise, in line with constantly reassuring the customer that their safety will always be the airline's number one priority.

Karthik Viswanathan is Senior Manager, Indian sub-continent at Qatar Airways

The pandemic has had a significant impact across various industries, bringing our lives to a halt. As India steadily moves towards ending the lockdown phase, it is time to fly past the obstacles brought in by the novel coronavirus and look for opportunities instead. Undoubtedly, like every other business, the aviation industry has also been impacted. However, in response to the global pandemic that gave birth to extraordinary circumstances, airlines have showcased immense resilience in adapting towards the fast-evolving situation.

People will want to travel, meet their loved ones, and explore the world. And as we enter the second phase of the year, possible easing of travel restrictions plays a promising ray-of-hope. There is much apprehension amongst travellers to fly again and a constant need for reassurance, hence creating an ideal period for the industry to build

Etihad Airways constantly innovating to redefine travel experiences in a post COVID-19 world

Steering through the uncharted waters, Etihad has been able to counter the ongoing crisis in an efficient manner. The on-going restructuring programme gave their business the agility to better manage its operation through the COVID-19 crisis and prepare for when air travel markets reopened. During this time, Etihad has also embarked on the biggest aircraft maintenance programme to ensure that the airline was in its best shape when it returns to flying. Lindsay White, Etihad Airways' Vice President, Eastern Region (APAC and ISC) throws light on how Etihad has weathered the impact of this crisis and the steps taken to curate renewed air travel experiences for their guests.

Prashant Nayak



Lindsay White

How has Etihad stood up with the impact of this global health and socio-economic crisis rising from this unprecedented COVID-19 situation?

The pandemic has impacted every industry globally, including aviation. However, Etihad has been prepared to weather the commercial and operational impact of this ongoing crisis. We chose to respond quickly, re-strategised and utilised the downtime to ensure that the

airline was in its best shape for when it returned to flying.

Etihad Airways' transformation over the recent years positioned us well, giving the business the agility to better manage its operation through the pandemic and be prepared for when air travel re-opened. Keeping in mind that we are a mid-sized airline and that we have different fleet configurations, we were very adaptable to the situation.

From launching industry-first initiatives such as 'Wellness Ambassadors' to operating goodwill flights to over 30 cities not normally served on the airline's global route network. I can say that Etihad has taken every effort to extend support to people across the globe. I would also like to add that we remain committed to our sustainability goals, pioneering new and effective ways of mitigating aviation's environmental impact and utilised this time to test a

range of initiatives.

Etihad has a vast aircraft fleet. Tell us about your current operation and particularly in India?

We are looking at expanding our network. Throughout June and July, Etihad was operating a network of special flights from Abu Dhabi to several destinations, following the partial lifting of international flight restrictions by

UAE and Indian authorities on travel for eligible individuals. Etihad operated special flights to and from Abu Dhabi to six cities in India, including Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kochi, and Mumbai.

Throughout August and September, subject to the lifting of international restrictions and the re-opening of individual markets, we aim to fly to 61 destinations worldwide from its Abu Dhabi hub, operating approximately 50 per cent of its pre-COVID capacity.

Gradually, what has Etihad's strategy been in rebuilding confidence in the traveller to fly again with the airline?

We understand that there is uncertainty in the minds of consumers about what the new normal in international air travel will look like; there are questions ranging from airport procedures to maintenance of a safe in-flight environment. We are focusing on seamless communication with our guests and partners to keep them informed about all the measures taken by Etihad to ensure that they have a safe flying experience with us.

The current situation has reinforced the importance of wellness and this will be the focus of renewed travel experiences at Etihad. We launched 'Etihad Wellness', a health and hygiene programme, building on our existing stringent measures. We have introduced multiple temporary measures that will not be limited to inside the aircraft itself.

Cabin air filtration cleaning: Our aircrafts have HEPA (high-efficiency

particulate air) filters which can filter more than 99 per cent of airborne microbes in the air. The cabin airflow is continuous, and delivered at a rate equivalent to up to 30 changes per hour.

Stricter measures at check-in counters: At Abu Dhabi International Airport, strict measures are in place at check-in counters to ensure a safer environment, including floor markings at 1.5m distance ensuring social distancing, check-in teams wearing gloves and face masks and regular sanitisation of check-in counters.

Etihad is known for leveraging technology for best air travel experiences. How is technology helping the airline during these trying times?

Technology and innovation have been in our DNA and forms the basis of how we have revolutionised the flying experience. In the past quarter, Etihad Airways actively sourced and invested in innovative solutions, which will forever redefine travel experiences.

Interactive map with Sitata: Etihad Airways has partnered with Sitata to launch an interactive travel map that uses advanced computer algorithms to detect new travel information globally.

Risk-assessment tool with Medicus AI: Etihad has partnered with healthcare technology company Medicus AI to launch a COVID-19 risk-assessment tool based on WHO guidelines.

Etihad Airways application: We encourage guests to check-in using the Etihad application/website, so when you arrive at the airport, it's just about dropping your bags.

Self-service check-in: We are about to launch an innovative self-service check-in and health screening, helping identify medically at-risk travellers by reading guests' respiratory system, heart rate and temperature.

Thermal cameras at Abu Dhabi airport: We've these cameras that will measure the temperature of guests' immigration,

Self-cleaning escalator handrails at Abu Dhabi airport: These have been installed at Abu Dhabi airports (Handrails get completely sanitized as they cycle through the escalator),

APT surface swab technology: We are using this to measure the bacteria or virus on a surface in the airport as well as in the aircrafts.

How are you staying connected with your Indian trade partners for support?

We have been touched by the support received from our trade partners in India. We understand this is a difficult time, so we are helping our trade partners manage guests' travel plans as smoothly as possible, offering maximum support and flexibility. We're working around the clock to assist our trade partners, making sure they are the first to know about our new policies, procedures and travel news. We have conducted regular webinars to keep them updated and engaging in knowledge sharing sessions and trainings for them.

We have introduced a range of travel waivers, solutions and benefits to help ease the burden and provide maximum flexibility to our trade partners.

Support with new bookings: On new bookings made before 31 August 2020, we're allowing unlimited changes to give partners the freedom and flexibility to change their guest's travel plans if needed. They can pick a new date or destination anywhere on our network and all they will pay is the difference in fare; there are no extra fees or hidden costs. If for any reason they can't travel, they will be eligible for Etihad Credit, and the fare difference will apply.

Support with existing bookings: Guests can re-book their trip before 30 November 2020 and travel to any

destination on Etihad's network before 31 October 2021, or use the value of their ticket as a credit towards their next trip. There is no charge to change the trip and we'll remove the fare difference if the guest travels within the same zone/area before 30 November 2020. Tickets must have been issued before 31 August 2020 to be eligible, and standard fare rules will apply.

Keep your ticket open: If the flight has been cancelled, guests can simply keep their ticket open until they are ready to travel again. If guests keep their ticket open until 31 October 2021, and they haven't used this open ticket within 12 months of the first cancelled flight, the guest will be entitled to a refund.

Tell us more about your initiative on 'Wellness Ambassadors'?

At Etihad Airways, the safety and health of our guests and employees will always remain a top priority. We continue to abide by the UAE and international government, regulatory and health authority directives and have taken multiple measures to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Etihad Airways launched 'Etihad Wellness', a comprehensive health and hygiene programme and customer guide. Championed by 'Wellness Ambassadors', they are a dedicated team, specially trained at our facilities in Abu Dhabi, and will provide essential travel health information and care so guests can fly with greater peace of mind.

Available 24/7: Guests can reach out via e-mail and a live web-chat option.

Abu Dhabi Airport: Etihad will them at Abu Dhabi International Airport to ensure guests are assisted at every point of their journey, right from check-in to boarding.

On-board: Once the airline resumes an expanded network of international flights, they will also be available on-board, complementing the service provided by other cabin crew.



Experience renewed travel affairs with gilt-edged safety norms at SOUTH KOREA



Trail of Songaksan Mountain in Jeju Island



Jong Sool Kwon

The country is being appreciated globally for its efforts in managing the Coronavirus outbreak. With an aim to keep hope afloat among travellers, Korea Tourism Organization has launched a new campaign #TakeMeBackToKorea. Jong Sool Kwon, Director of Korea Tourism Organization, New Delhi Office shares more with TTJ.

-Team TTJ

The pandemic has affected every industry and the entire world is leaving no stone unturned to get back on track. With every country focusing on safety and sanitisation, South Korea has been applauded worldwide for being one of the few nations to have successfully flattened the curve without a single lockdown. Korea being a forerunner in containing the virus, has been recognised by The World Bank in effectively handling the COVID-19 pandemic. For holidaymakers to wander in Korean reminiscence, Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) has launched a digital campaign - #TakeMeBackToKorea targeted to keep Korea, and its people, in the hearts and minds of Indian travellers. The film encapsulates memoirs from popular YouTubers vacationing in Korea, while they ponder over their experiences through stunning, throwback photographs and videos.

"These are the most challenging times in the travel and tourism industry, but we are sure to recover and come back stronger than before," shares Jong Sool Kwon.

South Korea is one of the first countries to promote domestic tourism and has already taken many steps to boost this sector. If there is one destination that can rekindle wanderlust along with ensuring safety, it is South Korea! KTO is gearing up for travellers

to come and experience South Korea in a new, transformed way.

Kwon adds, "Korea is following every safety measure and we have successfully lowered the number of COVID-19 cases in our country. Although there is no definite answer as to when International tourism will resume, we are well prepared. We are discovering more content and considering ways of ensuring the safety of tourists in cooperation with local governments and relevant authorities."

The recent announcement to promote night tours is one of their most creative steps by the government to revive the growing tourism industry. South Korea has a good environment for developing night tours as it is known for its safe streets and 24-hour stores available nationwide. They are encouraging people to utilise the quieter hours after the sun sets and witness the vibrancy of South Korea in the non-rush night hours.

For a safe travel, South Korea assures certain locations that will provide visitors a secluded yet fulfilling stay experience. Seoul, being one of the most populous cities, is also home to numerous attractions and night tour programs that are less crowded and impressive. It is home to famous landmarks, towers and stunning architectural masterpieces, such as the N Seoul Tower and Banpo Bridge Rainbow Fountain;



Bukchon Hanok Village

guaranteed to take your breath away. For a safe, cultural experience, one can discover the UNESCO listed treasures such as Changdeokgung and Gyeongbokgung palaces to see the unparalleled collection of artefacts.

As social distancing will continue to be a norm, Korea is making health and wellness its top priority. On visiting Korea, a Hanok will be a preferred choice of stay as it lends an authentic Korean experience with thorough privacy for tourists. Here, one can attain tranquility and enjoy a secluded stay and minimal interaction with service staff. Owing to the current situation, visitors will opt



Changgyeonggung Palace



Gunnamji Pond, Chungcheongnam-do

for travelling in private vehicles as an alternative to crowded, community transport. Korea offers self-drives at the exotic Jeju Island, a safe choice for families to explore the island's scenic routes and get a taste of nature at its best. As an extension of nature trails, South Korea also provides a plethora of serene parks and forests where one can wander in a peaceful atmosphere.

Moreover, encouraging positivity and inspiring travellers to look forward to good times in South Korea, KTO's new campaign #TakeMeBackToKorea, is a journey through the destination's modern and exciting offerings;

and brings alive moments from Korea like never before!

Kwon further shares, "India has always been a priority for South Korea and we are going digital to remain at the top of the traveller's mind. We have conceptualised #TakeMeBackToKorea to engage people across India and remind them about the beauty and uniqueness of travelling to South Korea. Once travel opens up, there will be a sudden demand for travel to places which not only entertain but provide a healing experience as well. We look forward to welcoming visitors to our abode soon."

Opportunity to migrate unorganised hospitality sector to an organised one

The Indian hotel industry has been largely dominated by unorganised players. There are approximately one million hotel rooms available in the country of which only 160,000 rooms are of the organised players both domestic and international combined. Even in the organised space, international chains have continued to dominate the share. It was back in 2008/09 when the domestic chains started expanding and increasing their share in the pie. For independent hotels, it is going to be a hard time ahead even in the post COVID-19 era and it is time for them to tie up with a branded chain to get more value and benefits.

Nandivardhan Jain



Nandivardhan Jain

The average pan India occupancy dropped significantly from 65 per cent in 2019 during the current pandemic. The organised players are currently operating at 20-30 per cent of occupancy which is getting generated from the people cited above. Noesis Capital Advisors conducted a consumer survey during the lockdown which indicated that 73 per cent consumers are looking at branded hotels for their upcoming vacation plans and business needs and are ready to pay a premium of 15-20 per cent in room rates to ensure health and safety of themselves and their family members are not compromised.

The trust that the consumer has on the organised player's adaptation of SOPs and highly maintained hygiene is shifting the demand towards the organised players as they feel their health will not be compromised at these properties. As an early sign of revival, we have already started witnessing demand for organised hotels on the outskirts of NCR where the

local population from NCR has restarted travelling to escape the four walls of their house for even a weekend or so.

With about 16 per cent share of branded hotels in India, the branded chains bring multiple benefits to the entire tourism ecosystem: all stakeholders and owners, guests, hotel employees, financial institutions, the government, vendors, neighbourhood businesses, etc.

With an organised proper framework in place, it allows all the stakeholders a better experience in terms of services, credibility, financial stability, better taxes, better vendor management, and increased business for neighbourhood entrepreneurs.

Tying up with a branded chain for an independent hotel brings additional perks for the independent hotel as below:

- Easy recruitment and training programs as getting associated with a branded chain help an individual with a career path and development.
- Access to regional sales offices as setting up multiple sales offices across different cities for an independent hotel is not convenient.
- Setting up, revenue management services will help the hotel to break its room inventory into different categories and allows them to maximize the revenues.
- Provides marketing support and increases focus on digital marketing.
- Branded hotel loyalty programs allow loyal guests revenue to come into the hotel.
- The brand value attached to the chain enhances the independent hotel's presence and attracts a better demand for the property.
- Have maintenance protocols in place which ensure the asset is properly maintained and upgraded.
- It becomes easier to bring in corporate business at the property as a company has annual contracts.

- It brings more technological expertise to the hotel. A branded chain has a bigger exposure towards the usage of technology inside the hotel like different payment gateways, mobile app-based check-in/check-out options, etc.

These benefits and perks attached to the branded hotels allow the independent hotel to improve on their profitability and ultimately increase the ROI and its valuations. Improved valuations allow the hotel owner a better opportunity to raise funds from financial institutions.

During the last 36 months, nearly 9,500 rooms have been re-branded or converted from an independent hotel to a branded chain or from one brand to another. Looking at the added benefits the hotels get after getting associated with international or domestic chains, many hoteliers have started exploring this opportunity for the last three years.

A 72 room hotel in Viman Nagar, Pune was converted under the brand tie-up by Noesis Capital Advisors. Surprisingly, within one quarter itself, the hotel witnessed a strong growth of 31.3 per cent in room rates to INR 4,200 per room per night significantly improving the profitability. The entire cost of renovations that went into rebranding the hotel was just 2 per cent of the asset value.

Looking at the current pandemic situation, many domestic and international brands are already evaluating multiple proposals at various locations to tap the current opportunity. The hotel owner and the branded chains to enter into agreements will benefit both and revive the hospitality ecosystem at a much faster rate.

We at Noesis are now working on more than 100 hotel brand conversion projects and we continue to receive more requests from hotel owners to help them find the right brand partner for them.

Nandivardhan Jain is the Founder & CEO, Noesis Capital Advisors.

Time to secure customers loyalty and confidence

Since the beginning of 2020, most travellers who love exploring new and exciting destinations have been grounded due to the impact of COVID-19; unable to travel for business or leisure purposes. The outbreak of the pandemic has led to the entire travel ecosystem experiencing a seismic shift, affecting airlines, hotels and businesses that have had to navigate uncharted territory.

Priyanka Lakhani



Priyanka Lakhani

Looking at the future, a new survey from Collinson's Priority Pass has found that 3 in 4 frequent flyers globally (71 per cent) are ready to return to travel either immediately or within the next 3-6 months; while in Asia Pacific, 2 in 3 frequent flyers (66 per cent) are ready to return to travel within the next six months. With the desire to travel clearly still strong, it's important for travel brands to continue to show support during what has been a difficult time for all— in turn, securing much needed reciprocal customer loyalty.

Acting with continued empathy and flexibility

India accounts for the majority of South Asia's Travel and Tourism economy and is the highest growing aviation market in the world. When COVID-19 first began to impact us all, it was imperative that travel brands provided flexibility with regards to rebooking and cancellation policies. Many airlines, hotels, loyalty programmes and tourism operators waived cancellation fees, relaxed loyalty membership requirements and

introduced more flexibility on future bookings- providing peace of mind at what has been a difficult time.

As travel restrictions continue to be eased across the country and state governments continue to promote domestic tourism, we have seen signs of recovery blossoming in the domestic market. However, it will remain imperative that businesses maintain an amenable, customer-first mindset; so customers feel brands are supporting and championing their return to travel.

Building traveller confidence

A crucial element in building traveller confidence will be promoting and actively supporting traveller health and safety. A major concern for travellers is about how the industry is adapting to ensure their safe return to travel, which has prompted the travel industry to take action.

New measures for airports will play a key role in building traveller confidence. Increases in online check-in, pre-assigned baggage tags and COVID-19 testing are increasingly expected to be provided as options to travellers; as is the introduction of socially-distanced and touch-free experiences to help minimize crowding, such as Collinson's trio of airport lounge initiatives.

Ensuring travellers feel safe when using a lounge is important, this is substantiated by a recent Collinson Priority Pass survey which revealed that 52 per cent of travellers in Asia Pacific expect to use their lounge access more than before the pandemic with 68 per cent willing to pay for access to a lounge where guest numbers are controlled and social distancing is maintained. In addition, of all markets surveyed, APAC travellers are the most confident in the safety of the lounge with 78 per cent citing no concerns around the airport lounge.

Moving forward, it will be critical that travel brands continue to innovate and

introduce new and creative ways to not only help travellers feel safe, but also to give customers an integrated journey that feels connected, cohesive and catered to their needs.

Communicating honestly and creatively

Core to any new strategy or innovation is the way in which it's communicated – and as such, most brands have been on a communications journey in recent months, linked to when and how their business has been affected by the outbreak. The first step by many was sharing their company's own actions in monitoring the situation and putting safety first. We then saw them get more creative with aspirational and bold communications, to remind their customers that the joy of travelling was not forever lost. Transparency is essential throughout all stages of communication, but never more so than in times of crisis. Brands can stand out from the crowd by providing an honest point of view on how they are affected by the outbreak. This helps to build kinship between brands and their customers, each facing their own challenges, and also goes a long way to build trust with a brand - something which will pay dividends as travel recovers.

Ultimately, with none of us truly knowing what the new 'normal' looks like, it's imperative that travel brands continue to be kind, honest and innovative, to show their customers that they are valued but also to remain top of mind for when those customers are ready to travel again. It is by engaging travel lovers today, in the right way and at the right time, that brands can help ensure the travel recovery of tomorrow.

Priyanka Lakhani is the Commercial Director, Middle East and Africa and Director South Asia at Collinson

Trade Associations need to speak with one accord for welfare of the Travel & Tourism Industry

Though, the unorganised travel and tourism sector in India which is more than 70 per cent filled Rs 16.91 lakh crore with the national exchequer in 2018, the Ministry of Tourism never bothered to see its importance. The bane of our Industry is that we are still unorganised, not recognised and we still do not have a common platform to represent our problems.

Biji Eapen



Biji Eapen

In the Indian scenario, due to the pandemic, the travel and tourism sector is facing an economic meltdown and a nose-dive for millions of people dependent upon it for their livelihoods into debt, and the 'domino effect' also result in massive job losses across the entire supply chain, hitting employees and those in self-employment. According to WTTC, India is expected to be most heavily impacted with up to nine million jobs at risk throughout the country.

A recent media reports that the 'Union Government, comprising its political leadership and the officials, have hinted to the travel and tourism stakeholders that despite being the worst-hit, tourism has been missing out in the bailout packages rolled out by the Union Government because of its 'unorganised nature'. From the Tourism Minister to senior government officials have blamed the trade for their failure to get organised as a sector, backed by credible data for being considered for financial support.'

The unorganised travel and tourism sector in India is an integral part of the economy. Ever wonder correctly to see that all these years, even when Rs 16.91 lakh crore filled in the national exchequer in 2018 also, the Ministry of Tourism never

bothered to see its importance. It is only the Covid-19, the pandemic has opened their eyes to see the truth that more than 70 per cent of travel and tourism are in 'unorganised nature' and will not eligible for any "bailouts". Alas, our policymakers could have taken some sensible decisions in the presence of deep uncertainty that requires more than determination.

The travel, tourism, transport, and hospitality industry in India supports 42.673 million jobs in the country and hence requires a broad-minded philosophy of parenting. The Leaderships should be indulgent enough to understand that our Industry is firmly connected and knitted together: Tourist attractions, travel agents, tour operators, GDS and technology companies, hotels, resorts, home-stays, restaurants and catering, serviced apartments, tourist information and guide services, transport operators including airline, roads, railways, waterways and canals, travel trade associations, tourism boards, travel and tourism training institutes, travel magazines, journalists and writers including the supply chain management and logistics activities in travel and tourism ranging from ground handling to delivery of catering products, to information systems management and compliance with health and safety regulations, etc.

The tourism and hospitality sector has universally recognised as an agent of development and an engine for socio-economic growth. But the Small Medium Enterprises (SME) or Micro Small Medium Enterprises (MSME) registration, Incredible India, Government of India or State tourism recognitions or approvals are not yet mandatory for travel and tourism operations.

Neither IATA nor PATA recognitions carry much benefits or leverage. With a laptop also, one can do business in travel and tourism-related activities. In general, our tourism and hospitality sector, comprising travel, tourism, aviation, and hospitality segments remains as an unorganised sector.

The media reported that some travel and tourism professional organizations and trade associations had approached the government for unique/ separate financial relief for their memberships based on their nature of activities. Our demands should not be confined, but for a common goal.

We, IATA Agents Association of India, made an appeal to Hon Prime Minister of India on 4th April 2020 requesting to provide a bailout to sustain the travel and tourism sector.

Protect the salaries, incomes, and jobs of the millions of employees and provide benefits for the self-employed.

Economic stabilisation loans as working capital or loans in the form of cash credit and overdraft.

Moratorium on loans and interests.

Waive or remove all dues, taxes, or finance charges that affect cash flow.

Reduction in electricity charges, etc. for the next 12 months.

Also, we successfully conducted an e-Signature campaign as a 'Follow-up Appeal' and submitted on June 14, 2020, with thousands of e-Signatures obtained through the nationwide crusade, without limiting or confined to IAAI members, where, we have voiced for the entire travel trade fraternity.

The Industry should not confine to vested interests. Regardless, we have to accept ourselves as a family member of the travel and tourism comprising with 43 million employees or/and self-employed who are the real representatives or ambassadors of the travel, tourism, and hospitality industry in India. The unorganised sector is in no way an independent and private sector and not to be discriminated against. "United we stand, divided we fall". We have to recognize, respect and accept others. Then, join hand in hand and stand UNITED for the conventional benefits and welfare of all industries at large.

The bane of our Industry is that we are still unorganised and do not have a common

platform to represent. The present umbrella organization, namely 'FAITH' did not have the representation of the industry as a whole. The need of the hour is that all travel and tourism industry associations to come forward and form a common platform like FICCI, CII, or ASSOCHAM, with the proper representation and equal status to all the travel, tourism, and hospitality-related national trade bodies in India. Perhaps, FAITH can take the lead!

There are many lessons we all learned from life. With unity, we can achieve many things, but alone, do only very little. Take a look at the 'airline commission' issue, a matter that radically affected the Industry, the very survival of travel agents, due to a lack of unity within the trade, we were compelled to depend on the court of law. When airlines implemented zero commission, on behalf of the travel agents fraternity, IAAI had approached Kerala High Court.

Accordingly, DGCA on 5th March 2010 and MoCA on 16th September 2013 passed favourable orders endorsing that 'commission' as an integral part of the FARE, which formed the TARIFF and mandated

that 'commission', is the legal remuneration to travel agents. Despite this, recently an association leader was demanding 'commission' from Air India. To date, these orders are not challenged but been unable to implement due to a lack of unity and support from the fraternity—a matter, which can be jointly sorted out quickly for the welfare of the entire community.

The travel and tourism industry has been ignored by the Central and all the State Governments. We should know our strengths and weaknesses. We are a family of 43 million members, plus our families, and other dependents. We are living in difficult times. This pandemic is hitting our Industry very hard. Recovery is vital to prevent millions of people from being driven into extreme poverty. And, the crisis has shown us, the importance of coordination to overcome the vulnerability of our Industry and become more resilient. Again, Together we stand, divided we fall.

The impact of the crisis felt throughout the entire tourism ecosystem, and reopening and rebuilding will require a joined-up approach. We at IAAI wholeheartedly put

forward the suggestion to form a common platform of travel and tourism-related industry associations to work together and to achieve active recovery and collectively represent the interests and requirements of the industry and its stakeholders. We request the leadership of all travel, tourism, transportation, hospitality, and other related national trade associations in India to come forwards and positively respond to our suggestion to protect and safeguard our Industry.

As Albert Einstein had said, "We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if humanity is to survive". To create a new kind of cognizance to solve our problems, we need unity. Unity does not mean uniformity. It implies cooperation amid diversity. The need for the hour is that the trade associations must rise to the occasion, and speak with one accord for the welfare of the travel and tourism industry and its stakeholders.

Biji Eapen is the National President, IATA Agents Association of India (IAAI) & CMD-Speedwings Aviation Group.



Piyush Agarwal

RJ group launches UVC light disinfection for the Hospitality Industry

RJ Group, a pioneer in the hospitality and healthcare sector has introduced a range of UVC light disinfection products, which has been validated to effectively inactivate SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The company has taken a fresh approach by offering products that are designed with UV-C light sterilisation technology. These products can be customised to serve the specific demands in the hospitality sector.

Team TTJ

light is germicidal – i.e., it deactivates the DNA of bacteria, viruses and other pathogens and thus destroys their ability to multiply and cause disease. Thus, when the organism tries to replicate, it dies.

UVC Light disinfection in hospitality settings allows you to realize all the benefits of germicidal lighting in limited space applications such as PTACs, Fan Coil Units, and Water Treatment. The benefits are numerous including reduction of bacteria, viruses, mold and odours in the common area of a hotel such as Lobby, Kitchen, Rooms and banquets. These products are made of 99 per cent CRCA Steel and 1 per cent non-toxic plastic components. The lights have a life span between 4000 hrs to 16000 hrs. Post that only the lights need to be changed.

Piyush Agarwal, CEO, RJ Group of Companies, said, "It's known that the

hotels and restaurants have a large number of points of interaction that are used by employees and guests. And it's humanly impossible to maintain cleanliness standards without errors. UVC technology used in our light disinfecting system helps in effectively disinfecting surfaces from germicidal bacteria that fuel the growth of viruses at one go. By its usage, we are not only eliminating the viruses that are responsible for this pandemic but also creating a future safety net of protection for possible stronger viruses that could affect lives."

The group is reaching across the Hospitality industry to equip them first, right from the entry of vegetables, food, customer luggage -entering the hotel premises to the sanitisation of rooms, restaurants, banquets hall, gym and all common passages, so that their customers can use the facilities with ease.

To meet the growing demand for products in the health security space, RJ Group has developed this defence range for fighting efficiently against COVID-19. RJ Group has ensured strict quality control on every single product units. All its products are 100 per cent designed from the homegrown tested technology with ISO13485 certification to manufacture UVC systems and the testing report generated from Haffkine Institute. This new range is entirely 'Made in India', the company's support to the government's call for 'Aatmanirbhar'.

The UV-C technology in these is designed in accordance with the norms suggested by medical and research bodies to disinfect surfaces from germicidal bacteria. The UV-C

Ferreting Bhutan



Perched high in the Himalayas, Bhutan is a dreamy paradise. My little discoveries in the world's last remaining Buddhist Kingdom with my friends made me fall in love with this place. In our eight day trip in January 2020, we covered the regular but immersive Bhutanese itineraries of Thimphu, Punakha and Paro. By reading this account, you will get to know why you should consider Bhutan as your next travel destination.

Sanchi Nayak

We started from Bagdogra in West Bengal with a two hour delayed flight from Mumbai and this delay means we were losing precious travel time because the sun sets early in the North Eastern parts of the sub continent. At Bagdogra, we had hired a comfortable 10 seater Toyota Hi Ace for the whole trip and it was our driver Tandin's own car and he was familiar with the roads and well versed with almost entire Bhutan.

From Bagdogra its three hours drive to Phuentsholing, the entry town of Bhutan bordering the city of Jaigon in India. The border is separated by a single Bhutanese gate. Tourists from India do not need visa to enter Bhutan but have to show proof of identity such as a passport or voter ID card and apply for a permit at Phuentsholing to enter Bhutan.

Phuentsholing is uniquely more urban than other Bhutanese towns. It has many restaurants and karaoke bars. For people who love shopping should definitely visit the main market. Walking around you will find colourful handmade

bags, shawls, hair bands etc. As it is a local market goods are cheap as compared to Bhutanese stores further up. You'll obviously find all the goods which you'll find in India. Phuentsholing had many trendier things to fall in love with but unfortunately the town was not in our itinerary, just an entry city. Here at Phuentsholing Socials, I had my best tasting Momos ever.

After a well spent night, we started our main trip and proceeded to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. Thimphu contains most of the important political buildings



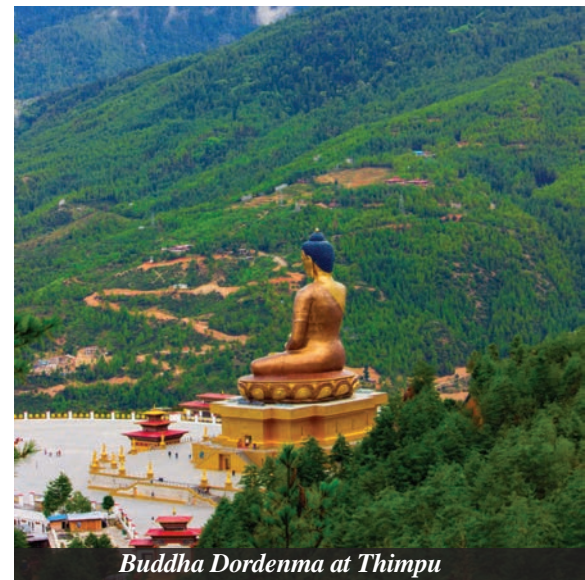
You will be in no short supply of momos when you visit Bhutan

in Bhutan. The culture of Bhutan is fully reflected in Thimphu in literature, religion, customs, and national dress code, the monastic practices of the monasteries, music, and dance. It is also the largest city in the country.

Buddha Dordenma is one of the top attractions in Thimphu. Buddhism plays

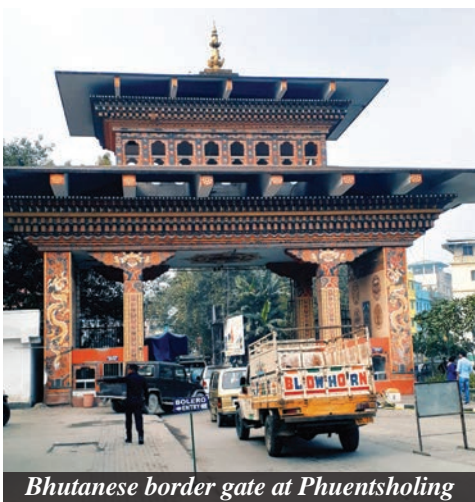
a strong part in the daily life of the Bhutanese. The Buddha Dordenma is the largest sitting statue at top of the hill. With one of the best views in the city, this Buddha point is called Kuensel Phodrang by the locals.

Takin National Preserve is a relaxing and a lovely place to be with your family. Here, on a walk, you will find the Takin which is the national animal of Bhutan along with Gorals, Serows, Musk deer, etc.



Buddha Dordenma at Thimphu

The Tashichho Dzong overlooks the Wang Chhu River, just outside of the Thimphu city limits. It is an impressive building, having served as the seat of the government since 1952. Thimphu Chorten; also known as the National Memorial Chorten, was built in the honour of Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the third king of Bhutan in 1947. Serving as a major landmark, this Tibetan styled stupa is also idolized as one of most visible religious structures in Thimphu. Furthermore, Thimphu has many attractions for tourist interested in arts and literature.



Bhutanese border gate at Phuentsholing



On way to Thimphu

As we continued our journey towards Punakha, we reached Dochula, a beautiful mountain pass, which is about 20 km from Thimphu. It is also known as “Druk Wangyal Chortens.” as was in honour of 108 Bhutanese soldiers who died in a 2003 military operation. It’s not just a place of historical and religious importance, but also a popular tourist attraction that any traveller would want to witness on their journey through Bhutan. Scenery is picturesque with closer views of the snow-laden Himalayas.

We stayed in a modest accommodation at Punakha but had one of the mesmerising scenery besides the Punakha River. We



Dochula Pass

had quite an afternoon over by the river with a tent camp lunch and fun filled and adventurous river rafting for at least two hours with plenty of bird sightings.

The Punakha Dzong is the second oldest and second-largest Dzong in Bhutan and one of its most majestic structures. The Dzong was consecrated in the name of Pungthang Dechen Phodrang. In 1639, a commemorative chapel was erected to house the arms seized from the Tibetans who were defeated by the Bhutanese on this spot. Administrative offices of the Dzong, a very large, white-washed stupa and a bodhi tree are located in the first courtyard. All of Bhutan’s kings have been crowned here.

Besides the Dzong, is the longest suspension bridge in Bhutan. This 160 metres suspension bridge is the longest in Bhutan. The bridge is stable and provides a good view of the river and valley, with the mountain as background.



The Punakha Dzong

The real adventure is walking across the bridge. The bridge is an important part of the architectural history of Bhutan as it was built to connect the villages of Shengana, Samdingkha and Wangkha to the Palace of the Wangchuk Kings.

The city of Paro falls in a picturesque region in one of the widest valleys in the kingdom and is covered in fertile rice fields and has a beautiful, crystalline



Suspension bridge at Punakha

river meandering down the valley. The region contains one of Bhutan’s most iconic landmarks, Taksang Monastery, the Tiger’s Nest.

This awe-inspiring Taksang Monastery was constructed upon a sheer cliff face, above forests of oak and rhododendrons. It is a prominent Himalayan Buddhist sacred site and the temple complex is located in the cliffside of the upper Paro valley in Bhutan. The hike to Tiger’s Nest is a moderate to difficult one but you’ll be able to do it if you have at least an average level of fitness. The hike takes between 3 to 5 hours depending on your speed and stamina.

The collection at the National Museum in Paro preserves a snap-shot of the rich cultural traditions of the country. Another site worth visiting in Paro is Drugyel Dzong or The Fortress of the Victorious



Taksang Monastery or Tiger’s Nest

Bhutanese. There are over 155 temples and monasteries in the area, some dating as far back as the 14th century. The country’s first and only international airport is also located in the region. Its close proximity to the historical and religious sites in the region has resulted in

the development of an array of luxurious, high-end tourist resorts making Paro one of the main international destinations for visitors. There is a vantage point near the airport which gives an excellent view of the airport and the valley.

On the way back to Phuentsholing, we came across the Iron Chain Bridge; the Tachogang Lhakhang Bridge crosses the Paro Chhu to the Dzong. This 600-year-old bridge was built by Thangtong Gyalpo in the late 1300s, which is said to have built 108 bridges all over Tibet and Bhutan. Made of wood and Iron, this is the first bridge to have ever been built in Bhutan. Tachogang Lhakhang Bridge greets its guests with a fantastic view of the surroundings.



A street in Paro

Thus, we indeed ended our trip on a happy note with a fantastic value for money tour but I have made a promise to be back soon as there is still a lot to be explored in this land of mystery, history, happiness, peace, spirituality and lots of Dzongs and Chortens.



The 600 year old Iron Chain Bridge

What I noticed in Bhutan

Bhutan is free entry country for residents of India, Bangladesh and Maldives but new entry policies are anticipated in the future because of overcrowding of regional tourists which is supposedly a threat to Bhutanese environmental standards and cleanliness. Moreover, incidents of insensitive behaviour of Indian tourists towards local customs and values have also been reported. In one such incident that happened in 2019, an Indian tourist climbed a 'Chorten' to click a selfie which is anathema to the locals, who view these constructions as having religious significance.

Bhutan will soon follow a 'high value, low volume' tourism policy. In other words, the Himalayan nation aims to attract only a few tourists each year while ensuring that they are high spending and other ecological aspects are maintained.

Indian vehicles are permitted to enter Bhutan without any hindrance, but there have been instances of Indian drivers, who were not used to mountain roads, meeting with serious accidents.

Surprising, there are no traffic lights in Bhutan. The drivers are all polite and drive their vehicles slowly. And stop and offer you to cross the roads first. The police also look impressive in their outfits.

You will find many prayer flags on the roads and atop hills mostly made out of five colors. Each color represents the five elements on a physical level, the building blocks of both our bodies and the environment. It is believed that when the wind moves prayer flags, even with

the slightest breeze, these prayers and blessings become activated, and then are carried through the air in a spiritual vibration across the vicinity.

Bhutan says no, to tobacco, plastics and smoking in public places. You will find local alcohol pretty cheap and of good quality.

The main architectural style of the buildings here is that of the Tibetan Buddhist style. Iron bars and iron nails are strictly not used in the construction, which makes the architecture of Bhutan different from the rest of the world. There is unity in construction and design of houses and establishments and these aspects give the scenic cities of Bhutan an unique view, just like the glorious landscapes.

Presently, Bhutan's currency, 1 Ngultrum is equal to 1 Indian Rupee.

You will find mostly women who head the families and run businesses and establishments.

Uncommon breeds of stray dogs with furry coats are a common feature on the Bhutan Roads and are often seen lying lazily in the sun.

The king is loved and respected by the people. It is interesting to note that during passing of King's cavalcade on the roads, every other car stops as a respect.

Archery is the national sport and you will find archery games at tourist spots.

You cannot wear short dress or pants inside monasteries and temples. You should follow the dress code.

Bhutanese like their food spicy and they add lots of chillies to their food, thus, check before you order. Thukpa



the famous Tibetan noodle soup is also regularly eaten in Bhutan.

Apart from the hiking and trekking to the temples and monasteries, visitors can also have adventurous activity of white water rafting, lake side camping and barbeques, bird watching and studying the history of the country.

Education and medical facilities is free for all the citizens. Even tourists are entitled for health care, in case of their health issues in their length of stay.

Paan eating is the favourite pass time of Bhutanese and you will find many large spittoons in crowded places.

For shopaholics, Paro town and Timphu local market is best place for buy authentic Bhutanese products.

Some facts about Bhutan:

The Druk is the "Thunder Dragon" of Tibetan and Bhutanese mythology and a Bhutanese national symbol. A Druk appears on the flag of Bhutan, holding jewels to represent wealth. Thus, Bhutan is known as "land of Thunder dragons or kingdom of dragons."

In Bhutan, Dzong are forts and Chortens are temples

Bhutan provides electricity to some parts of North East India.

Potatoes were introduced to Bhutan by India and Bhutanese respect this aspect. There are many versions of Ema datshi and Kewa datshi, popular dishes in Bhutan which is made of potatoes topped with cheese and chillies.

Bhutan was isolated from the world until 1970 and TV was introduced only in 1990.

The only carbon negative country and according to their law, 60% of Bhutan's land should always be in natural environment or forestland.

Sanchi Nayak is an aspiring travel and food enthusiast waiting to get out and travel with a great eye for photography.



VFS Global launches online appointment booking service for COVID-19 sample collection

To meet this demand and as part of an additional service offering, VFS Global has launched an online appointment booking service for COVID-19 RT-PCR Sample Collection in Delhi, Kochi and Mumbai. This service is offered in association with a network of certified medical laboratories approved by the Government of India and having all due accreditations for swab collection for COVID-19. Customers in Delhi, Kochi and Mumbai can book appointments on VFS Global's website and provide samples at designated associate medical laboratories from August 10, 2020.

'At Your Doorstep' services are also offered in Mumbai, Delhi and Kochi, that enables sample collection from the safety and comfort of a customer's home. Samples are collected by trained medical professionals from associate medical laboratories and the reports directly sent with full confidentiality to the registered email address of the customer.

Similar offerings will be extended to customers in Hyderabad, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Jalandhar, Chennai, Bengaluru, and Pune in the coming weeks.

CapaJet announces South East Asia & Pacific repatriation flights beginning August 19

After successfully organising and operating several repatriation flights in the last two months, bringing back thousands of stranded Indians home, CapaJet announced the operations of new flights beginning August 19, targeting key routes in South East Asia & Pacific. These flights will be operating from Jakarta, New Delhi, Port Moresby, Nadi and will touch down in Delhi, Singapore and Jakarta.

The first flight will be between Delhi, Singapore and Jakarta on August 19, followed by another Jakarta-Delhi flight on August 22. While online bookings have already started and tickets are selling fast, there are limited seats available. All the necessary approvals to run these special flights have been granted by the authorities of relevant countries. The flight from Port Moresby to Delhi will depart on August 23, while Nadi-New Delhi is scheduled for August 24.

India inks air bubble deal with Maldives

India has signed an air bubble agreement with the Maldives, making it the sixth country in a growing list of places where Indians can travel to. The first flight to Male from India will depart on August 18. The agreement with Maldives was inked during a video conference between External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar and his Maldives counterpart Abdulla Shahid.

During the virtual meet, India also announced a new Indian Line of Credit (LoC) of USD 400 million along with a grant component of USD 100 million for the Greater Male Connectivity Project. This will be the single-largest infrastructure project in the Maldives and will link Male with Villingili, Gulhifalhu, and Thilafushi islands.




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TAAI President, Jyoti Mayal exclusively invited for a joint meeting with MoT and MoCA

TAAI President, Jyoti Mayal was given an exclusive opportunity and invited on August 13, to have a joint meeting with Hon. Tourism

Minister Prahlad Singh Patel and Hon. Minister of Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri.



Suggestions were taken on, resumption of domestic tourism in India along with opening up of skies for domestic as well as international routes. Also, discussion on airline refunds was made along with other points including challenges of the trade due to pandemic and changes required to enhance the business of travel and tourism by travel agents. Both the Ministers along with Director General Tourism, Meenakshi Sharma and ADG-Rupinder Brar and Dy Secretary Civil Aviation Usha Padhee were present at the meeting, who assured full support and encouragement to the trade from their end.

International arrival process made easy with contact-less solution for passengers coming to India

Delhi International Airport Limited announced that it has developed a first-of-its-kind portal where India-bound international arriving flyers can fill the mandatory self-declaration form and also apply online for exemption from mandatory institution quarantine process. The online forms have been developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of External Affairs and Governments of various states and union territories including Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh among others

This will help in making passengers' journeys more convenient and comfortable in a contactless way as they won't have to fill the physical copies of the forms on arrival. Delhi Airport continues to be a hub for international travel. With India establishing an air bubble with several countries, the number of international arrivals is likely to go up. Then, this new online self-declaration and quarantine exemption portal will prove to be beneficial for the government officials in taking a swift and informed decision on granting exemption or know the latest health condition of the international arriving passenger.

Passengers seeking exemption under the five specific categories will need to fill the e-form available on the website of Delhi Airport 'www.newdelhiairport.in'. They will have to submit it along with supporting documents, including a copy of their passports, at least 72 hours before boarding their flights. However, there is no such time capping for passengers filling for the Self-Declaration form.

This process will help passengers avoid the hassle of providing the same set of information and documents to different authorities multiple times as the online portal has the smart option to autofill the second application using the previous application's request number. All applications will get auto-routed to the respective state government depending upon the first port of arrival. Similarly, all self-declaration applications will be routed to Airport Health Organization (APHO), under

the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. A copy of approval or rejection of exemption requests on specific grounds will be emailed to the passengers. Those who would be given exemption from mandatory institutional quarantine can show the same at transfer area after landing at Delhi Airport, and walk out of the airport hassle-free.



Qatar Airways' Privilege Club redefines loyalty programme with a newly enhanced Qmiles policy



Qatar Airways' loyalty programme, Privilege Club, announced a change to its Qmiles policy in efforts to enhance the programme to further honour members loyalty. When a member earns or spends Qmiles, their balance is valid for 36 months. Members can now earn or spend their Qmiles for as long as they stay active with the programme. This enhancement is among the initial steps in Privilege Club's journey of change in exceeding expectations from the airline passengers can always rely on.

Privilege Club offers four membership tiers – Burgundy, Silver, Gold and Platinum – each with their own exclusive benefits for members to enjoy. Qmiles are earned when members travel with Qatar Airways, oneworld® airlines, other airline partners or use the services of any of the airline's 60+ global partners. Qmiles are awarded based on the booking class purchased and can be redeemed for a range of exciting benefits and rewards including award flights, upgrades or extra baggage on Qatar Airways.

Sharjah re-opens and is ready to welcome tourists with assurance of top-level safety



Sharjah has reopened for tourism with the assurance of top-level safety for visitors. All safety measures and precautions in place are validated through the 'Sharjah Safe for Tourism' stamp, launched by the World Travel and Tourism Council to reassure travellers.

Visitors are expected to flock to the Emirate's tourism establishments. Tourists travelling to Sharjah are required to take a COVID-19 test at the Sharjah airport upon arrival (results usually out within 24 hours) and Indian passengers will also undergo another PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) test upon arriving at Sharjah Airport and must self-isolate until the results are out.

FAITH urges MoT to revive both demand and supply drivers

Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality, (FAITH) the policy federation of all the national associations representing the complete tourism, travel and hospitality industry of India had an inter-association meeting with the Ministry of Tourism.

To revive both demand and supply drivers, FAITH and its 10 member associations have proposed solutions such as dual-task forces strategy, free E-visa across categories, Uniform quarantine policies, creating consumer confidence and dispelling fear, etc, among many others. These issues were identified to enhance tourism demand while protecting tourism supply in India.

The dual-task force strategy is creating an inter-ministerial task force at the central government level and an interstate task force. These two task forces need to be empowered and need to be agile to fast track decision making as tourism will be the last sector to revive.

To stimulate domestic tourism FAITH associations recommended dispelling consumer fear and confusion by ensuring uniform inter-quarantine air and land border policy across all states. The associations proposed a multiyear e- visa holiday for all visa categories as and when till inbound demand to India stabilises. This needs to be complemented by publicising widely the revised 96 hour RT PCR policy for COVID testing and ensuring standardisation across all airports.

Marketing communication of tourism should be kick-started which should focus on positivity and safety of Indian tourism while weaving these messages around different product segments, destinations, and incredible concepts of Indian tourism in multiple Indian and international languages to help stimulate both domestic and international tourism

FAITH Associations have requested Delhi Hotels to be unlocked as Delhi is the gateway of North India. They have also requested for all states to support hospitality by giving a statutory waiver on all fixed liabilities power costs, liquor permits, property cesses and so on. They have suggested that GST be rationalised for hotels above Rs 7500 to be brought down to 12 per cent from 18 per cent which will stimulate domestic travel.

To financially protect the tourism companies, till the resolution plan is set in motion by the RBI, FAITH proposed extension of the moratorium of tourism and hospitality companies. FAITH Associations requested for an even more healthy partnership approach between Indian travel agents, IATA and Air India. Travel agents and consumers also need to insure against airline payment defaults of their advances and cancellations and mechanisms need to be put in place.

FAITH spokesperson said that the FAITH Associations are hopeful that the demand generation measures and supply protection measures for tourism will be implemented quickly to kick start Indian tourism and express their gratitude to Tourism Ministry for initiating this exercise.

Canada non-stop flight on Air Canada is back



Under the new travel guidelines, Air Canada announces the start of their flights again and will initially begin with a thrice a week non-stop flight between Delhi and Toronto.

Starting August 15 and till August 30 flights will operate on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday. Inventory is already open for sale on GDS and 'aircanada.com' and through all leading travel operators. Presently, only Canadian citizens, PR, students, work permit holders and Indian passport holders on visitor visas can travel.

Indian nationals carrying valid visa can now travel to UAE



Indian Ambassador to UAE Pavan Kapoor said that Indian nationals carrying any type of valid UAE visa can now travel to the country.

"Very pleased to see the @MoCA_GoI notification this evening as per which both Indian & UAE airlines can now carry any Indian national holding any type of valid UAE visa from India to UAE! @IndembAbuDhabi @cgidubai @MoFAICUAE," Kapoor tweeted.

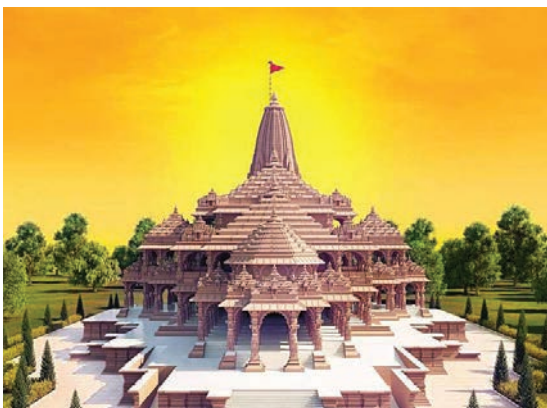
Flight operations between India and UAE had been shut for about five months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The ticket bookings for flights from UAE to 18 destinations in India from August 16 to 31 are open.

Lufthansa reinstates inbound flights to India



German airline, Lufthansa will recommence passenger flight services to India on specific routes, following a bilateral agreement between India and Germany. The airline announced that Indian citizens are eligible to travel on Lufthansa flights to India from the US, Canada, and other countries. Consequently, Lufthansa will be able to offer flights to Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. Lufthansa has already been operating outbound flights from India for several months, departing from Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore (Bengaluru) to its Frankfurt and Munich hubs, the latter being Europe's only five-star airport.

Mega plan for Ayodhya as a big centre of tourist, economic and religious activity



The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has prepared a master plan for turning the ancient holy city of Ayodhya into a 'Smart City'. It may be recalled that in November 2019, the UP government had agreed to develop seven municipal corporations, including Ayodhya and Gorakhpur, as 'smart cities'. Also, the Mayor of Ayodhya, Rishikesh Upadhyay, has disclosed that the ancient holy city will be developed as a 'major

pilgrimage centre' under the Smart City Project.

After the Supreme Court's verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case, the Uttar Pradesh government has made elaborate plans to construct a resplendent destination in the temple town. Expecting nearly 100,000 pilgrims a day at the Shree Ram Janmabhoomi temple once it is ready by the end of 2023 or 2024, the Uttar Pradesh government and the Centre are working on a plan to develop Ayodhya as a big centre of tourist, economic and religious activity. The state government aims to build Ayodhya as the biggest religious destination in North India with plans to constitute an 'Ayodhya Tirtha Development Board' to take this task further.

As per the officials, the mega plan will take shape simultaneously with the construction of the temple and will include an international Sri Ram Airport in Ayodhya, a modern railway station taking shape by next year, new religious tourism attractions like the world's tallest statue of Lord Ram and development of the entire 84-mile perimeter area the city as a religious destination. Several multi-level parking, a network of widened highways and a two-km long elevated road leading to Ram Janmabhoomi, underground cabling and deployment of electric vehicles to ferry people are on the anvil.

Tornos, the first to reckon Ayodhya's lost glory

Tornos is an established name in tourism for the last 26 years, specialising in immersive travel experiences and has been associated with projection of Ayodhya internationally, having worked and researched extensively on the revival of Ayodhya as a tourist destination. It now set a foot in Ayodhya by coming up with its office in this temple city, which will be a first Tour Company in Ayodhya and will provide all travel related services to incoming tourists.

Immersive travel experiences, in which the company specialises, will now be available to visiting tourists to Ayodhya. 'Mokshdayni Walk' and 'Ram Vivah' have been company's most innovative tourism products based on Ayodhya which were till now being operated and managed from Lucknow but now with its own set up in Ayodhya. Tornos is looking at providing employment opportunities to locals and to come up with many more immersive travel experiences to showcase this deserving destination to the world. Ayodhya can be seen as a sort after tourist destination and both state and the central governments are possibly seeing tourism to be Ayodhya's main economic driver.

Uttarakhand to develop 'Ramayana Circuit' to boost religious tourism

Uttarakhand is looking to develop a 'Ramayana Circuit', comprising all holy sites linked with Ramayana in the state, to boost religious tourism. According to the news reports, Uttarakhand tourism minister, Satpal Maharaj, shared the news with the press in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya during the Bhoomi Pujan ceremony recently.

Under this initiative, officials are keen to bring holy sites associated with Ramayana and build them for tourists to visit and learn about. "We have some holy sites and temples in the state which are linked with Ramayana. We will develop all of them and bring it under our initiative of Ramayana circuit to boost religious tourism in the state," Satpal Maharaj said.

He further said that Rishikesh has Bharat and Shatrughan temples in Rishikesh where it is believed that the two had met Lord Rama. There is also Raghunath temple in Devprayag which was also visited by Lord Rama. By putting these temples in the Ramayana circuit, people will also get to know about the importance of Uttarakhand in Ramayana.



340 km LoC road to put North Kashmir valleys on the tourism map

The planned border road running adjacent to the Line of Control is set to bring the picturesque mountains and Valleys of North Kashmir and take tourists right away from Gulmarg to Drass Kargil interspersed with almost a dozen tunnels. The starting point of the planned road will be the border village of Teetwal in Karnah tehsil of Kupwara district and the endpoint, Mushkoh Valley in Drass Kargil in the Union territory of Ladakh.

The plan is to not only construct the road but also develop the scenic spots it seeks to cover with the best tourist facilities so that visitors get to explore Kashmir beyond Srinagar, Gulmarg and Pahalgam and the immense tourism potential of mountains, valleys, passes and gushing rivers of Kupwara, Bandipora and Drass Kargil can be harnessed. The border road will be part of the proposed 600-km highway and the estimated cost of the entire highway is Rs 8,000 crore, according to J&K chief secretary B V R Subrahmanyam.





Lemon Tree Hotels debuts in the holy city of Dwarka with Lemon Tree Premier, Dwarka

Lemon Tree Hotels Limited, through its management subsidiary Carnation Hotels, announced its debut in Dwarka, Gujarat, with the launch of the 109 key hotel – Lemon Tree Premier, Dwarka. Located on the sacred lands of 'Lord Krishna's kingdom' and within the historic city of Dwarka, stands the aesthetically designed hotel. The property is strategically situated adjacent to the Iskon gate, which is just a kilometre from the magnificent Dwarkadhish Temple.

The hotel features 109 well-appointed rooms and suites, which combine understated elegance and old world charm with modern amenities and facilities. Designed for the comfort of every traveller, most of the plush and comfortable rooms and suites offer a majestic view of the Dwarkadhish Temple. The hotel provides a customized pilgrim tour that includes the Dwarkadhish Temple, Nageshwar Jyothirlinga Temple, Bet Dwarka Temples, Rukmani Temple and Gopi Talav lake. The closest airports are Rajkot Airport and Ahmedabad Airport. At a distance of 230 km from Somnath, Dwarka also makes for a perfect road trip destination for travellers who seek scenic delights.

Portugal launches COVID-19 travel insurance for international tourists

Foreign visitors planning their holidays in Portugal can now take out Portugal Travel Insurance, a travel insurance adapted to the new pandemic caused by COVID-19. The initiative is promoted by RNA Seguros de Assistência, and is available at 'portugaltravelinsurance.com'. The coverage is extended to the entire national territory and covers, among others, medical, surgical, pharmaceutical and hospital expenses associated with COVID-19, as well as cancellation, interruption or holiday period extension expenses, also due to the same pandemic. The objective is to guarantee visitors to Portugal, that they can travel around the country, safely and with confidence.

Tourists planning to visit Portugal will be able to register for free on the Health Passport through the PortugalHealthPassport website, which guarantees them the possibility of carrying out the Covid-19 test and access, at previously fixed prices, to urgent high-quality healthcare, five different types of check-ups, at CUF network of clinics and hospitals', Hospital da Luz, HPA Saúde and Lusíadas, throughout the national territory.

The Travel Corporation announces USD 300 Million 'Peace of Mind' promise

The Travel Corporation (TTC) and its portfolio of 40 travel brands have announced its \$300 Million US Dollars 'Peace of Mind Promise' to its loyal Travel Advisor community and their clients. As a family-owned and run business for the past 100 years, TTC acknowledges that part of its enduring success is to always conduct its business conservatively and today, the company is fully accredited in all the countries they operate across the globe.

These challenging times call for transparency and the announcement is a reassurance of TTC's current financial strength and integrity. The company has decided to share tangible financial information so that agents are fully aware that their clients' monies and future travels are safe and that the organisation is highly solvent.

Thus, the 'Peace of Mind Promise' gives the reassurance to their loyal Travel Advisors and their clients that their monies for future travel are safe and this goes beyond TTC's commitment to having a memorable holiday with them. The guest experience is always at the heart of TTC and they have further enhanced their well-being protocols and added brand-new Well-being Director Positions as they look forward to warmly welcoming back each and every guest on future trips.

In direct response to clients' needs for more flexible booking options in a post-COVID-19 world, TTC has implemented a refundable \$99 deposit, which allows guests to secure the trip they want, risk-free. Combined with amended flexible booking terms, customers are allowed to make free changes up and until 30 days prior to travel, allowing them to book with complete confidence and ensure a seamless payment experience. If for any reason clients change their minds, they can choose new dates and/or a new destination without penalty on the land portion of their trips.



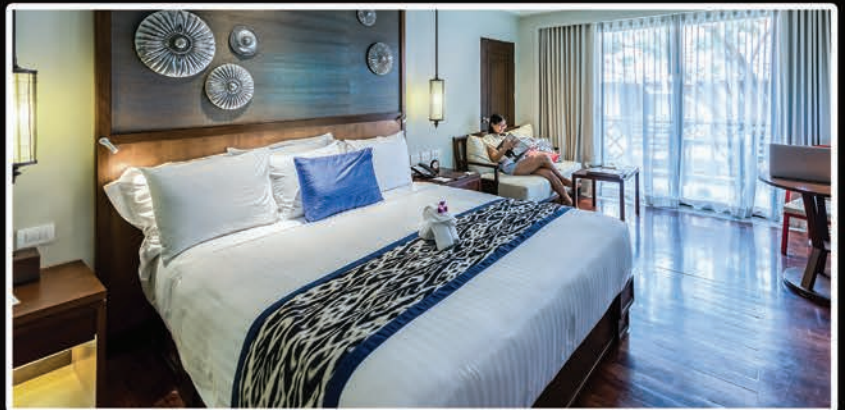
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