

**STAY
UPDATED**

Authentic Travel News

Enterprising Industry Views

www.traveltradejournal.com

TTJ Travel Trade Journal

Vol. 10 | Issue 11 | September 2020 | Pages 44 | ₹50

TTJ
Travel Trade Journal

GET NEWS
DELIVERED
TO YOUR WHATSAPP



To subscribe to us
Give a missed call to
9560264443

Save this number in your contacts

tripjack

IPL Fantasy League



Join **India's Largest** Fantasy League for **Travel Agents**

Free to play
&

Win Mega Prizes Daily



To Play Register on tripjack.com now

Get Best Deals on **HOTELS & Flights**



022 62506250

www.tripjack.com

Dekho Apna Desh. Up-close

A series of Webinars
under the over all theme
of Dekho Apna Desh by
The Ministry of Tourism

अतुल्य!भारत
Incredible!ndia

Indiatourism
Mumbai

Team Sampan

Editor & Publisher	:	Ravi Sharma
Contributing Editor	:	Naveen Lal
Consulting Editor	:	Rachita Sehgal
Bureau Head (West)	:	Prashant Nayak
Reporter	:	Sonika Bhandari
Reporter	:	Aditya Vikram Singh
Consulting Editor	:	Sonia Dutt
Sr. Designer	:	Subhash Chaudhary
HTML Developer	:	Jitender Singh Shekhawat
GM - Marketing	:	Sonika Bohra
Bureau Head (East)	:	Partha Chatterjee
Manager PR	:	Ankit Dixit
Cordinator (West)	:	Bharti Kalia
Consultant (West)	:	Sameer Montario
Project Head Events	:	Rohan Rana
Photographer	:	Parth Sharma
Asst. Manager Administration	:	Kuldeep Singh
Accounts Manager	:	Priyesh Ranjan

Email: info@sampanmedia.com

Editorial and Marketing Office :
Sampan Media Pvt. Ltd., B-7/114A, 3rd Floor, Safdarjung Enclave, Near Sukhmani Hospital, New Delhi - 110029 Ph: 9560264443, ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

All information in Travel Trade Journal (TTJ) is derived from sources we consider reliable. It is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. Opinions / views expressed by third parties in abstract or in interviews are not necessarily shared by us. Material appearing in the magazine cannot be reproduced in whole or in part(s) without prior permission. The publisher assumes no responsibility for material lost or damaged in transit. The publisher reserves the right to refuse, withdraw or otherwise deal with all advertisements without explanation. All advertisements must comply with the Indian Advertisements Code. The publisher will not be liable for any loss caused by any delay in publication, error or failure of advertisement to appear.

Owned and published by: Ravi Sharma, Editor & Publisher, 18/3, Railway Colony, Sarojini Nagar, P.S. Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021 and printed on his behalf at Polykam Offset, C-138, Naraina Industrial Area, Phase-1, New Delhi-110028.



Dear Friends,

Though the current climate for the travel industry may still look murky, the industry optimism to survive and thrive is impeccable, the hope to travel and the trend of revenge tourism is gaining momentum with each passing day.

While pandemics and disasters might dissuade us from time to time, they'll never keep us from doing what we were born to do, Travel!

Inside our TTJ Sept 2020 issue, we have an industry outlook on key indicators on the recovery of travel, organisations talking about the mitigation strategies applied to counter the COVID-19 crisis and a look at the future of travel. The time has come to position brands, destinations and attractions and be successful when this crisis is over.

We are united and let us be united in this struggle against the pandemic until it is over.

Take Care, Be Safe and Happy Reading!

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)
Prague | Vienna | Budapest

India's Leading Visa Facilitation Company

Inclusions

- Hotel
- Food
- Transport
- Sightseeing

Package Starting @ ₹ 20,000/-

Ace Inbound - Outbound Tour Operators

+91-11-45616161

journeys@jetsavetours.com

www.jetsavetours.com

30/28, 3rd Floor, East Patel Nagar, New Delhi- 110008

Kerala plans to welcome tourists in early October



The state of Kerala has been shut for tourism ever since COVID-19 broke out in the country, eventually leading to strict lockdowns across the nation. Kadakampally Surendran, Minister for Co-Operation, Tourism and Devaswom in Government of Kerala announced that the state is planning to welcome tourists in early October.

Kerala tourism department has prepared a report and plan for the same, with a very emphasis on safety and SOPs for the same. The Minister referring to the plan, said, "The plan includes highlighting the importance of wellness and ayurveda for immunity. The file has been presented to the chief minister and health department for their advice."

Thus, the reopening of the state's tourism has come as a huge respite for the industry. While a specific date for the same has not been announced yet, it is clear that due protocols and safety standards would be in place when tourism resumes in Kerala.

Gujarat declares its first Heritage Tourism Policy



Unveiling its first Heritage Tourism Policy, the Gujarat government has allowed the opening up of heritage hotels, museums, banquet halls and restaurants inside historic palaces, forts and buildings. This policy applies to historic structures that existed before January 1, 1950, and will allow international and domestic tourists to see and experience historic structures from close quarters.

Under this policy, a new heritage hotel or an existing one will get financial assistance of ₹ 5-10 crore for renovation or expansion. The basic heritage structure should not be altered during this process. The government will give a 20 per cent subsidy (maximum of ₹ 5 crore) if the investment is up to ₹ 25 crore. If the investments are over ₹ 25 crore, then the maximum subsidy would be ₹ 10 crore.

Similarly, to begin a new heritage museum, banquet hall or restaurant or to renovate or restore an existing one, financial assistance of ₹ 45 lakh to ₹ 1 crore will be provided. This financial aid will be given at 7 per cent interest for five years and will not exceed ₹ 30 lakh in a year.

CSMIA launches RT-PCR testing facility for passengers

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) has launched an express COVID-19 RT-PCR test facility for all passengers arriving at the airport. Located near the exit gates of the airport, the testing facility is available around the clock at a very reasonable cost to all passengers. CSMIA plans to further extend this availability of this service for passengers departing from CSMIA shortly as well.

In compliance with the standards of the ICMR and NABL, the RT-PCR test is available at a charge of ₹ 1600 onwards. Passengers can make an online booking on www.suburbandiagnosics.com or register themselves at the helpdesk set up at the arrival terminal to enroll for the RT-PCR test and receive a digital and physical copy of the test report in under 8 hours. All international passengers are advised to book their connecting flight with a gap of 8-12 hours.

Upon submission of test samples, arriving passengers will be guided to a waiting lounge with special F&B arrangements while waiting on the test report. Alternatively, passengers can also opt to book a room at the airport hotel, with the approval of the state authorities. Passengers who have tested negative will be allowed to proceed onward to their final destinations; they will receive a stamp indicating a home quarantine by the state officials. In the event of a positive report, passengers will be transferred by the state authorities to a designated institution. CSMIA plans to further extend the RT-PCR test service to passengers departing from the airport shortly wherein passengers can opt to undergo the test before departing from the airport and have their report emailed to them.

Tour packages to attract five per cent TCS from Oct 1

Starting October 1, 2020, any amount remitted abroad to buy foreign tour packages, and any other foreign remittance made above ₹ 7 lakh, will now attract TCS (Tax-Collected-at Source) unless the tax is already deducted at source (TDS) on that amount.

While the tax on foreign tour packages will be 5 per cent for any amount, for other foreign remittances the tax will kick in only for the amount spent above ₹ 7 lakh. For education-related foreign remittances funded by loans, though, the tax will be just 0.5 per cent for the amount above ₹ 7 lakh, considering many Indian students take loans to pursue education abroad.

Under the Reserve Bank of India's liberalised remittances scheme, individuals can remit a maximum of \$250,000 abroad every year. The provision to collect tax on remittances was introduced in the Finance Act of 2020 subject to riders and notified on March 27, to take effect from October 1.

Dubai launches Global Retirement Programme

The Government of Dubai has launched

Retire in Dubai, a global retirement programme that offers foreign retirees aged 55 and above the opportunity to enjoy the distinctive lifestyle offered by the emirate.

Developed by the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) in collaboration with the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs (GDRFA-Dubai), the competitive programme's packages cover healthcare, real estate, insurance and banking.

Eligible applicants will be provided a Retirement Visa, renewable every five years. The retiree can choose between one of three financial requirements: earning a monthly income of AED20,000 (approx. USD5,500); having savings of AED1 million (approx. USD275,000); or owning a property in Dubai worth AED2 million (approx. USD550,000). In its initial phase, the programme will focus on UAE residents working in Dubai who have reached retirement age. Dubai's close proximity with the native countries of a large majority of residents makes it a convenient retirement destination for them.



Singapore Tourism Board to start accepting applications for pilot MICE events

In line with the safe and gradual resumption of economic activities in Singapore, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) will start accepting applications for organisers to pilot Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) events of up to 250

attendees from October 1, 2020. STB and the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) will review all MICE event proposals, and event organisers may proceed only upon obtaining MTI's approval. There will be pilot events taking place under this arrangement, such as the Singapore International Energy Week (SIEW) Conference, in October 2020.

Organisers who apply to pilot events with up to 250 attendees must demonstrate their ability to implement Safe Management Measures to meet a set of health and safety outcomes. More details will be released at a later stage. The decision to accept applications to pilot MICE events of up to 250 attendees comes on the back of STB's Safe Business Events Framework for business events of up to 50 attendees, which was first announced in July 2020. STB operationalised the framework with two pilots – the first concluded successfully in August 2020, while plans for the second pilot, which will take place in late September 2020, are underway.



OTOAI writes to PMO, urges immediate roll-back of TCS



Outbound tourism traffic from India stands at a complete dead end in the absence of international commercial flights operating from the country. Given the rising number of COVID cases in India, outbound tourism will take a while before picking up again. In light of the same, OTOAI (Outbound Tour Operators of India) has written to the PMO to roll-back the implementation of TCS as this will further kill the business of the travel and tour operators. In addition to the PMO, OTOAI has also written to Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Finance Minister, Government of India; Shri Pramod Chandra Mody, Chairman, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance and Shri Prahlad Singh Patel, Tourism Minister, Government of India. OTOAI Team had approached the Ministry of Tourism and PMO in February 2020 as well, soon after TCS was announced and was able to convince the authorities to hold back its implementation by six months.

Speaking on the matter, Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI, said, "The Aviation Industry is already in turmoil and the condition of the tourism sector is no better. Implementation of TCS will further impact a lot of companies, especially small and medium companies, and will force them to shut the business, which will further add to the alarmingly high number of people losing their jobs in the tourism sector. The travel and tourism industry provides jobs to around 11 per cent of the total population today and the suffering of the Tourism sector will vastly affect the employment quotient of the country. The Government must listen to us and roll-back the implementation of TCS."

Oman Air to resume scheduled service from October 1



Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, will return to scheduled service on October 1, with flights to 16 cities in 12 countries. The airline will connect Muscat with London, Istanbul, Frankfurt, Cairo, Mumbai, Delhi, Kochi, Dubai, Doha, Dar Es Salaam, Zanzibar, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Lahore and Islamabad, with more destinations to be added in the near future. Flights to India are subject to Indian authorities lifting restrictions for scheduled international passenger flights.

Win exciting prizes with Tripjack

Tripjack has announced an exciting competition for the travel trade based on the IPL matches. All agents can sign up and win prizes every day with free hotel stays, air tickets, gifts and loyalty points redeemable on future bookings. Hasan Patel, Director, Tripjack shares more on the initiative.

Team TTJ

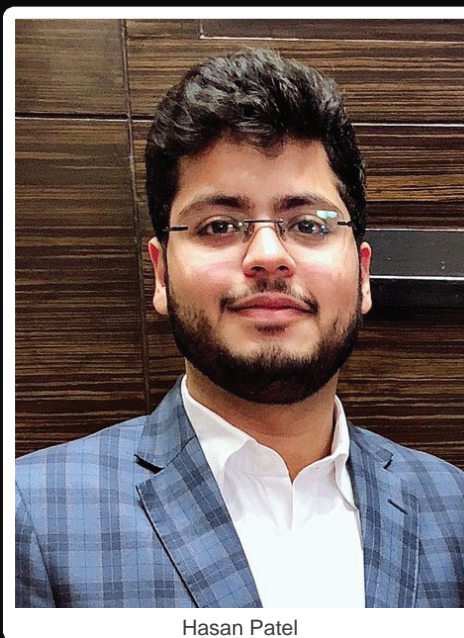
Tripjack is one of India's foremost B2B travel portals, constantly evolving and adding value in the business by giving its distributors and agents the best technology deals and a user-friendly platform to transact and achieve their own financial freedom.

What was the idea behind this activity? Why choose IPL to conduct this activity?

Over the last few months, the entire country has experienced a big lull period. All business and entertainment activities were slow. Cricket and especially the IPL is a massive event in India, and after all these months we are really looking forward to it. We wanted to share this experience amongst our travel partners and that's when the idea came up. We think with business activity resuming in the last 2 months, the travel fraternity requires a mood uplifter and hence we organised the Tripjack Travel Agent IPL Fantasy League. It is a unique and new concept, and everyone is very excited about it.

What are some of the prizes that participants will stand to win? Please emphasise the frequency of prize announcements.

There are about 60 matches in the IPL, and we will have contests daily. Before



Hasan Patel

every match travel partners can log in to the fantasy app or website through tripjack.com and set up a team of the best 11 players. All contests are free to play, and the top winners from every match can win hotel stays, air tickets, gifts, and loyalty points. Tripjack.com has great deals for hotels and flights, so the loyalty points will be available in the agency account after the IPL is over, and can be used for additional discounts against future trip bookings.

When will the prizes be announced? Is there one grand prize to be won at the end?

There is an opportunity to win prizes for every match. Along with that, we will have a weekly and season-long leaderboard. The

winners of the leaderboards will be eligible to win bonus rewards and mega prizes. And absolutely, the top lucky winners with the highest points earned throughout the IPL will win surprise MEGA prizes!

How do agents participate in this?

The fantasy concept is great fun because it is free to play with prizes every day, the travel partners are very excited. After signing up the user will receive 1500 Bonus Game Cash (which can be used to play the games). To participate, first, you need to sign up for Tripjack, and then before every IPL match, you need to select your best 11 players from both teams. You cannot join the contest once the match starts. As the game progresses every run, wicket, boundary, etc earns your team and player certain points. The participants with the highest points will be the winners.

When can they start signing up and where? Till when will this competition be open to participation?

Signups are open now! Create a tripjack.com within 2 minutes, and then click on Join Fantasy. There are additional rewards for signing up early. The competition will be open till the end of the IPL season.

Anything else you would like to add?

It is a great activity for all travel agents across India to add some extra fun to this IPL season. Even for those who don't follow cricket so much, because there is an opportunity to win daily prizes it is definitely worth a try! We as a team at Tripjack are really looking forward to this IPL season and contest.

tripjack

IPL Travel Agent Fantasy League

"Win Mega Prizes Every IPL Match"



DUBAI'S EVENTS INDUSTRY STAGES A GRAND COMEBACK

The beat is back in Dubai's events sector with an array of regional and international artists heralding the restart of an industry that is a key pillar of the city's tourism destination proposition and a growing contributor to its economy. The restart of the events sector has also been made possible by the decisive citywide management of the global pandemic leading to a phased resumption of events and entertainment activities, starting with a line-up of events hosted under the Dubai Summer Surprises (DSS) programme.

Event organisers received a further boost from Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM), which gave the green light for hosting live events, as well as indoor and outdoor concerts supported by precautionary measures to ensure the health and safety of fans and artists.

Three sold-out shows by international comedian Jimmy Carr highlight Dubai's position as a safe and popular events and entertainment hub. Jimmy Carr, who was originally scheduled to perform two shows at Dubai World Trade Centre on 13 and 14 August, accommodated a third show due to popular demand. All three shows were part



of DSS, which ran from the city's summer events calendar on 9 July.

His shows were a major safety test that the events sector passed without a hitch. Each show was held at 30 per cent capacity to allow for sufficient social distancing space with the venue providing a chequerboard seating format for fans. Despite the 'new normal' rules, it was still intimate enough for Jimmy Carr to build an enjoyable interactive rapport with the audience.

International stand-up comedians are regularly flown in to perform at the Laughter Factory with sell-out shows every month, with July bringing out the best of Dublin's funniest comedian Danny O'Brien, storytelling comic Nick Page and Irish Times columnist comedian Peter Flanagan. Performing their hilarious acts in August

were top Scottish comedian Leo Kears, Eddy Brimson, one of the UK's funniest comedians appearing for the first time in Dubai and Dana Alexander, one of Britain's and Canada's hottest emerging young comedians.

A global event that was held across virtual platforms, 'Tomorrowland around the World' was streamed live exclusively to the Festival Arena at Dubai

Festival City, which was the only physical venue in the world to present the event to a live audience and also the first socially distanced entertainment event in the UAE. Music fans also enjoyed concerts by two top singers from the region, Emirati singer Hussain Al Jassmi and the talented Yara at the Dubai Opera as part of the Eid in Dubai celebrations. Fans were also able to attend a Hologram Concert featuring the late Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum at Dubai Opera.

As one of the first few cities in the world to reactivate the events industry, Dubai has lined-up events like Fall/Winter Collection retail campaign, the Dubai Home Festival, the Dubai Fitness Challenge and the iconic Dubai Shopping Festival, which kicks off in December.



Ahmed Al Khaja, Chief Executive Officer, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE)

Dubai's tourism strategy is guided by the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and the ruler of Dubai to ensure Dubai becomes the most visited city in the world. Dubai has a long history of hosting leisure events featuring A-list musicians and performers, who have made the city a part of their world tours over the years. We are now excited to see the events environment regaining its vibrancy with the return of live events, paving the way for international and regional stars to take centre stage, showcasing Dubai as a safe destination and further enhancing its position as a leading global events hub. Dubai Tourism will continue working with its stakeholders and partners to keep up the momentum in the events sector, as we prepare to cater to the diverse and evolving needs of visitors ahead of the full reopening of the tourism industry.

Recasting current problems into Proactive Goals

Jaal Shah, Group Managing Director, Travel Designer Group, founded RezLive.com in 2007, with determination to build the organisation on a strong financial foundation. With a vision to be profitable from the first year, debt-free and cash-rich, the company leaders analysed all the risks associated with their business model such as currency exchange, credit and business disruptions and strategically worked on strengthening the organisation on all these aspects. These efforts paid off when the cash flows came to a grinding halt during the pandemic. They had no trouble in refunding their clients and hence are now able to plan diligently for the post-COVID-19 market.

Prashant Nayak

The travel industry is one of the worst impacted industries because of the COVID-19 pandemic and Travel Designer Group was not immune to it. As an organisation, they went through one of the most challenging times throughout their existence since 1999 and their business impact is similar to all other organisations in the industry.

So, with leisure, business and MICE restrictions, the only business left was from stranded travellers and quarantine requirements. "Fortunately for us, we started tracking the developments of COVID-19 as early as January. When some parts of the world started going into lockdowns, we started preparing, in early March, for a similar scenario in the countries where we operate. This ensured that we did not face any major issues in our operations and helped us to settle seamlessly to work from home. It is all behind us now and we are seeing green shoots in some of our major markets. We should see more recovery in the coming months," says Jaal.

The freeze in cash flow was so sudden and so deep that the pandemic has tested the immunity of all travel companies. In the early stage of the pandemic, there was an expectation of a V-shaped recovery to the economy. While many industries bounced back significantly after the lockdowns, travel and tourism is still facing the brunt of movement restrictions between countries and in many cases within a country. It was clear that the industry was in for a slow recovery.

While assessing the recovery route, Jaal adds, "We also had to restructure our organisation set-up to reduce our cost,



Jaal Shah

align it to current business levels and strengthen it for sustainable business. We had to make some tough decisions and let go of some wonderful talent we had. However, we ensured that we were transparent right from the start and tried to minimize the impact in all possible ways. Earlier this year, we earmarked 2020 as a year of innovation. We kept our promise of launching a completely redesigned booking platform REZ2020 in March and since then we have rolled out several first-of-its-kind innovative features that can help our travel agent clients to build a sustainable business model."

From an industry perspective, according to Jaal, sector-specific relief measures from governments will help. Examples can be taken from countries such as the UK and Thailand. The recent VAT cut for the hospitality and tourism sector in the UK has spurred an increase in customer spending; the Thailand government subsidises domestic travel

up to fifty per cent for its citizens. Such measures will remove the fear of travelling and encourage people to take a holiday.

From an organisation's perspective, there is no easy medicine. "The market size has shrunk, and it is going to take considerable time to recover. Proactiveness will be the key. Taking action in the current situation with proactive goals is essential to be viable in business in the future. As we speak, we have many clients who are getting substantial volumes of business in domestic tourism and staycations. In our interactions with them, we are thrilled to know how these companies are leveraging social media and innovative modes of communication to reach out to their target audience, present them with up-to-date travel advisories and promote exciting domestic holidays," shares Jaal.

Speaking about his staff and keeping them motivated during these difficult times, Jaal shares, "Our biggest strength is our people. When we noticed lockdowns being implemented in many countries, we asked our team to be ready for such an eventuality. We were well prepared to announce work from home even before lockdowns were announced in many countries where we operate. When the refund requests started pouring in, our sales, operations and accounts team worked hand-in-hand to ensure that every query was closed and refunded within an acceptable timeframe. Now as we look to recover, I am confident that our team will step up to the challenge and take our organisation forward. I believe that motivation comes from a sense of purpose. Our objective to help our clients build a sustainable business model in the post-COVID recovery phase will drive our people."

'Flexibility' is the new watchword for APAC airline industry recovery: aMADEUS

From tsunamis to ash clouds and global financial crises, the travel industry has seen its share of setbacks over the past few years. Yet COVID-19 is an altogether bigger challenge.

Cyril Tetaz, Executive Vice President Airlines, Amadeus, Asia Pacific

The global pandemic has had an unparalleled and devastating impact on the aviation industry in Asia Pacific with airlines grounding their entire fleets for months. And although in some countries in the region where air travel is tentatively resuming, IATA's latest figures predict that demand for air travel is unlikely to reach 2019 levels again at least till 2024.

Despite this challenging backdrop, there are still opportunities for carriers that can adapt their operations. But to give customers what they want, and to navigate the ongoing uncertainty, flexibility will need to become the new industry watchword.

There are four areas where flexibility will be critical to Asia Pacific's airlines surviving - and having a shot at thriving - in the era of COVID-19:

Disruption management

The highly changeable nature of the COVID-19 policies and situation means that airlines need to ensure that their disruption management systems are informed by the very latest data. The system needs to be agile enough to respond in real time so that any changes are managed seamlessly from the passenger's perspective.

The increasing ubiquity of mobile apps and wearable makes it easier than ever for carriers to communicate last-minute changes with their passengers. But the holy grail of successful disruption management is also to be able to offer alternative flight options, and short-term accommodation if necessary, in a matter of seconds and in a highly personalised way.

Technology will be critical to airlines achieving this at scale, with the latest breed of sophisticated inventory management systems – like Amadeus' Altéa Passenger Service System (PSS) – underpinned by big data analytics, machine learning algorithms and cloud computing to allow real-time customisation for individual passengers in response to disruptions.

Cabin configurations

Over the past few months, many airlines have refocused some of their fleets to support repatriation flights, transport of cargo and medical supply shipments. Korean Air and Asiana even reported profits



Cyril Tetaz

in Q2 by focusing on their cargo businesses.

To do this, many have repurposed their aircraft by adding additional cargo space to flight cabins and extra space around passengers and families to apply maximum safety measures. Agility has been key, through the seamless integration between airline systems from inventory to reservation, departure control, and offer management.

Increased choice through interlining and codeshares

The reduction in flight routes has prompted increased airline consolidation and collaboration, as industry players across the value chain unite to survive; and we expect interlining and codeshare agreements to become a mainstay of the industry in the region as the pandemic continues, ensuring travellers still have as much choice as possible.

As well as choosing the right partners to collaborate with, success will again come down to airlines having the right technology infrastructure in place. Dynamic customer identification and sophisticated airline policy controls to automate flight schedules and codeshare agreements will be key; as will the ability for carriers to easily work together with each other and with third-party partners.

For this reason, we've made 'collaboration' a founding principle of our airline solutions. Our Altéa suite, for example, is designed to deliver a common core functionality to a community of airlines as an alternative to high cost, on-going IT development

within each airline, while we've made our Amadeus Airline Platform an open system to allow third parties and start-ups to develop on top of Amadeus technology. Crucially, this helps to fast-track development from concept to market, which is more important than ever in the current climate.

Flexible cancellation, rebooking and revenue management

Finally, reassuring travellers of the ease of cancellation and rebooking will be critical to tempting people back to frequent flying in the COVID era. Again, having a smart inventory management system is the key to making the cancellation and rebooking process as easy and seamless as possible for sales partners and the end customer.

This includes using advanced availability management techniques, dynamic customer identification and sophisticated airline policy controls to automate flight schedules, codeshare agreements, re-accommodation and seating.

Carriers could also consider turning any under-capacity issues into a positive by making it easier for their customers to redeem existing reward points, as another way to tempt travellers back to flying and engender long-term loyalty.

Flexible, state of the art revenue management will also be critical for airlines to move quickly to recovery; shifting away from models that use historical data in favour of real-time demand analysis and use of merchandising techniques to shape hyper-relevant offers. Airlines will need to be more responsive to fast-changing consumer behaviour and the fact that booking lead times are getting much shorter.

For this reason, we have incorporated artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms into our revenue management solutions. This allows an airline to build models where there is no precedent upon which to rely and quickly identify patterns of recovery at different market, country and route levels, permitting airline partners to seize opportunities as they emerge.

Flexibility should be the cornerstone of all carriers' mid-term plans – building in a greater level of agility than ever before so that technology, systems and staff can respond quickly as the situation inevitably continues to change.



Constantly adding on new benefits for passengers



For recovery of the aviation industry, more than anything, it will now also depend upon the consumer confidence in airlines with regards to safety. IndiGo is taking measures beyond the guidelines as well to ensure a safe flying experience and are confident that they will be able to restore the trust of their customers in air travel, as it is the safest mode for travel in the current scenario given the protections and precautions implemented. William Boulter, Chief Commercial Officer, IndiGo, shares more on the steps the airline has taken to be successful post the crisis.

Prashant Nayak

What are the key indicators you have been watching or following which can/will help the recovery of the travel industry?

There have been a lot of predictions about the recovery of the aviation industry, which has been hit hard by this pandemic. We have seen a positive trend over the first hundred days of resumption of operations post the lockdown including the steadily rising PLF, unit revenue and future bookings on the back of increasing customer confidence in air travel. The relaxation in state government restrictions and the allowance of 60 per cent capacity by the central government will further help in increasing capacity as well as demand.

What programmes/projects has the airline been working on (or your strategies) to be successful post-crisis?

Operational Strategy

We have explored new streams of revenue with charter flights and we are going aggressive on CarGo. We have earmarked ten aircraft for CarGo operations on freighter mode, with CarGo in cabin and we shall continue this even after resuming pre-COVID capacity levels. Currently, we are operating 600 scheduled commercial flights, charter flights, CarGo and air bubble flights every day. We have already operated over 800 international charters and repatriation flights from June to August 2020.

In fact, 68 per cent customers in our consumer survey said they feel air travel is the safest, followed by road (24 per cent) and rail (8 per cent). The increased safety and confidence in air travel is also expected to shift some of the travellers from rail to air transport over the next one year, fuelling recovery for the aviation sector.

Building Customer Confidence

We introduced our Lean Clean Flying Machine initiative, aimed to educate our passengers about the steps being taken for their safety and safety of others, once air travel resumed in May to enhance their confidence in air travel. Our safety measures enable contactless travel for customers with social distancing maintained at all points – airport entry, baggage-drop counters, security checks, boarding gates, coaches, ramp and baggage claim and

providing electronic receipt (SMS) of the checked-in baggage. We are regularly disinfecting all common surfaces such as the baggage drop counters, boarding gates, coaches, ramps, wheelchairs, crew vehicles and of course, the aircraft itself, are being thoroughly disinfected using approved cleaning agents. The tray tables, armrests, overhead nozzles, lavatories and galleys are receiving special attention, given the frequency of contact. We are providing personal protective equipment (safety kit) to all passengers at the boarding gate to make sure they are covered. Our ground staff and crew members (cockpit and cabin) are always wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) appropriate for their roles. Along with this, IndiGo's travel assistance now has hospitalization benefits along with coverage for COVID-19.

Our consumer survey which we conducted in June highlighted that 95 per cent customers prioritize health and wellness of the airline staff, while 92 per cent of them feel that sanitation and safety protocols by airlines need to be in place. Personal safety kits (90 per cent) and contactless travel experience (89 per cent) were next on priority. As an industry, we have done well in communicating all our safety measures and protocols across platforms, with almost 93 per cent of travellers being aware of them. The survey highlighted that 65 per cent customers felt confident that IndiGo will ensure clean and safe travel for their journey. Factors such as lack of social distancing by other passengers (62 per cent), quarantine measures by states (55 per cent) and sitting in the aircraft with so many people (55 per cent) have been identified as key deterrents for air travel. While 57 per cent customers are fairly aware of IndiGo's Lean, clean flying machine programme to promote safe and clean travel experience

Recently, we have re-started 6E Tiffin for our passengers with a range of hygienic, healthy and delicious snacks, for domestic and select international bookings. Prioritising the safety, we have opened this only through pre-booking and purchase of the same is not available on board, so that there will be minimal interaction between and more safety between the passengers and our cabin crew on our lean, clean flying machine.

Stimulating Demand

In order to stimulate demand, we

have launched the following initiatives for our customers:

Flex pay: Passengers can secure their bookings by paying only 10 per cent of the total fare amount and defer their payment on an IndiGo domestic flight for a period of up to 15 days either from the date of bookings or before the date of departure.

'Tough Cookie': We launched the initiative on the occasion of National Doctor's Day to express gratitude towards the tireless commitment and service being given by the medical fraternity to the nation and humanity. As part of the initiative, we are providing up to 25 per cent Tough Cookie discount on the airfares to the nurses and doctors who have serviced in these challenging times. Currently, we have about 100 doctors/nurses flying with us every day.

6E double seat bookings: The option allows customers to book two seats for a single passenger, while the charges for the extra seat are effectively up to 25 per cent lower than the original booking cost. This offering also addresses the concern expressed in our customer survey, wherein 62 per cent passengers found lack of social distancing by others a key deterrent for air travel

Hotel Partnerships: We have partnered with Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Limited (ASPHL) wherein ASPHL has created special room packages across its 21 hotels for all IndiGo flyers where they pay for a single night and get second room night complimentary. We have also partnered with Accor Hotels to offer accelerated benefits to Ka-ching cardholders.

What are your thoughts on the 'New Age in the travel industry' post the pandemic?

We are stringently adhering to all the 'new normal in travel' protocols with our safety measures for COVID-19 protection and I do believe, that some of these will now continue to be a part of our overall hygiene practices even after the vaccine is developed. The safety guidelines for air travel have been devised in consultation with the government and medical experts to ensure the safety of passengers and crew. We are taking measures beyond the guidelines as well, to ensure a safe flying experience and are confident that we will continue to strengthen the trust of our customers in air travel, as the safest mode for travel, in the current scenario.

Rebuilding trust in true Virgin Atlantic style

Virgin Atlantic has reshaped its end-to-end customer experience, from arrival at the airport to landing at the passenger's destination. Besides keeping them safe, Virgin Atlantic allows its travellers to enjoy the exceptional service the airline is known for! Alex McEwan, Country Manager, Virgin Atlantic, India, is excited to welcome passengers back on their Delhi and Mumbai flights that started this month and marking the beginning of their recovery route.

Prashant Nayak

Relaxation of travel restrictions will naturally be the largest catalyst for the recovery of the travel industry. Virgin Atlantic is calling for both UK and US governments to introduce robust passenger testing regimes to lift travel restrictions whilst protecting public health. Restoring traveller confidence is an essential part of the recovery of the industry.

Talking about strategies to be successful post-crisis, Alex says, "Like all travel businesses, the pandemic has had a huge impact on our financial position. We are pleased to announce that we have completed a £1.2bn private-only solvent recapitalisation of the airline and holiday business. This significant milestone puts Virgin Atlantic in a position to rebuild its balance sheet, restore customer confidence and welcome passengers to the skies safely, as soon as they are ready to travel. We have also taken measures to simplify our fleet, accelerating the retirement of 747-400s and A330-200s. By 2022 our younger, greener fleet will comprise solely of twin-engine aircraft reducing CO2/RTK emissions by an estimated further 10 per cent, building on the 18 per cent efficiency already achieved since 2007."

Virgin Atlantic's endeavour in 'the new age in the travel' is to provide a safe, healthy and hassle-free experience to its customers. To do so, they have undertaken some bold initiatives and changes so that the customers can book with confidence with them. To



Alex McEwan

make the customers travel hassle-free and provide them with peace of mind, they have announced complimentary COVID-19 global insurance cover which will apply to all existing and new bookings, travelling from August 24, 2020, up until March 31, 2021.

The insurance policy with Allianz Assistance offers comprehensive cover if a Virgin Atlantic customer or travel companion becomes ill with COVID-19 while on a trip. Emergency medical costs, associated expenses such as transport and accommodation and repatriation up to £500,000 are included, as well as costs if a customer is denied boarding or held in quarantine.

"Our flexible booking policy gives as much choice as possible to customers as they make their future travel plans. Customers booking with the airline have the option to make two date changes to their flights, with rebooking available up until September 30, 2022. These date changes have the associated change fee waived, though potential fare differences may be incurred if the new travel dates are after November 30, 2020. Customers may also change their origin or destination or make one free name(s) change on the booking," informs Alex.

To ensure the health and safety of their customers and their people, Virgin Atlantic is implementing additional measures to offer peace of mind in the airport and when taking to the skies. These include enhanced and thorough cleaning practices at check-in, boarding gates and onboard including the use of electrostatic spraying of high-grade disinfectants onboard in all their cabins and lavatories, ensuring no surface is left untouched. "Safe distancing will also be adhered to wherever possible, particularly at check-in and boarding and where not possible, masks will be required. We will provide a personal Health Pack for the wellbeing and comfort of all our customers, which will contain medical-grade face masks as a requirement to be worn onboard, surface wipes and hand gel," assures Alex.

For their Flying Club (loyalty programme) members they have introduced measures to make programme even more rewarding. On this, Alex further shares, "We have introduced tier points for redemption flights and extended Flying Club tier status and benefits by a further six months providing greater opportunities for customers to progress or maintain their tier status. Also, we have expanded our onboard food and beverage service in all cabins for customers whilst continuing to ensure the services are designed to limit interaction, and the food is enclosed and controlled from preparation in a COVID-19 -safe, monitored environment to the moment it is served."

The airline is committed to supporting its customers and look forward to welcoming them onboard and flying them safely to their destinations in truly Virgin Atlantic style.



On an endeavour to offer their customers the best

Vistara remains committed to its long-term expansion plans, which are to densify its domestic network and expand globally. As a relatively young airline, it has been nimble in its approach since the early stages of the journey which has rewarded the airline in many ways. TTJ speaks with Vinod Kannan, Chief Commercial Officer, Vistara, to know more about the latest developments at Vistara.

Sonika Bohra

Although the aviation business is far from reaching normalcy, a gradual but steady improvement is being observed in traffic and overall passenger confidence. Insights of Vistara's customer survey concluded in June 2020 have given them great confidence, which revealed that 65 per cent of the respondents expected to take their next Vistara flight before December 2020. 25 per cent of them indicated that they would fly to visit their friends and relatives, while 35 per cent of the respondents expected to fly for business.

Even globally tourism is slowly gaining momentum with several countries opening their borders for tourists. The list of countries entering into 'transport bubble' pacts with India is growing as well, enabling travel for business, VFR and in some cases, even leisure. Vistara is already operating special non-stop flights to Dubai and London while they are reviewing the opportunity to operate similar flights to Paris and Frankfurt.

"Today, the entire industry has come together to rebuild passenger confidence in flying, which is already showing positive signs and helping fuel demand. At Vistara, our campaign #FlyingFeelSafeAgain, aimed to generate awareness about air travel being the safest mode of travel, has been very well received. We have also been in constant touch with our customers to inform them about the safety measures and other customer-centric initiatives to generate awareness while focusing on their feedback and suggestions," explains Vinod.

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, there has been a natural focus on stepping up safety and hygiene measures across various touchpoints. Vistara's survey had also revealed that fear of exposure during air travel is one of the key concerns among travellers. Hence, in a post-pandemic world, the touchless feature is going to play a key role in ensuring safety throughout the passenger's journey and will be a deciding factor for the customers to choose an airline.



Vinod Kannan

At Vistara, they were already on their digital transformation journey which has only been fast-tracked due to the pandemic. Initiatives taken by Vistara like scan and fly, Self-tagging, self-baggage drop, self-boarding, e-gates, biometrics/face recognition and e-boarding passes are all touchless solutions which will go a long way to build confidence in flying.

Also, for long-haul international flights, travellers now increasingly prefer to fly non-stop to their destinations to avoid exposure. This is another opportunity for Vistara, as they aim to connect more international destinations with direct flights to/from India.

Cathay Pacific believes in more flexibility and freedom to customers

Whilst there have been significant setbacks this year due to the outbreak of the pandemic, Cathay Pacific continues to serve customers based on their three core values of being thoughtful, progressive and having a can-do spirit. As a world-leading service brand, they continue to upgrade their offerings, thereby giving customers a more seamless and memorable experience when they travel with them. Anand Yedery, Regional Head Marketing and Sales – South Asia, Middle East and Africa, shares more about the airline's recent developments.

Prashant Nayak

Given the ever-changing nature of the current scenario, Cathay Pacific India team has been using leading industry tools to understand the travel demand mainly from India to Hong Kong and further to the popular Asian, North American and South West Pacific routes.

"We are constantly monitoring government announcements regarding travel orders for different countries, customer sentiments along with behaviour trends through search and booking engines. Furthermore, ongoing conversations with our trade and corporate partners also help draw insights in understanding the customer's willingness to resume travel to the destination of their choice," says Anand.

Over the last few months, they have also introduced Cathay Care, a commitment to their passenger's safety and wellbeing which

includes enhanced measures across every stage of their journey from check-in to the cabin and also in their lounges. These measures begin with contactless check-in, temperature screening at various touchpoints and the installation of HEPA filters across all cabins. Anand shares, "We understand the dilemma our customers could be facing, considering the situation is so dynamic. Hence, we have introduced more flexibility for not just customers who were booked with us in March – April during the global lockdown but also anyone who would like to book going forward."

To further provide customers with maximum flexibility, Cathay has introduced the 'Fly Worry Free' and 'Cathay Credits' initiatives, giving travellers the freedom to make unlimited changes to new tickets, without the extra charge and converting their tickets to credits that will enable them to fly at a later date.



Anand Yedery

The airline continues to be a pioneer in areas of environment and community development. Their initiatives include reducing Cathay Pacific's single-use plastic footprint to 50 per cent by the end of 2022 and removing nearly 200 million pieces of single-use plastic from the operations annually. "Besides, we strongly support sustainable sourcing of food and being a corporate member of WWF, we ensure the food served is sourced organically. We recently added six Airbus A350s to our fleet making it more fuel-efficient and thereby reducing the greenhouse gas emission. We are committed to successfully delivering a premium service to our customers for years to come," informs Anand.

CapaJet showcases impressive performance in repatriation charter flights

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, CapaJet has extended its support to various countries to operate special repatriation charter flights and bring back stranded citizens. It has constantly engaged in dialogue with different governments to run repatriation flights. While operating the repatriation flights, CapaJet is ensuring and adhering to the latest international aviation guidelines issued to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Komal Seth, India Representative, CapaJet shares more on the charter flights which has also come to the rescue of many stranded Indians.

Prashant Nayak

Tell us in brief about CapaJet and its mode of operations?

CapaJet is a luxury charter flight service provider for personal and business flying needs. Headquartered in Hong Kong, CapaJet offers global coverage with the highest service and a seamless, flexible and dedicated flying solution at convenience and comfort. CapaJet owns and charters a fleet of Bombardier Global 5000 and Global 6000 aircraft for worldwide Private Jet Charter.

Since the pandemic began, CapaJet has extended its support to existing clients (which include both private and public sectors) and answered the market's needs, as such we supported missions to various countries to operate special repatriation charter flights and bring back stranded citizens. CapaJet has become the preferred carrier for repatriation for countries like India, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Indonesia for special repatriation flights while discussions are on with many other countries.

How does India fit into your plan of operations and what kind of growth do you see from this market?

India being an important source market for us, we aim to derive substantial growth into the region through PR activities and marketing partnerships. We are hopeful with the expansion of regional connectivity tapping other cities to promote our services.

The private charter business has experienced a small positive growth rate in the last financial year primarily because of an increase in the number of HNI's and diversification of fleet size. India has also noticed developments of new terminals for private charters and renovation of existing airports especially in tier II and tier III cities promoting regional connectivity leading to the increase in demand.

Delhi and Mumbai being two main business and medical centers in India has huge demand backed by the presence of HNI's, political movements and medical emergencies. Moreover, the initiative of



Komal Seth

promoting more airports of other cities with the regional connectivity program of the government, promises an opportunity and growth in this sector in the years to come.

How are you reaching out to your target audience in this relatively new market?

India being a growing source market for us, we aim to derive greater growth into the region through PR and marketing partnerships and working closely with pan India media. We are further stressing on customer care support and online booking services to provide easy booking facilities for the customers seeking flying options. With the introduction of more airports and terminals for charters, we are looking forward to providing more domestic flying options.

Presently, CapaJet has positioned itself into operating repatriation flights. Tell us about the flights and particularly the India repatriation programme and its challenges?

After successfully organising and operating several repatriation flights in the past few months, bringing back thousands

of stranded Indians home, CapaJet recently accomplished the impressive landmark repatriating over 19,000 people within 90 days. At a time when air travel around the world has come to a standstill and most countries closed their airspace, we managed to achieve this number with its determination to operate and run as many repatriation flights as possible while negotiating and coordinating with different countries and their government.

More repatriation missions are in the pipeline to bring back stranded citizens from various countries to key cities in India. All these flights are operated in accordance with the directive released by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Department of Civil Aviation India.

What are the types of aircraft used for these repatriation flights and how are you maintaining safety measures onboard these flights?

CapaJet is committed to providing high-end service and comfortable flying experience to its passengers. To ensure this, the company has selected Singapore Airlines and Garuda Airlines to operate its long-haul Asia and APAC repatriation mission.

While operating the repatriation flights, CapaJet ensures and adheres to the latest international aviation guidelines issued to prevent the spread of COVID-19 disease. One of the key facilities that CapaJet flights ensure is high standard services with complete safety and privacy. The aircrafts are completely sanitised, temperature screenings are done for each passenger and the crew ensures that all these stringent guidelines are being followed.

Amidst the pandemic scenario, the Cabin crew undergoes special training, especially on passenger safety adhering to the highest safety guidelines. We do ensure the aircrafts are deep cleaned before boarding and crew are tested before each flight for COVID-19.

Likewise, we also follow guidelines set out by each respective country, just recently on

our Special Repatriation Mission to Fiji, it was the requirement that all passenger complete a 48-hour pre-departure quarantine process which involved arriving in Delhi two days prior to departure and checking into a designated hotel to remain quarantined and isolated prior to departure, during this time we arranged for in-room COVID-19 PCR testing, and then finally dedicated, secure private transport to the airport. This allowed for a fully sanitised and screened flight.

Do you think that the success these repatriation flights will help you leverage your brand in India for on-demand and private charter business, post the pandemic?

We are noticing a huge surge in private flying demand as it is convenient and opens options to multiple destinations.

As businesses reopen, business travel is again becoming necessary. Of course, with airline schedules at skeleton levels, getting where you go has become more difficult. Missing a connection often means an overnight stay at a hub. Fewer trips can be done in a single day, and clients are still formulating policies about accepting visitors who arrive by airlines as part of their duty-of-care requirements. Besides business movements, we are noticing the demand for leisure travel as well.

As such with our increased presence in India fuelled by these repatriation missions, we firmly believe that it will help our brand in India as well as around the world. Our passengers on these repatriation flights come for all walks of life from CEOs to students. Our reputation is that we are delivering in difficult times; we are going beyond hardship to reach excellence. We are providing invaluable services to the public, which won't be forgotten in good times.

Any expansion plans thought about?

We see a strong future in the India market

and the upcoming developments may include further offices, and then further investment in IT, infrastructure, and, of course, staff and training. The scope of the charter market in India is poised to expand thanks to the infrastructural development push by the government and private companies. As charters serve as the fastest available mode of transport on short notice, the quickest accessibility to remote areas, we are looking forward to seeing prominent growth from the India market.



Marina Bay Sands, set to transform MICE events into immersive visual experiences

Marina Bay Sands, the leading business, leisure and entertainment destination in Asia has launched a state-of-the-art hybrid event broadcast studio at Sands Expo and Convention Centre. This is a first for the industry, as the award-winning venue paves the way to redefine the future of meetings.

Team TTJ

Designed to accommodate a live studio audience with a maximum capacity of fifty persons at any one time, the hybrid broadcast studio – which offers broadcast-quality live-streaming capabilities and hologram functionalities – will act as the central hub for event planners looking to produce hybrid meetings in the new era.

Hybrid meetings will help enable the return of large-scale events in a virtual manner amid the COVID-19 situation and Marina Bay Sands wants to set the stage for these shows by providing planners with a suite of useful and innovative solutions which are relevant for the times. Their highly advanced hybrid broadcast studio is not only equipped with industry-grade broadcasting equipment and interactive stage set-up, it will also be maintained with the highest sanitisation levels to ensure the well-being of the clients. Marina Bay Sands will continue enhancing the technical capabilities of the broadcast studio and drive greater demand and innovation in the hybrid events scene.

The studio's centrepiece is a cutting-edge three-dimensional stage fitted with an immersive backdrop and floor that can be reconfigured to fit every event's needs. Replacing the conventional green screen backdrop are two massive 6 metre by 4 metre right-angled LED walls which can show high-resolution 360-degree visuals, while a plexiglass LED floor can display stunning floor projections. The three-dimensional stage is designed to provide presenters with a better perspective of their surroundings, helping them to visualise and deliver their presentations in a more immersive environment. Stage lighting systems can be customised, designed and operated to fit an event's specific needs. In this season of travel restrictions, the studio is also able to beam someone from a different part of the world 'live' into Singapore through a holographic presence.



Marina Bay Sands currently offers three virtual conferencing options – full virtual webcasting and live streaming events; hybrid events with in-person and online audiences; and hybrid events with holographic telepresence. Clients can look forward to an enhanced suite of event tech capabilities incorporating Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and Extended Reality (XR) solutions as Marina Bay Sands continues to reimagine the future of meetings.

Antara River Cruises heralds a new era in luxury travel

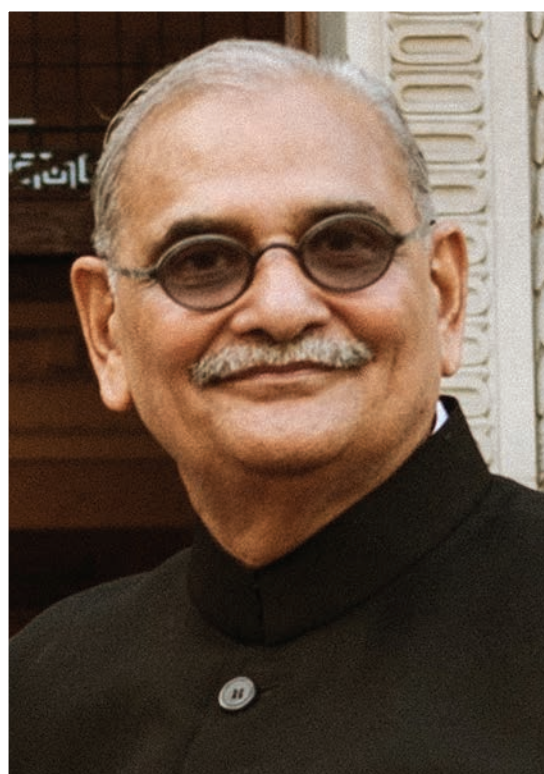
Owned by Heritage River Journeys, Antara Cruises is India's leading luxury river cruise company that owns and operates its fleet across the Indian rivers showcasing untouched and amazing destinations. The all-inclusive warm, personalised and unmatched Antara hospitality makes it the ideal choice for top international cruising partners. TTJ speaks to the dynamic duo, Raj Singh, Founder & Chairman of the Group and Hemant Mediratta, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer, Antara Cruises, both with invaluable background and hands-on experience in luxury hospitality, and who are steering guiding the company with a clear agenda and a roadmap to expand with new cruise ships and enhanced service offerings.

Prashant Nayak

Tell us about Antara Luxury River Cruises?

Raj Singh: Antara, our new brand is an evolution of Heritage River Journeys, the pioneer of Indian River cruising operations for over 15 years, providing enthralling journeys (to mainly international travellers) in luxury sailings along rivers in India. Heritage River Journeys has been lauded as an experiential and luxurious and a unique way to see India and its hidden gems along riverbanks. We design, build and operate our own vessels and we wanted to further refine our hospitality services, facilities, itineraries, and ships to allow for more people, across India and overseas, to enjoy this truly immersive Indian experience, a wonderful way to explore the country's ancient, authentic cultures. So, Antara Luxury River Cruises is the next step in the evolution of Heritage River Journeys.

Hemant Mediratta: Antara, derived from the Sanskrit word 'Antar' meaning 'the distinction', became a source of inspiration for us to make a difference and take you on a journey along the spiritual rivers of India to rediscover yourself and experience the joy of spending time with your loved ones in luxury.



Raj Singh



Hemant Mediratta

Antara Luxury River Cruises is a brilliant celebration of life. Cruising along India's mystical rivers with an all-inclusive suite offering, French balconies, and expansive social spaces, plush on-board amenities, unique gastronomy experiences, wellness and sunrise yoga, and an array of activities on and off-board make Antara cruises a perfect venue for a pre-wedding retreat, milestone events like anniversaries, birthdays, spiritual retreats and family reunion while sailing on the Ganges. Excursions, village explorations, wildlife sighting, birding, nature walks, we craft each itinerary and personalise every experience to suit our guests. We strive to offer you

travel experiences that not just unique but transformational.

Tell us about the thrills of river cruise over contemporary cruising?

Raj Singh: The original definition of cruising stems from the golden age more than a millennia ago when travellers first sailed on small intimate vessels, filled with the excitement of the unknown, to explore the joys of traversing un-trodden paths beyond the water horizon, creating long-lasting friendships and cultural exchange along the way. This has been overtaken by colossal steel leviathans forcing bland experiences, segregation of travellers from local

peoples and culture, and wasting vast quantities of all resources.

In direct contrast to this process of unsustainable extraction, by the reintroducing River Cruising to India after 100 years we've sought to offer a different path to rediscovering the joys of travelling by water and visiting hidden locales as witnessed in antiquity. We strive to regain all that has been lost of the original definition, to immerse, exchange, build, and create mutual resonance in exceptional journeys of learning and self-discovery by and on the water.

Hemant Mediratta: Ocean cruising is more often than not associated with large ocean cruise liners. The consequences of such large vessels carrying 1000s of guests creating a little city in itself is not all rosy. The journeys can be lengthy and privacy, exclusivity, personalisation also tend to get lost on such cruise liners.

River cruising however is different. The first cruise of my life many years ago was a River Cruise in Europe and I found it to be a 'real immersive experience'. In the past few years, all my holidays have been river cruises, and have travelled on most rivers in Europe. The joy of slow travel, no packing and unpacking, seeing a new destination every day and the familiarity and comfort with staff members for 7-10 days is truly a luxurious experience. In a river cruise, you are on water but not far away from land, the riverscapes give you a peek into local culture and life. Especially as they stop in small villages and towns which one would normally not venture to as they are not touristy. Hence true authentic experiential travel is something that makes river cruising very unique.

Challenges in the luxury cruising business especially in a market like India where cruising is yet to grow?

Raj Singh: The most important aspect here to address is the limited awareness of the concept of river cruising experience. River cruising is a relatively new concept for the Indian travellers with regards to an authentic exploration of our beautiful country, its culture, history while enjoying hospitality at its best. We believe that India has a myriad of stories set along its ancient river banks, together with unmatched hospitality and activities to rejuvenate the body and the mind, Antara offers a truly immersive experience, one that transforms and touches you at the core. We are looking forward to showcasing

ANTARA LUXURY RIVER CRUISES

unchartered destinations through Antara's unmatched hospitality.

Hemant Mediratta: Every challenge comes with opportunity. I believe our Indian consumers are looking for immersive, transformational experiences. River Cruising is a brilliant way to experience slow travel and rediscover yourself. Currently, the awareness of River Cruising in India may be low however it's our vision to have an Antara Cruise in most navigable rivers of India. With this pioneering effort, we will be able to open a new segment of travellers and introduce Luxury River Cruising in India.

Your thoughts/idea of luxury onboard Antara Cruises to provide guests with more choice, control, and personalisation?

Raj Singh: The Antara advantage of all-inclusive service aboard small luxury ships gives guests the freedom and flexibility to determine their own selections, whilst our attentive crew is always on hand to support and facilitate additional requests. All our excursions, sightseeing, birding trips, historical viewings, etc. are crafted and led by handpicked in-house specialists and experts who guide guests through these experiences. The itineraries that our travel experts create are personalised, customised, and absolutely incredible, just as our promise of unmatched hospitality.

Hemant Mediratta: Luxury is very personal and we want to encourage our guests to do what they love in the best possible manner on our ships. We have the highest staff to suite ratio so there is extreme personalisation and every experience on Antara can be individually curated for you. Our butler service ensures you are well looked after when you enjoy the riverscapes from your lavish suites or spacious sundeck or the bar. The all-inclusive cruise also ensures that you don't have to ever think of dipping into your pocket for anything you want onboard. It's all about carefree, relaxed, slow travel to discover yourself and create unforgettable memories on an Antara Cruise.

Tell us about your cruise ships / routes and expansion plans?

Raj Singh: We design and build each of our handcrafted ships in

Indian tradition, handcraft from the steel hull to the textiles in the lounge, inspired by traditional motifs, history, and naval traditions of our region. To ensure a seamless flow of the inherent Antara experience, it was time for us to rebrand, restructure, and expand. I am extremely happy to have Hemant on-board at this transformational time. Together, will be driving new business, new strategies as well as implementing infrastructure development.

Hemant Mediratta: Currently, we operate two ships Ganges Voyager 1 and Ganga Voyager 2 on the Ganga which are stationed in Kolkata and sail all the way to Varanasi and Dhaka. We will be introducing at least 2 more ships by October 21, as well as bringing new offerings and experiences in the coming months. There is active investor interest but we are well funded for now and will choose our potential investors who are like-minded and buy into our vision of what we want Antara cruises to be. We are innovating as we expand our routes and services to our guests.

Tell us about your promotion plans and marketing strategies in these difficult times and even post the pandemic?

Raj Singh: We've been the only river cruise line to showcase the best of India by water at global river cruising standards, along with the highest levels of hospitality. We hope that through the evolution into Antara and the innovative experiences we introduce; we share the joys of sailing the country's waterways with a wider Indian audience.

Hemant Mediratta: Domestic Travel is our immediate and near term focus. We have introduced bespoke charters. We craft the most unforgettable intimate events and incentives, ensuring your groups can connect in more meaningful ways. We offer the complete buyout of our ships for charters ranging from 2-7 nights, on itineraries that are personalised as per your requirements for a maximum of 56 guests aboard. For us, each event is an opportunity to create new moments of magic, through meticulous attention to details, tailored experiences and flawless execution. Very soon we will introduce two new concepts which would be something the industry hasn't seen before. I can only tell you this much that we are constantly striving to delight our guests and innovate to provide a wholesome and rich experience.

TBO Group ventures into the Marine Business

The platform will offer real-time seaman fares, which will assist travel agents to explore an untapped industry in India. Ankush Nijhawan, Co-Founder, TBO Group shares more with TTJ.

Team TTJ



Ankush Nijhawan

India's leading B2B travel portal, TBO Group recently launched 'TBO Marine', a hybrid e-commerce platform to cater to the niche market segment of the marine industry. Via this platform, TBO is offering its audience quick and easy access to global seaman fares, providing an immaculate travel management service.

TBO aims to extend its expertise in marine travel management; providing value and expertise to the B2B segment in the following industries: Offshore oil and energy sectors, dry dock, specialised marine contracting, crew management companies, travel agents servicing the marine, and port agents.

Ankush Nijhawan, says, "The key objective of TBO marine is to offer a seamless service

to the b2b partners with the assistance of exclusively curated software, equipped to bestow a flawless experience. Through this integration on our platform, TBO is empowering its partners to tap into a new segment. Our team of highly skilled professionals will be available 24/7/365, to offer specialised rates, state-of-the-art technology and years of experience of airways schedules, visa assistance, and cost-effective ways to add value to our clients."

The Marine industry in India is a standout amid the most dawning and breathtaking sectors. Identified as a lucrative and niche market segment, the Marine is yet to be discovered to its core potential. Worldwide, this potential sector is being explored at a high pace with technological development.

Ark Travels forays into representation business; acquires Outbound Konnections

Ark Travels, one of India's reputed and leading B2B company specialising in the Cruise representation business, penetrates further into the non-cruising representation space, with the acquisition of Outbound Konnections. This business move will further expand Ark Travels' tourism portfolio as it enters into a space that is one of the most dynamic and volatile in the travel industry.

Team TTJ



Kishan Biyani

was already in the initial stage of discussion with an international investor, when she was approached by her industry trade colleague, Kishan Biyani of Ark Travels to consider a 100 percent buyout deal with Ark Travels.

Biyani, who is known for his astute business foresight expressed his keen interest to foray into the representation space, which led to the final buyout of the Outbound Konnections by Ark Travels.

With head office based in Mumbai and branch office in Bangalore and satellite offices in 15 major cities PAN India, Ark Travels is confident to expand the newly acquired business through its widespread network and agent base. Biyani expressed confidence to grow the newly acquired company like the way the cruise business expanded from 1,500 passengers in 2008 to 60,000 passengers in 2018. A visionary and an astute businessman, Biyani, takes pride in mentioning that Ark Travels holds the record of being the top seller of Dream cruises globally for two consecutive years 2017 – 2018.

Says Biyani, "I was observing the representation business with a keen lens and I felt this is the right time to enter into this space. I found the right partner, with Outbound Konnections to accelerate my growth plans and vision, related to this niche. I found the team at Outbound Konnections highly professional, with an eye for detail. Both companies share common synergies in terms of ethics and vision. I feel with the existing workforce Ark Travels; we can have a varied bouquet of products besides Cruises, Club Med Resorts and Europamundo Vacations to offer to their B2B network without increasing overheads."

Speaking about the development, Lokhandwala says, "With Ark Travels now taking over Outbound Konnections, will lead to a wider reach with their online platform DECKPRO, which has an active database of 15000+++ agents PAN India, will give the products good visibility and strong brand presence. Kishan is a focused and meticulous businessman and I am confident the brand will grow well under his leadership. I will continue my role as Director in the company."

Outbound Konnections, spearheaded by Anjum Lokhandwala, is a boutique representation company offering premium services to a wide range of global brands in the travel and tourism sector for the past eight years. Lokhandwala, the primary curator of Outbound Konnections,

Secure your future with 'BIMA KARLO'

Arvind Tandon, Director, Ark Travels, is an expert and a well-known personality in the travel trade and has always been assisting and guiding the agent fraternity to earn additional revenues for a long time. Now, with the pandemic giving a severe setback to the entire travel and tourism industry, Ark Travels as market leaders in the cruise and leisure segment, have set up an alternate business model for the travel agents to survive the difficult times. To know more about the alternate model, TTJ speaks to Arvind Tandon, now the Founder of Bima Karlo, a new Insurance vertical which travel agents can evaluate for an alternate source of income.

Prashant Nayak

It has been a sorry state of affairs for the travel, hospitality and tourism sector with major salary cuts, zero incomes for many, millions of layoffs, cruises and airlines non-operational, hotels in doldrums, small organisations out of business and even big established tourism establishments unable to pay salaries to their staff. Thus, with the travel industry coming to a standstill in early 2020, a large number of travel agents across India are constantly looking for an alternate income to survive.

Tandon says, "It has been a sorry state of affairs for the travel and hospitality sector during this pandemic. It seems that it will be only by next summer that real revenues will start flowing and jobs will get revived. Currently, most of them are jobless, starving and attempting to feed their families with substantial disruption to their lives. As market leaders in travel and as doyens of the industry, it was my responsibility to offer a new income model to our crisis-ridden community. The idea of starting an alternate viable income model came to me when we saw so many in our fraternity jobless or with no means to continue earning."

Tandon joined hands with Anil Garg, founder of 'Explore Travel TV' channel, ex-CTO Sony TV and the Founder of the Internet in India, and after some months of thought and research commenced setting up the alternate business model for the travel retailers.

According to Tandon, travel agents are familiar with the commission model



Arvind Tandon

in their business including online portals. Soon, they discovered that the travel agents were also familiar with the insurance business having sold travel and overseas mediclaim insurance for time immemorial. Also, the insurance business had a commission structure at an unheard of twenty-five to thirty per cent to start with, while the agents earn only about eight to ten per cent selling travel products. Further, for bookings, they had to look for a model similar to that of the CRS system which is used by the agents.

"We found an Insurance broker named Robinhood, who was glad to be our principal, and they had a large workforce of about five hundred staff and they were third in the hierarchy of brokers pan India. Also, they had contracts with

twenty-five Insurance companies, and lastly, and importantly, their booking arsenal had the CRS like system as well as a Mobile App for ease of selling by agents and both could provide immediate quotes and product choices of multiple Insurance companies. So, ultimately we have 'Bima Karlo' which is kind of offering a lifeline to agents."

On their part, Robinhood will provide free registration, no joining fees, free online training, product training, sales assistance in different verticals of insurance such as life, vehicle, overseas, health, motor, fire, etc to travel agents across India. However, the trainings will be the key factor in product selling, pitching and claims. Tandon feels that there is so much to do in the insurance industry that agents can continue this business and earn quite well even after the travel industry is back to normal.

"With Robinhood, our principals would be varied but we depend on them for assisted training in products, selling, claims and relationships and Robinhood will facilitate tripartite contracting between us, agents and insurance principals. Bima Karlo will leverage and guarantee attractive commissions with rates appraised at a suitable time and directly paid to the agents on time. Currently, there are close thirty travel agents registered and expressed interest and the company is expecting to have over five hundred agents to join in by the end of December 2020. After a fifteen-day training, we give them a certificate," assures Tandon.

Women in Tourism

A Force to be Reckoned With

Tourism is one of the most gender-inclusive sectors. Globally, some of the tourism industry's biggest disruptions and socially impactful campaigns are being rolled out by wonderful teams of women, who ideate, create and then go on to effectively implement.

Neliswa Nkani



Neliswa Nkani

Women assume a wide range of roles within the industry, with many of them donning several hats – they are leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs, teachers, trainers, marketers, event managers, communication experts and guides. They lead efforts in ecotourism, rural tourism, and play a huge role in empowering their communities. Whether it is providing income opportunities to other women, mentoring and encouraging the next generation of female leaders, acting as role models to budding entrepreneurs, or just being socially responsible – there is no doubt that women in tourism are changing the industry for the better.

Where do they rank on the global scale?

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), majority of the tourism workforce worldwide is female, with 54 per cent people employed in tourism being women. This is significantly higher as compared to 39 per cent in the broader global economy. Even the wage gap is smaller in the tourism industry as women in tourism earn 14.7 per cent less than men, as compared to

16.8 per cent less in the broader global economy. This is also an industry that prides itself on offering women greater opportunities in leadership roles, with 23 per cent of tourism Ministers being female compared to 20.7 per cent of government Ministers overall.

I have been in the tourism industry for almost three decades now, and there is perhaps no other sector that has contributed to new job opportunities for women, as much as tourism. This may partially be attributed to the prevalence of jobs associated with femininity in particular, in the hospitality sector of the industry.

However, we still have a long way to go until the full potential of women in the tourism sector is realised. For starters, there is a distinct gender segregation of the labour market. Women are, more often than not, lower-level employees in tourism organisations headed and managed by their male counterparts, and are thus underrepresented in senior management positions. There is also the need to promote women-owned tourism businesses.

What can we do to make a difference?

- Effective implementation of gender-sensitive legal and macroeconomic policies at local and national levels will increase women's economic empowerment in the tourism sector
- Investing in focused skill training (including soft skills) for women, coupled with gender equality trainings across the sector will go a long way dissolving misplaced prejudices
- Recognising and empowering women to assume leadership positions will help create environments for them to perform under equally competitive conditions
- Providing access to appropriate technology amidst the digitalisation of tourism can offer exciting new opportunities for women-lead innovations
- Gender equality strategies for the tourism sector must be backed by institutional and budgetary support.

South Africa is a country that is seeing more and more representation of women in key positions, especially in the tourism sector. With regards to Parliamentary representation, post the 2019 elections women ministers comprise 50 per cent of the Cabinet, women deputy ministers make up 46 per cent of the total number of deputy ministers and women voters are consistently at 55 per cent.

Even the Department of Tourism is helmed by the Hon. Minister of Tourism, Ms. Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, while Ms. Hanneli Slabber overlooks Asia, Australasia and Middle East as the



Mmamoloko Kubayi

Regional General Manager. It fills me with pride that our India office has over 80 per cent women, with most of them heading various departments!

Results like these are only possible if more and more women are celebrated and entrusted with leadership roles. In South Africa, the Department of Tourism is doing commendable work in aiding women who own businesses and

empowering those who aspire to own tourism businesses.

The Department of Tourism is also looking to actively assist women-owned businesses that have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic and ensure that women are part of the tourism value chain and supply chain. They plan to engage the private sector in advancing women empowerment while ensuring that Women in Tourism become part of other women's formations for networking and support. Lastly, they seek to ensure that women in villages and townships are empowered to participate meaningfully in the tourism sector.

As South African Tourism, we would like to introduce a Women in Tourism India-South Africa chapter, to build, encourage and enhance tourism relations between South Africa and India.

We would also be delighted to introduce a Women in Tourism: Rural Girl Child tourism program, where we introduce young rural girls to the tourism space and help them lead rural tourism, take ownership, empower rural communities and be an essential part of the tourism ecosystem.

Tourism is arguably the most profitable sector for female entrepreneurs as it allows women to make a business out of skills they already possess. It is also an ideal sector for women to express themselves and their culture, and educate visitors regarding the intricate ecosystems in their localities. From running catering businesses to bed and breakfasts and hostels, to guided tours, women across the globe are beginning to realise the endless potential of the tourism sector.

As an increasing number of women are challenging gender stereotypes



Women in rural tourism in Ndebele Village, Mpumalanga



Women tourists form a critical part of the tourism ecosystem in South Africa

in the sector and assuming roles once dominated by men – such as tour guides, there is phenomenal potential waiting to be tapped and utilised. I am confident that the future holds great possibilities as policymakers become more aware of the need to put measures in place, that

ensure women and the communities they belong to share in the benefits that tourism brings.

Neliswa Nkani is Hub Head – Middle East, India and South East Asia, South African Tourism



Women tourists golfing in the Rainbow Nation

Hopeful beams of positivity at Nijhawan Group

‘The representation giant announces salary reversals’

Team TTJ

These days seldom do we come across happy news like these, taking a lead, Nijhawan Group recently announced the reversal of salary cuts. In a happy conversation with TTJ, an optimistic leader, Priyanka Nijhawan, Director, Nijhawan Group shares her delight.

COVID-19 has diverted the whole world to habituate into the new normal. The travel fraternity is under immense scrutiny. Three months after cutting pay for most employees, in response to the coronavirus pandemic, one of India's largest representation companies; Nijhawan Group has announced the reversal of salary cuts of their employees amid the pandemic- repaying them for what they gave up. The sentiment has a silver lining of new hope for the future of the travel and tourism sector.

The group announced that it is ending those salary reductions in part because

the plausibility of a worst-case scenario has ‘significantly reduced’ since the pay cuts were implemented.

Priyanka shares, “During these difficult and unprecedented times, our employees have been through immense pressure and challenges. This pandemic has made us emerge stronger with courage and hope for a better future. The travel industry as you are aware is one of the worst-hit by the pandemic and while others have struggled, Nijhawan Group as a team has shown courage, commitment and leadership in tackling the innumerable challenges in these critical times through commitment and hard work, we have tackled all hardships along the way. It is the faithfulness and loyalty of our employees that has made this possible.” In addition, she also urged everyone to continue to focus and participate in working together to bring back the business, as it was pre-COVID.



Priyanka Nijhawan

Discerning traveller and the millennials to drive revival

The last six months have given Atout France ample opportunities to participate in webinars and presentations and impart knowledge on France to the trade pan India. Sheetal Munshaw, Director, Atout France India and her team have been in regular touch with the trade and the media to regularly update them on the evolution of the situation in France.

Prashant Nayak

The travel industry will once again need to reinvent itself to adapt to the current circumstances and the changing pattern of travel trends that all are observing. While domestic tourism is slated to be at the forefront of the revival of the tourism industry, there will also be a genre of travellers who will want to travel to outbound destinations once the situation improves and Sheetal believes that the discerning traveller and the millennials will drive this revival.

More than ever, the counsel of the travel agent will be sought in determining the choice of location and sanitary measures implemented by countries to assure the safety and security of international visitors. “There will be a strong demand for ecotourism/sustainable tourism-oriented holidays, more sojourns in the great outdoors as well as self-drive holidays. Communication on these safety measures and the relay of this communication across multiple platforms will be crucial in driving

the recovery of the industry,” explains Sheetal.

Atout France has been regularly communicating on virtual visits, safety measures adapted by their partners and re-openings of emblematic sites and monuments. They have also been in regular touch with the trade and the press and have been regularly updating them on the evolution of the situation in France. Atout France will also be organising two virtual B2B workshops in September- one exclusive for Paris and its region and the other on France – allowing for exchanges between the trade and our partners.

For their partners in France, an interactive world map has been created which gives real-time information on the evolution of the situation in countries where Atout France has a presence. Sheetal shares, “During the months of May-June, we had organised country/ zone specific webinars for our French partners giving them an update on the situation in each of our countries and



Sheetal Munshaw

tourism trends. Early October will also see our offices world over engaging in virtual interactions with our partners to discuss collaborative opportunities for 2021.”

According to Sheetal, very soon the focus will shift from quantitative to qualitative tourism. Travellers may not hesitate in increasing their spends to guarantee complete safety while travelling and on the other hand, destinations may also encourage less of over-crowding of monuments, showcasing lesser-known, offbeat locations and encouraging more cultural and local interactions.

Deepening engagements with the Indian travel trade

From the onset of the pandemic, Los Angeles Tourism has been committed to ensuring its travel trade partners the most up-to-date information about travelling safely to the destination with the latest health guidelines. Seema Kadam, Regional Director – India, Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board, gives a brief about the destination situation and the programs they have adopted to engage with the India market to keep the destination on top-of-mind.

Prashant Nayak

First and foremost, Seema says that the health and safety of the Los Angeles community is of paramount importance. Los Angeles Tourism has been taking a thoughtful and measured approach to the recovery of its tourism economy, actively monitoring the COVID-19 crisis for decreases in key indicators including daily case counts, hospitalisations and positivity rates. They are also leveraging quantitative and qualitative research and data such as economic forecasts from Tourism Economics, traveller sentiment and weekly lodging reports to guide their recovery strategy.

“We must acknowledge the efforts of our civic leaders who are working tirelessly to ensure that public health, reinvigorating the economy and job recovery all go hand-in-hand. Los Angeles Tourism and industry leaders continue to work closely with Public Health officials to ensure that we can safely and responsibly reopen our travel and

tourism economy, including developing and implementing stringent safety protocols designed to protect both employees and guests,” opines Seema.

Los Angeles Tourism’s ‘Magic Hour’ campaign, was coupled with a live-streaming sunset from Venice Beach with extensive webinars and online trainings to expand their L.A. knowledge. They have also promoted inspirational content to Indian trade and consumers through targeted promotion on their social media channels including Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Seema further informs, “We continue to participate in virtual trade events from our partners Brand USA and Virtual Travel Mart by Travelgyaan to showcase L.A. and its offerings. Finally, we are actively working to relaunch our LA Insider online training module to help our trade partners discover and sell the destination like a true expert once international travel is ready to resume.”



Seema Kadam

She firmly believes travel is a resilient industry as people will always have a fundamental desire to explore the world around them to understand other cultures and traditions. “The travel industry will certainly adapt to a new world given the fact that the pandemic has permanently changed the way we travel. Health and safety will be at the forefront of every aspect of the traveller’s journey but we will undoubtedly see a boom for outdoor attractions and experiences such as hiking trails, national parks and beaches where there’s more room for social distancing without many constraints,” concludes Seema.

‘There is great pent-up demand for revenge-travel’

The travel industry is very resilient, and it will bounce back with a vengeance. Sheema Vohra, Managing Director, Sartha Global Marketing believes that it is just a matter of time for business to be back and the industry needs to be prepared for better times because they are definitely going to come soon.

Sonika Bohra

What travellers are also looking for at this time is clarity on safety and travel protocols being implemented by destinations and airlines. Clear information dissemination on this subject will help destinations attract travellers earlier, as compared to those whose rules are ambiguous. There is great pent-up demand for ‘revenge-travel’, a term that some are using, and people are waiting to travel as and when the skies open up, and destinations are ready to welcome tourism.

“One of the biggest game-changers for the restart of outbound travel from India will be the air-travel bubble agreements that the government is working on. The fact that arrangements are also in place with top outbound travel markets like the USA, UK, France and Germany among others, and with several others in the pipeline will help in reinforcing faith amongst potential Indian travellers to plan holidays overseas,” tells Sheema.

Reflecting back, as an organisation, the whole objective of Sartha Global during this crisis was to keep up their interaction with clients and the travel trade. Sheema shares more, “On behalf of our clients, we set up an extensive product-training program as well as a robust media and influencer engagement program, with Indian trade partners industry as well as consumers. All this was done with the prime objective of being well-positioned and creating strong brand-recall for our destinations, as and when the markets revive and travel resumes.”

Sanitation will also be one of the top concerns, and destinations will need to be geared up for better hygiene and sanitation regimes in place. There will be a rise of the responsible traveller who will be more cautious regarding health and cleanliness, and hence, will expect it from hotels and services at a destination.



Sheema Vohra

“Going ahead, travel will have a whole different meaning for wander-lusters and enthusiasts. The lockdown has made people realise how precious holidays are and how integral they are in our lives. This will lead to a more evolved traveller who will seek greater experiences –culture, nature, road-trips, outdoors, and local life, primarily taking a deeper dive at a destination, not just visiting tourist attractions,” concludes Sheema.

Hotels need to be honest and clear to build guests' confidence

Industry veterans reckon that due to the ongoing pandemic, the travel and hospitality sector will reach pre-COVID levels, not before 2022. However, the only breather in the entire scenario is that the industry is experimenting with new ideas and is exploring additional revenue streams. In the process, guests are also evolving with their tastes, preferences and experiences.

Rattan Keswani

Travel will take some time to pick up, and will depend largely on the opening up of domestic and international travel. Also, for some time, business travel will be restricted to the absolutely necessary, and leisure travellers will look for options closer to home.

Road trips will come even more into focus, with most guests being more comfortable about travelling in their own vehicles with end-to-end connectivity, rather than gathering in public places like airports or railway stations.

There will be a huge demand for hygiene, safe and sustainable stays. From all the research we have done and reports we have delved into, we have further collected data that says that guests are willing to forego certain aspects of travel and hotel stays, as long as the cleanliness and hygiene factors aren't compromised.

There is also a focus on adopting more and better digital solutions for various processes in the industry, not to replace but to augment the personal touch. From contactless dining platforms and QR codes to online payments and e-forms for data collection, the world is moving in a more digitally optimised direction. While, in hospitality, nothing can ever completely replace human interaction, these digital solutions can go a long way in bridging communication between us and the guest in a safe and controlled environment.

I also firmly believe that being 'honest and clear' gives the best results and boosts confidence, which mirrors the concept of transparency and how that strengthens a firm, along with reinforcing their mechanism to their audience. It is very important for every hotel company to showcase their best practices in hygiene, cleanliness and social distancing so that every guest can make an informed

decision for a safe stay

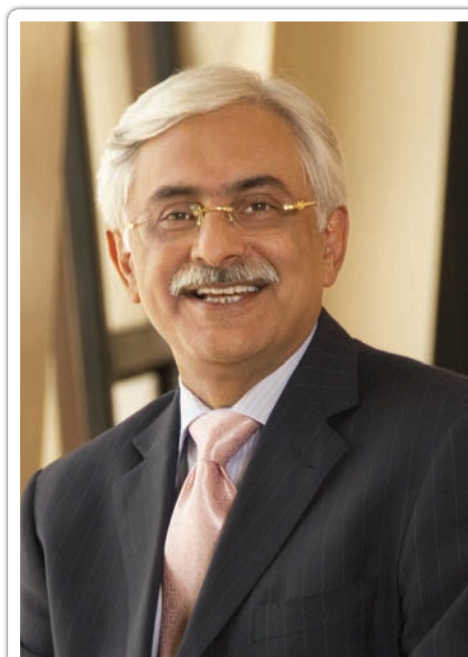
Consumer confidence is driven by many other external factors – the environment, clear confidence-building measures by the government and cohesion between the Centre and states. Until vaccines are available – on our own, our industry can only play a small part. We must ensure that everything we do is focused on ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of our guests and team members, and ensuring the highest level of hygiene across all touch points. As the economy starts to perform, confidence and happiness will enable travel.

The media needs to promote how branded hospitality players have endeavoured to make travel safer for customers. It is imperative that we think of unique ways of doing the same in terms of conviction, pricing, belief and continuity.

For the past few months, we have been supporting the national and state government needs for quarantining guests, and for hospitals to assist health workers. This has created a revenue opportunity, albeit at very low rates. Also, this demand will change as the number of cases reduces, and government regulations regarding quarantine continue to change.

One area we have tapped into is day-use accommodation and work areas with business facilities and high-speed WIFI for the day for transient and short-stay guests, and for those for whom it may not be convenient to work from home – whether due to personal reasons or infrastructure limitations. These days, WFH could mean work from hotel just as much as work from home.

In our continued effort to provide a clean, comfortable and safe stay every time a guest visits us, we have launched our Rest Assured initiative. As a part of this initiative, we have extensively researched, benchmarked



Rattan Keswani

and implemented stringent cleanliness, sanitisation and social distancing protocols across our 80 properties, in India and abroad. We have partnered with Diversey, a global leader in smart, sustainable cleaning and hygiene solutions, for our Indian properties. They are providing us with US EPA approved safe chemicals, operating checklists, training support, videos and support materials to add to our own repertoire of processes and procedures, and will be conducting regular reviews in all properties, as part of this association.

We foresee a lot more domestic travel this year until the skies open up and international destinations have been cleared. We expect an uptick in domestic leisure travel, and with nearly 80 hotels across the country, are planning several packages targeted towards staycations and great Indian getaways.

Rattan Keswani is the Deputy Managing Director at Lemon Tree Hotels and Director at Carnation Hotels.

‘The worst we, as an industry can do, remain stagnant and adopt the Ostrich Syndrome’

The future of the hospitality industry depends on how people will shape it as a brand. Understanding consumer behaviours, creating a safe environment for travellers, using technology and contact-less methods of providing guest experience while maintaining the authentic hospitality India is renowned for, are factors the hospitality industry will have to pay attention to in order to survive. Dietmar Kielnhofer – General Manager, JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, tells us how the iconic luxury property is managing in the pandemic.

Prashant Nayak

COVID-19 is without a doubt a major industry disruptor, a cataclysmic event without any precedent that forced us to examine the way we worked and conducted business. It galvanised us to re-examine existing cleaning processes and procedures. We have to embrace the winds of change that blew our way and adapt to the changing tourism landscape or perish, there are no viable alternatives.

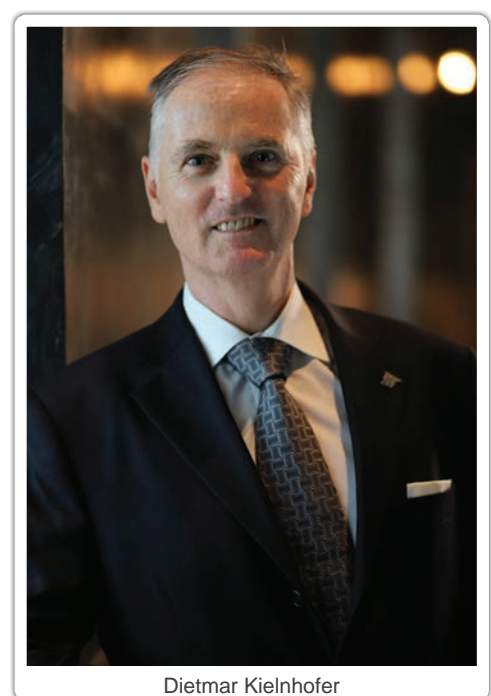
Dietmar says, “As an industry, we are fighting an invisible enemy who has proven to be quite resilient and deadly. We need to send a message to all key stakeholders that hotels have gone far beyond the call of duty in developing new cleaning protocols and procedures to combat the spread of COVID-19. The hotel and tourism industry needs to work together and create an image of confidence, that we are ready to welcome back our customers. The general level of cleanliness in luxury hotels has always been exemplary, what we must do now is to communicate this to a wider audience. At JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar as an international hotel operator, we are uncompromising in our approach to cleaning and sanitation—we don’t have a choice, this is what our customers expect from us.”

JW Sahar is renowned for its food and beverage offerings and launched Marriott On Wheels in the month of May, to provide guests with a safe and hygienic dining experience in the comfort of their homes through a range of customisable Bento Boxes with an option to place bulk orders. Also, JW Café, their all-day dining restaurant has been the city’s favourite brunch destination and to continue providing an elated Sunday experience, the team has also curated the ‘Brunch in a Box’.

“Apart from providing guests with food and beverage options at home, we have also designed our recently launched Staycation Package where one could come and unwind within their own city or a drivable distance. The package includes inclusions and offerings to help guests to relax and enjoy without having to move out from the hotel. Our aim was to continue crafting experiences for our guests and keep them connected with us and build their trust in these unprecedented times making it easier for us to create confidence in our guests post the crisis. Our staycation offer is across all our Marriott Hotels and is the perfect getaway for the entire family with inclusions especially for kids,” shares Dietmar.

Marriott International also initiated a program called ‘Commitment to Clean’. This program was developed at the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak with health and hygiene experts from Ecolab and Diversy, key partners who worked with us for many years already. The safety and security of their guests and associates is of vital importance as this is an area where they as an international brand, don’t compromise. Dietmar assures, “Having access to our company’s vast source of information and intelligence gives us an enormous competitive advantage. ‘Commitment to Clean’ is an all-encompassing program to ensure that we align our protocols, hotel procedures, processes and hotel operations to instill a heightened sense of safety and security, comfort and confidence in our brand.”

Furthermore, they have recently appointed a dedicated ‘Cleanliness Champion’ who works with all managers to ensure the highest safety and sanitation standards are maintained at all times – in the front of the house and



Dietmar Kielnhofer

the heart of the house. This rigorous and uncompromising follow up and documentation is what gives them a competitive edge. What they want to achieve for all their customers who stay with them in this period of uncertainty is ‘Peace of Mind’.

“The pre COVID-19 world we knew is gone, this is not the time to be nostalgic but adapt and change and move forward. The worst we, as an industry can do is remaining stagnant and adopt the ‘Ostrich Syndrome’ by putting our head in the sand and pretending everything will be fine. JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar has invested time, efforts and training in our associates to be fully compliant to the latest legislation, this is our responsibility as a good corporate citizen. This is the time to exercise leadership and lead from the front, embrace the coming change and run with it and show the world that we are ready for what’s coming next.” concludes Dietmar.

Eros Hotel New Delhi, in line with the latest safety and hygiene norms

To ensure that all standard safety and sanitisation protocols are followed, Eros Hotel New Delhi has dedicated a Hygiene & Safety Manager and a steadfast team available 24X7 for guest assistance. Davinder Juj, General Manager at Eros Hotel New Delhi Nehru Place shares more with TTJ.

-Rachita Sehgal

Hospitality has always been known for guest recognition and delivering personalised services, however in the post lockdown phase, safety and hygiene have become the key to restore the confidence of the guests as well as team members. Adapting to the new normal and implementing new safety measures will play a crucial role in driving the hospitality industry towards a progressive path. Davinder further adds, "At Eros Hotel, we are focusing on training and skill development of team members and adequate display of various dos and don'ts in all areas for guests and associates. To ensure that everyone visiting the hotel feels the same warmth and comfort with us while experiencing the sense of safety, we have adopted various processes which include the highest levels of cleaning and sanitisation of all the areas of the hotel,



Davinder Juj

touchless soap dispensers, sensor taps, automatic sanitizers, PPE in all relevant areas, staggered seating in restaurants

and common areas, new protocols for holding events and conferences, markings and queue manager placement to encourage safe distancing, screening of guests and team members at the hotel, mock drills for team members to prepare them for emergency situations and reducing touch points in all areas."

Over the past few months, we have been continuously engaging with our guests and keeping them informed about the protocols which the hotel has adopted to keep them safe at the premises after re-opening. Going forward, our communication towards guest safety and hygiene will become stronger and visible which will help us instill their confidence and trust in us. "We would need to work very hard to win our guests back by providing a safe and hygienic environment, flexibility in cancellation policies, peaceful and green areas for rejuvenation, contactless services and most importantly transparent communication," shares Davinder.

SAFETY AND SANITISATION MEASURES AT EROS NEW DELHI NEHRU PLACE

STRICT PROTOCOLS

As we stand committed to serve our guests and team members with a safe and hygienic environment, we have put all our standard procedures and protocols in line with the guidelines issued by the World Health Organization (WHO), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MHFW) and Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

CONTROLLING COSTS

We have always believed in robust methods to run hotel operations efficiently and effectively. These methods help us even adapt to situations that happen rarely. However, in order to tackle the current situation, we are controlling every aspect of costs in the organisation.

Energy Cost: Switching to open access power to save energy cost ensuring no wastage of electricity anywhere in the hotel

Payroll Cost: Minimal manning to manage operations and reduction on extra welfare activities for time being to keep the cost under control

F&B Cost: Ensuring minimum wastage, right portioning and right pricing

Operating Cost: Look through each and every expense line

and discontinue any non-essential expenses

ENCOURAGE IN-ROOM DINING

Our priority is to encourage in-room dining among room guests as a safety measure and for those who prefer to dine in the restaurant, we are ensuring that they enjoy their meals in a safe and hygienic environment. For in-house guests staying with families, we are offering a specially curated menu that will be served in the guest room.

NEW OFFERINGS

Considering the changed circumstances, we have introduced different packages catering to the needs of our guests. We have also introduced home delivery and take away services so that our patrons can enjoy their favourite food at the comfort of their homes.

TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION

Over the past few months, we have been continuously engaging with our guests and keeping them informed about all the protocols which the hotel has adopted to keep them safe at the premises after re-opening. Going forward, our communication towards guest safety and hygiene will become stronger and visible.

Rebounding amidst the pandemic

For Cygnett Hotels and Resorts, their number one priority at this point is the health and safety of their staff, guests and everyone associated with them. Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder & Managing Director, Cygnett Hotels and Resorts feels that the pandemic has rendered fear in the hearts of people, crippling them to step out and travel free again. So, the very first strategy is to calm this fear and make the guests as well as staff comfortable.

Prashant Nayak

The recovery of the hospitality industry will bank heavily on the sector adapting to the new normal. Things we need to understand that 'Work From Home' or remote working options are here to stay and businesses will look to work with localised supply chains and vendors. Every aspect of life like shopping, eating, working is going to be digital. Also, the government will continue to lay travel restrictions depending on the situation at hand, until a vaccine is found.

Thus, it is vital for the hospitality business to constantly observe the changes and indicators like Government directives, customer sentiments, local situations, etc. and be prepared with multiple scenarios. Sarkar says, "Three things I feel will help towards recovery are constant and consistent communication with the domestic or local target audience. Secondly, data collection and analysis where one has to keep a close look on your target customer's online behaviour. This could help you understand where and when to convert a potential booking and the last one is to ensure your property is 'Guest-ready' with all protocols in place as post this crisis; health; hygiene and safety will be a top priority across all businesses."

To instill trust and confidence in their customers, Cygnett hotels have implemented the following strategies:

Deployed an all-inclusive safety program, Health & Safety Assured

This program adheres to all rules and guidelines set by the World Health Organisation as well as the local and central health agencies. They have implemented these across all their properties to ensure a



Sarbendra Sarkar

consistent and comfortable experience for all their guests.

Launched a campaign-We will travel again

This campaign highlights and communicates the safety measures that they have initiated; emphasises their contactless check-in/check-out policy, the QR coded menus and their contactless food experience.

Amplified communications efforts by further priming digital marketing platforms

Highlighting their messaging via social media platforms; communicating with guests and potential guests personally via personalised calls, e-mailers and online chat mechanisms. Additionally, they have now started Whatsapp marketing and reach out to their customers and encourage them to do the same.

Implemented social distancing and contactless protocols:

- Rigorous training on hygiene and sterilisation protocols, social distancing for all staff.
- Contactless check-in and check out via mobile apps to ensure guest safety and comfort.
- QR code-based menus for a contact-less in-house dining experience.
- Health and immunity-boosting foods in the menus.

"The New Age in the travel and hospitality industry post the pandemic will be remarkably different. It's hard to make concrete remarks at this point. Everything will depend on how the sector future-proof's its business: whether it is marketing, sales, supply chain, distribution, booking, or hotel management strategies, etc. One thing is for sure, tomorrow's travellers will have an elevated expectation of 'Health, Hygiene and Safety' when booking a hotel. As the market bounces back, properties that meet top-notch sanitation expectations will be in the best position to benefit from the early demand," tells Sarkar.

Important to note is that Cygnett Hotels & Resorts, with its thirty-five properties across two countries (India and Nepal), has reopened thirteen of its properties in the North and Eastern parts of India.

"Cygnett Hotels is doing everything in its power to provide the most convenient, safe and comfortable stay for its guests. While meticulous cleaning and disinfecting processes need to be implemented. It is also absolutely necessary to ensure that the guests know the hygiene standards that we are maintaining. For this, we are ensuring clear communication at all customer touchpoints," assures Sarkar.



Cygnett Resort Mountain Breeze, Nainital



KSTDC's endeavour to boost tourism in North Karnataka

The coronavirus pandemic had literally shut the entire globe as travel and tourism had taken a backseat. However, as the world grapples with regaining freedom of movement post lockdown, KSTDC is taking all precautionary measures to make your stay at our Mayura Group of Hotels safe and sound.

Team KSTDC

Known as 'One State, Many Worlds', the state of Karnataka is famous for its natural beauty, cultural landscape and architectural heritage. There is something to satiate the wanderlust of every discerning tourist and traveler. KSTDC runs and operates 9 premium and 13 budget Hotel Mayuras across the state. Located at the prime locations with the best view, Hotel Mayura is often the best choice for relaxing, family holidays, staycation or workation.

In the effort to provide a holistic travel experience, the Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) has recently opened two new premium properties in Vijayapura (Bijapura) and Almatti, besides starting a new Hotel at Yegachi, Belur and adding a new block of 10 rooms at Jog falls.

Hotel Mayura Adil Shahi, Vijayapura

The foundation of the historic city of Vijayapura or the City



Hotel Mayura Adil Shahi, Vijayapura

of Victory was laid down during the reign of the Chalukyan dynasty between the 10th and 11th centuries and it experienced a great burst of architectural activity under the Adil Shahi dynasty. The city is renowned for Gol-Gumbaz, Jumma Masjid, Bara Kamaan, Gajanan Temple, Ibrahim Roza, Taj Bawdi, Malik-e-Maidan, Methar Mahal, Gagan Mahal, Jala Manzil, Upli Burj, Shivagiri, Siddeshwar Temple, etc. Located at a short distance from the Gol Gumbaz, the KSTDC Hotel Mayura Adilshahi Bijapur gives a glorious view of the monument. This small, yet cozy and Heritage property has 21 comfortable rooms and a restaurant, which serves the best food delicacies of Bijapur to its guests.

Hotel Mayura Krishna, Almatti

The mesmerising Almatti Dam on Krishna River is every tourist's delight. It is gaining popularity as a picnic spot, with well-maintained and sprawling gardens and boating facilities. Situated at a vantage point atop



Hotel Mayura Krishna, Almatti



Hotel Mayura Yagachi, Belur

a hill, Hotel Mayura Krishna gives a panoramic view of the reservoir, dam, river, gardens and the agriculture fields. It has 14 deluxe rooms with 2 suite rooms and 7 individual cottages. With Kudal Sangama, Badami, Aihole, Pattadakal and Bijapura at a driving distance, Hotel Mayura Krishna is the perfect place to stay to explore these famous tourist spots.

Hotel Mayura Yagachi, Belur

The ancient town of Belur has numerous monuments and temples built by the Hoysala rulers over a period of 300 years, which is a testimony of their love for art and architecture. The major attractions include the artistically carved Chenna Keshava Temple built in the 12th century by the Hoysala King Vishnuvardhana and the Gravity Pillar built during the reign of Vijayanagara Empire.

Yagachi Dam, built on the Yagachi river is yet another spot gaining popularity with the tourists. With rooms overlooking the Yegachi dam, Hotel Mayura Yagachi gives its guests a chance to relax to the sounds of water being released from the dam. The cool breeze from the dam and stunning views of the sunset make for a perfect staycation.

Hotel Mayura Gerusoppa, Jog Falls

Last but not least, a trip to Karnataka would be incomplete without sighting the enchanting Jog falls. Also known as Gerusoppa falls, it is the 2nd highest plunge waterfalls in India as it drops directly and does not stream on to the rocks. Your visit to Jog Falls will become memorable for a lifetime by the excellent lodging facilities and

hospitable staff at Hotel Mayura Gerusoppa Jog falls. One can just sit by the window in their room and enjoy the majestic sight and sound of the Jog Falls. Keeping up with the demands and the quest to serve our guests in the best possible way, KSTDC has added another block to hotel Mayura Gerusoppa. The newly renovated block, almost 140 years old heritage building, is located within the same premises. With this, we have added 10 new rooms and a renovated restaurant to our property at Jog Falls.

So now what's stopping you from visiting the state which has a rich history,

woven seamlessly into a modern kaleidoscope? The world may have changed in the context of the coronavirus pandemic but here while following all the necessary protocol and safety precautions, we feel inspired to give you a holiday experience, like never before.

Because your safety is our priority!



Jog Falls

Positive indicators for recovery of travel and tourism

Governments are easing restrictions and people are looking forward to travelling again. Travel and hospitality companies are in anticipation of reopening their business with enhanced sanitisation measures. Do you see early signs of recovery? Here are some positive traits, although it is still too early to claim it is business as usual.

Shwetank Singh

With the unlocking of all major markets and the opening up of air travel and domestic tourism, the travel and tourism industry would be very optimistic about the recovery from now till the end of the year. I have observed that the main stakeholders of this industry- which are the airlines, hotels and destination governing bodies have been very proactive to establish all guidelines and SOPs with respect to health and hygiene and crowd management to ensure the unlock does not lead to chaos but instead instils confidence amongst the travellers. Some of the key indicators I have followed are:

Seat Utilisation and Load Factor management in Airlines

The airlines have taken a big step by opening the air services albeit on reduced occupancy because these lead to lower profits with such stringent cost structures with a reduced occupancy. But this step has allowed people to start travelling again as we are seeing some transient business in our hotels and the airports have started to see higher volumes gather around. This is an important trend as we would soon be seeing more airlines resuming services and more airports opening over the months allowing a steady recovery for the industry.

Travel Bubbles

These air travel bubbles created with other countries were key arrangements during the repatriation phases and now other countries are using this opportunity to grow tourism and trade amongst them. I expect India to also begin their air services on similar lines also and currently, India already does have air travel bubbles with the Middle East, Asia Pacific regions, European Countries

and North America which can thus be a big step towards a revival.

Relaxation of State Quarantine Rules

Earlier, apart from the central government regulations, all states had their own quarantine rules which were stopping internal state travels till recent times. Now with the eventual unlocking up to phase 4, all states have started to open up and are allowing passenger movement. States such as Rajasthan, Goa, coastal regions of Maharashtra and Chandigarh are getting a higher footfall which is a positive sign.

Improving Travel Sentiments

With the relaxation of quarantine rules, growing airline services and improving numbers of corporate and business travellers; we are inching towards recovery on a daily basis. With the opening of state borders, the famous and preferred travel destinations are witnessing growing visitor numbers so all in all these are very positive steps needed for the recovery of the market.

Press coverage towards the improving recovery rates

While the media coverage has mainly been on the growing number of cases, there has also been some positive coverage on the low mortality rate and the high recovery rate which is nearing 78 per cent in India. I think the news agencies will have a very important role to play to work this industry back to normalcy. I think that people have an urge to step out and travel which has not happened this year and the whole industry always looks forward towards the October – February slot when leisure and group travel is at its peak. Given how the industry has been hit this year they would need these months to perform even more than ever so I think it is imperative for all news agencies to highlight the positive stories and play their part in the revival of their sector.



Shwetank Singh

Vaccine

We have been hearing some great progress made on this front by different pharma companies and nations. Some are in an advanced stage of testing while many are optimistic about introducing the vaccine in a few months. Whichever way this goes the whole industry is hoping this would be the game changer and all plans and strategies may be reviewed again once this vaccine is out for the public. So all news of this is a big breakthrough and all our industry folks are keeping a close eye to this development.

All these above points have had a positive impact on the industry. When put together, these measures have helped improve the daily numbers and we are slowly seeing the non-quarantine related occupancy grow across various segments of the industry. Going forward, these indicators are important for long term recovery as well.

Shwetank Singh is the Vice-President-Development and Asset Management at InterGlobe Hotels.

Atlantis, The Palm: Innovating to serve guests in a socially responsible way

Situated on the crescent of the Palm Island, Atlantis has become an icon of Dubai and one of the city's 'must-see' landmarks. Underwater suites, up-close encounters with marine animals, the rides of Aquaventure Waterpark, the mystery of the Lost Chambers Aquarium and the variety of award-winning bars and restaurants, all create special moments that become lifetime memories. Kyp Charalambous, VP-Sales, Atlantis, Dubai, gives an overview of the latest initiatives at the premier entertainment destination.

Prashant Nayak

In Dubai, with the ongoing global support from governments, airlines and local tourism entities such as DTCM, they will be able to continue to restore flight networks and put health and safety measures in place to encourage international travel again. In addition, initiatives such as free travel insurance from Emirates and Fly Dubai have been tremendously helpful in boosting travellers' confidence.

"This pattern of recovery means we have to have a clear distribution strategy in place and essentially be prepared for anything so that we can quickly fine-tune in changing circumstances. I think as long as we're prepared to adapt and evolve, we can continue to progress and recover," explains Charalambous.

At Atlantis, The Palm, they are continuously evolving to meet the needs of their customers during this challenging time. For example, they are now offering guests who stay five nights or more in resort free COVID-19 PCR tests for all international bookings. Additionally, they have partnered with one of the emirate's leading hospitals in order to be able to conduct the tests from the comfort of guests' hotel rooms. Elaborating further, Charalambous says, "This has enabled us to reduce any travel inconveniences and allowed our guests to relish every moment of their time spent at Atlantis, The Palm as



Kyp Charalambous

we strive to implement innovative ways to serve them in a socially responsible way. The latest initiative also aligns itself with Emirates Airline's free medical cover for COVID-19-related expenses, designed to boost travellers' confidence during the pandemic."

Whilst working in line with the United Arab Emirates government and Dubai authorities' restrictions and guidelines, during the start of the pandemic Atlantis, The Palm also implemented a small taskforce to work on vital maintenance projects around the resort and took the time to refurbish Saffron, their

all-day dining restaurant as well as their conference facilities so that by Q1, 2021, they will have completed the US\$100 million refurbishment programme that has updated the entire property. "When guests come back to visit us, it will be to a refreshed Atlantis, The Palm complete with refurbished rooms, Imperial Club, VIP check-in lounge plus much much more," informs Charalambous.

The new age of travel, certainly in the near future, will centre around health, safety and cleanliness. On this, Charalambous shares, "I think that moving forward, the elevated expectations surrounding this will unify all travellers and hygiene protocols will now be major selling points for resorts. Whilst guests have always trusted that hotels will be clean, I think now they will want more proof. For example, whilst we have always been recognised as a hospitality leader in terms of our high standards of health and safety, we have now progressed this further, securing international certification by the Bureau Veritas Safeguard Label."

Given the way COVID-19 has impacted the industry and changed travel plans for so many, it's also inevitable that flexibility will play a huge part in the future of travel. At Atlantis, The Palm, they have already anticipated this by allowing free amendments up to seven days before travel until the end of 2020 and will of course continue to reassess this as needed.



OCEAN PARK HONG KONG

New strategies for the new normal

To stay connected and engaged with their visitors, Ocean Park Hong Kong has adopted a two-way communication approach in which they deploy various interactive and engaging digital formats such as Facebook Live streaming, virtual thrill rides videos and other online interactions to enable their audience to experience the Park. Rosalind Siu, Executive Director, Sales, Marketing & Public Affairs, Ocean Park Hong Kong shares more with TTJ...

Rachita Sehgal

The exponential spread of coronavirus has led to brands having to change their marketing strategies, please share the different marketing tools and strategies that you have adopted during the pandemic to elevate your brand visibility.

Ocean Park Hong Kong (the Park) has been temporarily closed from 26 January to 12 June, and from 14 July until now, due to the COVID-19 situation. Since then, the Park suspended all overseas marketing and promotions as international and cross-border travel is significantly affected. Since the initial temporary closure, the Park focused its marketing and promotion efforts on local residents with an array of exclusive offers and encouraged them to visit the Park to enjoy the fresh air and plenty of outdoor space when the Park reopened

in mid-June. In addition, the Park stepped up the use of digital media platforms to reach out to visitors and fans while they had to stay home as a precautionary measure.

What has been your approach to strengthen your relationship with your customers while utilising an array of digital platforms?

To stay connected and engaged with our visitors, we have adopted a two-way communication approach in which we deploy various interactive and engaging digital formats such as Facebook Live streaming, virtual thrill rides videos and other online interactions to enable our audience to experience the Park, get to know more about the animal ambassadors, and stay tuned with the Park's happenings even when it is closed for the public. As schools were



suspended amid COVID-19 and classes were moved online instead, Ocean Park introduced a new educational channel on YouTube in February. The new channel, titled Redd's Nature Play Party, helps young children learn about animals and nature through a variety of entertaining content and approaches. The Park's effort was positively received by school children, parents and teachers alike.



PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Members-targeted marketing

For the Park's SmartFun Annual Pass holders, Ocean Park connected with them on an ongoing basis via direct marketing and e-newsletters. Members-exclusive programs such as preview tours and special workshops were arranged for them when the Park reopened in June and July.

New YouTube Channel

The Redd's Nature Play Party YouTube Channel offers an additional self-learning platform for kindergarten and lower primary school students, whose school classes have been suspended for many months due to the impact of COVID-19, by allowing them to enjoy educational videos featuring the Park's mascot Redd, who is an inventor and the most creative member of Whiskers & Friends. He leads the Redd team to visit different corners of Ocean Park and discover the secrets of nature. By sharing his findings through the videos, Redd helps deepen parents' and children's understanding of the ecosystem and environmental conservation.



With support from the Tourism Commission of the Hong Kong SAR Government, the channel comprises three series of educational content:

Play With Nature aims to stimulate curiosity and guide children to make full use of their five senses to explore and discover the mysteries of nature;

Move & Dance sees Ocean Park mascots Whiskers & Friends demonstrate gymnastics and dance movements, encouraging children to have fun and fully exercise their bodies at home; while

Art And Crafts Workshops stimulate children's creativity and enable them to learn about animals by making their own animal-themed arts and crafts.

Edutainment experience and new attractions

To help visitors reconnect with

nature and re-energise, a brand new edutainment experience titled Redd's 5 Senses Discovery was launched alongside with the Park's reopening in June. This free edutainment programme was curated to stimulate curiosity and encourage children to discover the wonders of nature through nature play and experiential learning under their parents' guidance. Visitors will receive a discovery pack for exploring different Discovery Zones located throughout the Park's Waterfront, with a wide array of recommended activities to help children learn through the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch as they interact with the objects, animals, plants and environment en route.

Furthermore, an exciting new animal exhibit, Little Meerkat & Giant Tortoise Adventure, was unveiled at the Whiskers Harbour in July. Visitors will be able to meet new members of the team at the Park's new African-themed animal exhibit. They will get the chance to learn about how meerkats and giant Aldabra tortoises adapt to the environment, as well as how to live in harmony with nature by loving and respecting all living creatures on Earth.

MMPRC concludes Rediscover Maldives Webinar Series

With the reopening of Maldives' borders to international tourists, Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC) kick-started the 'Rediscover Maldives, the Sunny Side of Life' campaign. Under this campaign, they also launched 'Rediscover Maldives Webinar Series' which consisted of four sessions for selected markets of which all have been completed.

Team TTJ

The webinar series was hosted by MMPRC together with the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Health, PR representatives from respective markets and industry partners, in the format of informative discussions and video clips.

The first session was successfully conducted for the Middle East, European, Asian and American markets on September 1, 2020. The second webinar concluded on September 8, for the markets of the UK, Germany, Italy, France and the USA. The third of this series of webinars took place recently on September 10, with over 300 participants, and focused on the markets of Southeast Asia, India, China, Korea, Japan and Australia. The final session on September 14, was targeted towards markets in Russia and the

Commonwealth of Independent States.

During these sessions, the impact of COVID-19 was discussed and emphasis was given on the recovery strategies in the tourism industry. The new norms in travel were also highlighted to give participants a better understanding and rebuild their confidence in the destination as a 'safe haven' for tourists. The Maldives is considered one of the safest countries to visit due to the stringent measures taken in tourist establishments and the safety provided by its unique geography.

MMPRC also initiated the campaign 'A Dozen Must do Experiences in the Maldives' during the first session of the webinar series. Some of these experiences are only attainable in the Maldives, such as flying above the islands, staying at your private over-water villa and exquisite

underwater dining experiences and many more such experiences.

Industry partners took the initiative to transport participants virtually to the Maldives as they presented the unique experiences available at their properties for tourists.

With the changing situation in several markets, MMPRC has been participating in and conducting several marketing campaigns on online and digital platforms such as destination training activities targeted to key markets and travel trade and gearing up for more global campaigns in these coming weeks. Also, MMPRC hosted the Facebook Live event 'Maldives, the Sun will Shine Again,' carried out a global campaign with CNN, and is conducting joint campaigns together with key markets.

StreetGooser

Revolutionising the PMS domain, empowering global accommodation providers

With the COVID-19 outbreak putting the brakes on the hotel industry in 2020 and technology pervading the travel and tourism domain, Cloud Based Technology player Streetgooser has certainly struck the right chord by offering the best of new age technology and a suite of inimitable bespoke solutions to enable accommodation providers take a giant leap of faith forward into a brand new era of travel and tourism.

Team TTJ

Streetgooser Technology, a new age entrant in the Cloud-Based Hotel Management Software domain, has been creating waves since inception in December 2019. With a basket of diverse, state-of-the-art technology products and apps, Streetgooser has revolutionised the global Hotel Management Software domain by curating a range of dynamic yet easy to use tech solutions that has helped accommodation providers across the globe expand their visibility, marketing reach and business growth while significantly reducing costs.

Headquartered in India's Silicon Valley Bengaluru, StreetGooser empowers hoteliers to connect with the world via their cutting edge technology platform. Streetgooser offers bespoke accommodation management solutions to meet the exclusive requirements of community hoteliers everywhere around the world.

Today, Streetgooser caters to Home Stays, B&Bs and Guest Houses ranging up to 50 Rooms; Serviced Apartments and Vacation Rentals that contain 20 Rooms; and also Boutique Hotels, Resorts, Villas and Hostels that house 100 Rooms.

Streetgooser has rapidly expanded into four distinct yet parallel product lines viz:

StreetGooser- the flagship accommodation management solution designed for small to mid-sized hotels, boutique hotels, serviced apartments, vacation rentals, guest houses, hostels, bed and breakfast, resorts and villas preferably with less than 100 rooms.

Powergooser- the revenue management solution which empowers independent hoteliers to imbibe the technology coupled with a highly skilled revenue manager to increase profits.

Gogooser- an online market place that offers an one-stop window to many exotic getaways. The platform promotes properties and drives more bookings with lesser commissions.

PowerGooserplus- a 360-degree digital marketing service specialising in Website design and development, Mobile App Development, SEO, SMM, Content and Corporate Video facilities.

Some of the unique features of the Streetgooser Cloud-based centralised dashboard system include a Distribution / Channel Manager, Housekeeping Management, Rate Shopper, Reputation Management, Website Builder, Booking Engine, Payment Gateway, Analytics and Report generation, 24X7 Chat Support, User & Profile Management and Accounting support. A dedicated Revenue Manager, inbuilt Channel Managers, Social Media and SEO management are just some of the many exclusive offerings from the Streetgooser suite of solutions.

In a mega initiative to fight the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and give back to the Travel Fraternity, Streetgooser has also pledged FOC Technology Support to the Hotel Industry for a limited time period. This will not only enable accommodation providers to tide through the financial crisis created by the pandemic but also offer them a chance to get familiar with the Streetgooser software at no charge and

choose from a wide suite of solutions to effectively manage their operations, market their properties and sell their inventory during the lockdown.

In a short period of 8 months Streetgooser has already massively expanded its network to reach over 50,000 Corporate Businesses, and 25,000+ Travel Agents and DMCs. Innovation and R&D is their core driving force and the recent pandemic has only opened up many opportunities to Streetgooser to conceptualise and market inventive delivery concepts, human capital sharing platforms, and nascent travel trends such as "Staycations," "Holistays" and "Revenge Travel" to help their clients ingenuously promote and sell their inventory during this lockdown.

With a robust team strength of 50 personnel, and a strong foundation in India's Silicon Valley Bengaluru, Streetgooser today boasts a strong global presence across the Indian sub-continent, Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Singapore and Sri Lanka in Asia; UK, Germany, France in Europe; Kenya and South Africa; and Brazil, Argentina and Peru in South America. The company has aggressive plans to expand its footprint into the North American continent and other countries worldwide.

The core team at Streetgooser is Shakthivelu M, Managing Director & Co-Founder, John Varghese, Chief Executive Officer & Founder, Deenath Sharma, Chief Technology Officer, and they have recently brought in Hema Manghnani as Vice President – Business Development.



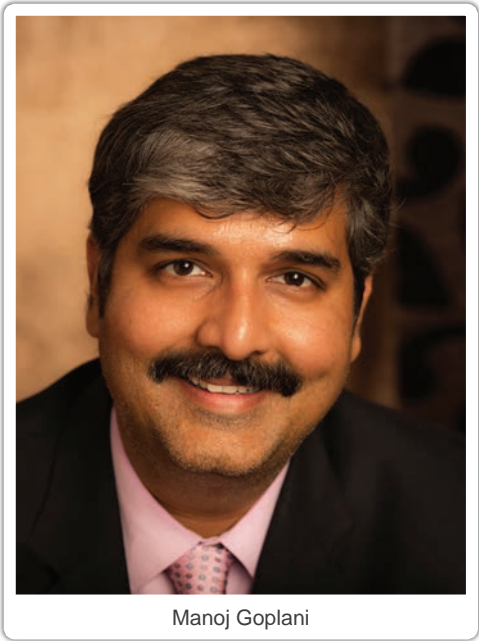
In the last four months, Seventy Seven Entertainment has executed over 50 digital events, creating stellar immersive experiences for various clients. The events industry is innately volatile and a complete shift to virtual seemed like a massive change initially, but we have evolved and commendably adapted to it, because, the show must go on.

Manoj Goplani

Close to six months of lockdown now and life seems to have gone through an upheaval. The events industry, which has mass gatherings at the core of its existence, was dealt with a severe blow due to the pandemic. But some of the most passionate players of this space believe that the show must go on and, thus, they shifted gears to explore the world of virtual events; Seventy Seven Entertainment is one of them.

Although a virtual event can never really emanate the magnanimity of an on-ground event, time waits for no one and we could not have halted and stared at this obstacle. Hibernation never really suited us and as an experiential service provider, we strongly feel that although the pace has slowed down, a comma is acceptable but not a full stop to things. For on-ground events, webcasting was the only virtual aspect in play, but with a 360-degree turn of things, video conferencing platforms have now become the new normal for webinars, conferences, R&R, product launches, sales meet, press meet among others.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, each one of us has inevitably participated in several virtual events hosted on a plethora of platforms. Take a closer look and you realize that this new 'virtual' normal, indeed, has its own set of pros. Remote audience engagement is taken care of, attendee participation can be tracked more effectively. What's more? Consider an R&R where the winner gets felicitated at their home in front of their entire family cheering and the event instantly brims up with EQ.



Manoj Goplani

There are several platforms available, each one of them with their own set of unique features. Thus, to find a platform that suits a particular event criterion isn't difficult. We have been working on platforms such as Zoom, Cisco Webex, GoToMeeting, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, and Blue Jeans. Depending on the event type, the number of participants, and platform restriction on the expected outcome, we suggest the appropriate platform.

So now the mighty question of how all these sails smooth for the business of tourism boards. To begin with, buyer-seller meets, travel exhibitions, travel marts, roadshows, etc., are typically the types of events executed in this space. A virtual travel mart allows an engaged party to generate B2C and B2B

connections through this one event in an immersive environment.

An on-ground event will at some point pose some or the other limitations, e.g., accommodating a large audience. But, for a digital event, one streaming platform and your audience count becomes just a number. For a travel show/exhibition, footfall is crucial and a digital show can help you achieve great numbers. Another great pro of a virtual travel/trade show is the ease of talent management. The speaker/ talent can now connect from anywhere in the world at a click of a button.

Virtual platforms beat the simpler video conferencing platforms by a landslide because the latter is one-way communication. No one wants that; there are more than enough OTT platforms for that. What any TG seeks right now is the right amount of interaction and immersive experiences. Video conferencing loses out on a lot of aspects compared to an on-ground event, and yes, no technology will ever come close to personally interacting with another person. But certain platforms immensely help in bridging that gap. With superlative elements such as stage with motion graphics integration, real-time reactions, the hybrid format of an on-ground and online event, immersive environments, customized zones like ballrooms, registration desks, lobbies, exhibition booths and breakout rooms, virtual platforms are equipped to dazzle audiences and leave them asking for more.

Manoj Goplani is the Director at Seventy Seven Entertainment.

Tourism's co-existence with COVID-19

As the world is collectively gearing up to embrace the new normal, tourism in India will also be back in demand with special safety measures and radical changes. While the pandemic has been a setback for travel tourism this year, it is now time for revival for the industry.

Anirban Chakraborty

It is said that in nature, the greatest evolutionary mechanisms developed by any species have occurred in an attempt to beat the odds. Even Charles Darwin's famed 'survival of the fittest' theory points out that in all of nature, organisms have adapted in order to defeat what was out to defeat them. But the evolution of flight took this manoeuvring on our planet to a higher level. Flying enabled several species to explore new territories that might otherwise be out of reach. This phenomenon is equally applicable to human civilization, and is true for the tourism industry all over the globe today, and the time has come for the industry to explore new territories and take flight in a way as never before.

The Tourism Sector has been affected by the pandemic, primarily due to the restrictions imposed globally to control the spread of the virus. However, this has also presented an opportunity for the tourism and travel industry to reinvent itself in new and innovative ways. Countries all over the world have adopted their own unique strategies to cope with the pandemic. India is also speeding up its re-opening strategies to re-generate cash flow. The tourism projects are being assisted by providing handholding support by institutions such as TFCI – a major lender to the tourism sector in India.

At a time like this, when international borders are almost closed, domestic tourism can truly take over, countries such as Japan have leveraged this, and it recently launched its "Go to Travel" campaign, an effort to boost domestic travel which provides subsidies on all domestic travel spending. This is also a huge opportunity for India and a wake-up call for the Govt. to boost domestic tourism.

The Indian travel and tourism sector contributed nearly \$194 billion, around 6.8 per cent of the country's GDP during

the year 2019. Since India is gradually re-opening important sectors of the economy, the hospitality industry needs to get a thumbs up from the Government to restart the business, with special operative guidelines in place.

The pandemic is likely to change most travel trends in the short to medium term within the country. Travellers today would prefer to go local due to the global situation and shall not be averse to spend a tad higher for factors such as hygiene, safety standards deployed in a hotel to ensure the health of its staff, etc. An inclination towards domestic travel is bound to create good demand, steering money back into local economies. Incentives offered by the industry to attract tourists will also add to this trend.

These new trends can boost the MSME sector in the country as many hotels get categorised under this sector and it can also help small and micro ancillary support units catering to a hotel, as the tourist flow resumes. However, efforts are required both at the Central as well as State Govt. level to induce demand for tourism in India and some State Govts. have already initiated efforts in this direction.

The Andhra govt. and the APTDC is conducting webinars for its officials, to inculcate state-of-the-art technologies and increase tourist activities; while Kerala has been through a similar disaster before (devastating floods and Nipah virus attack in 2018), it's all set to use its experience to restart tourism in the wake of the pandemic. Kerala is revitalising its domestic tourism by promoting Ayurveda, eco-tourism and adventure and is making its presence felt on the Incredible India digital platform by providing relevant content. Similarly, the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand has



Anirban Chakraborty

approved the expansion of the helipad at Kedarnath Dham, which shall allow the landing of Chinook helicopters to boost tourism. Also, under the Tourist Incentive Coupon Scheme, tourists will be given ₹ 1000 discount coupons for their e-booking for a minimum 3-day stay in hotels/homestays in Uttarakhand. Further, in a recent development, the Goa government has allowed restaurants and bars to reopen following SOPs and guidelines and lifted inter-state movement restrictions.

Financing institutions, such as TFCI are truly 'Helping Tourism Grow' by providing required financial support to assist units to withstand the temporary distortion during these challenging times. TFCI is deeply committed to supporting the survival, revival and growth of the tourism industry in India post COVID.

Anirban Chakraborty is the MD & CEO of Tourism Finance Corporation of India (TFCI).

FAITH, relentless in their effort for revival of tourism

FAITH (Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality) is the national federation of ten national Travel, Tourism and Hospitality associations of India and is considered an apex umbrella association for both the sectors. Subhash Goyal, Chairman, STIC Travel Group & Hon. Secretary, FAITH, speaks to TTJ as he shares how diligently the association is working for the survival of tourism and hospitality sectors reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prashant Nayak

FAITH, on behalf of the whole tourism industry, engages in key policy, strategy ideation and budgets with Central and State Governments of India for the growth of the Indian tourism industry since inception.

The ten-member associations are ADTOI, ATOAI, FHRAI, HAI, IATO, ICPB, IHHA, ITTA, TAAI, and TAFI. FAITH works with them to take their voices to the concerned authorities. All the associations' common agenda becomes the common strategy points to be taken up with the Government by FAITH.

FAITH has always been proactive in raising concerns of the tourism and ancillary industries. However, it is important to understand how this strong association has not been able to garner attention or gain support from the Government for recovery during the stimulus package, in spite of tourism being a huge contributor to the GDP.

Goyal says, "This is not a correct assessment! On the contrary, we have been informed from different sources in the Government, that because FAITH responded so fast with sector loss assessments, that the Government was able to get a first-hand understanding of the damage to the sector. Everybody has acknowledged that so much 'voice of tourism' which has happened in the last five months has not happened in the past 50 years."

Surely enough, FAITH has been in the limelight for voicing many concerns of the tourism and hospitality industry in the last few months and has been successful in getting the Government's attention.

Recently, they voiced over the negative American Travel Advisory to India with the Tourism Minister to



Subhash Goyal

urgently take it up with the Minister of External Affairs. FAITH and its 10 member associations in a multi association meeting with the Ministry of Tourism proposed multi-step strategies for the revival of tourism. These issues were identified to enhance tourism demand while protecting tourism supply in India. FAITH had requested a 24-month extension of the moratorium for tourism and that tourism Asset Classification to stay 'standard & not NPA'. Also, direct benefit transfer on funds closer to the repo rate increased to 50 per cent from 20 per cent of outstanding under the MSME fund. FAITH had also quoted distress from RBI, GST, IT, UNWTO, and IATA.

FAITH has over the months appealed to RBI, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Tourism, Niti Aayog for structured fiscal and monetary support to the tourism, travel and hospitality industry.

"The biggest impact that has been felt with all the Ministries and State Governments is that now they are fully aware of the problem in the tourism industry. Also, the other big thing to note is the whole industry for the first time is standing together through their associations with FAITH and speaking in one voice," shares Goyal.

He further adds, "Wherever the Government is in a position to support the industry based upon the resources they have, the Government has been trying to do so. Also, no other sectors have been supported because the major issue for everyone is lack of funds."

It is to be noted that over the years, FAITH and its Associations have successfully worked on e-visa strategy implementation, State Tourism Policies, CENVAT Credit, GST strategy for tourism, SEIS introduction & tradability of scripts, three Travel Marts, two Tourism Ministers meetings, SAARC PM visions, Tourism Policy Draft, five Economic Surveys, introducing of Mega Tourism zones, PPP in Tourism, Iconic destinations, Survival & Revival package, etc, and now the focus is on the cropping concerns due to the pandemic.

The pandemic has been a lesson for the Indian tourism and hospitality sectors on every front. Henceforth, after the gradual recovery, it is important that with so many Associations in India, every association needs to be proactive to protect the interest of its members and the industry, in cases of similar disasters in the future.

"It is time that all associations work together towards common goals and pursue them together," concludes Goyal.

IAHRC

The new voice of the hospitality industry

With an aim to be critical and a one-stop resource for their members, Indian Association of Hotel Representatives & Companies has been formed to strengthen the tourism industry through promotion, education and advocacy.



IAHRC

Indian Association of Hotel
Representatives & Companies

Team TTJ

Formed by a team of professional hotel representatives and companies promoting independent/individual hotels and hospitality groups, IAHRC harnesses the collective power and potential of an association for the greater good of the hospitality industry, and hence this association of like-minded hotel representatives and associated companies came into being.

One of the primary objectives of IAHRC is to quantify memberships and set out a benchmark for quality in representation and sales & marketing services. The association also aims to use their collective strength to petition for categorisation and recognition under tourism services with the Department of Tourism and work towards synergies with various other associations of the travel

industry to drive excellence and collaborations.

While their mission is to create an identity in the travel and tourism industry. The experienced board members will work together to create

opportunities for partnerships across the industry, support and create value that will positively impact both the industry stakeholders and the members respectively. The association aims to create synergies within and outside of the membership biosphere while protecting and nurturing the interest of members and stakeholders viz-a-viz trade partners and associate hoteliers. IAHRC aims to lead and strengthen the tourism industry through promotion, education and advocacy on behalf of its members.

IAHRC strives to make a difference in the Indian Tourism Industry by benchmarking best practises, integrity and trust through collective

envisioning of knowledge forums, skill development and excellence through teamwork, community development and a collaborative vision.



Geeta Maheshwari
President



K P Singh
Vice President



Digvijay Diwakar
General Secretary



Shruti Pandey
Joint Secretary



Jitender Sharma
Treasurer



Shoba Mohan
Communications

Hong Kong secures multiple first-ever MICE events amidst COVID-19 challenges

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has announced that Hong Kong has been recently chosen as the host city for four international MICE events; including the city's first-ever events of high strategic values, and two repeated events amidst the COVID-19 challenges. These business events are expected to bring in about 10,000 high-yield visitors in total and deliver a great economic contribution to the city and drive multi-sector development.

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has announced that Hong Kong has been recently chosen as the host city for four international MICE events; including the city's first-ever events of high strategic values, and two repeated events amidst the COVID-19 challenges. These business events are expected to bring in about 10,000 high-yield visitors in total and deliver a great economic contribution to the city and drive multi-sector development.

Dr YK Pang, Chairman of the HKTB, said, "We are excited to see Hong Kong winning such strategically important MICE events against competitors around the world. It is encouraging to see major

events to be held in our city for the very first time, such as the International Airline Transport Association (IATA) World Cargo Symposium, Asia Sports Technology Conference and the Congress of the Asian

Society of Transplantation (CAST) 2023. It demonstrates international event organisers' confidence in Hong Kong as a strategic, safe and hygienic destination for high-profile business events. The HKTB will continue to proactively engage international and Hong Kong organisers to bid for hosting rights of major MICE events and step up efforts in attracting repeated events to maintain Hong Kong's status as The World's Meeting Place."



IATO urges the government to provide immediate relief to the tourism sector

Industry body IATO recently had urged the government to provide immediate relief to the tourism sector, which has been severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes a one-time financial grant of the gross salaries amount paid to the staff of tour operators based on the balance sheet of the fiscal year 2018-19



which is submitted with the government authorities, IATO said. The industry body has also requested the government to raise duty drawback under the SEIS (Service Export India Scheme) from 7 per cent to 10 per cent. Such a measure would go a long way in alleviating the liquidity problem as the sector currently has zero billing and this would help tour operators to survive.

It has also sought amendment in rules regarding the granting of loans to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as presently only those who have established relationships with banks are being offered loans. Pronab Sarkar, President, IATO, said, "The tourism industry is in dire straits and needs urgent relief from the government. The measures we have sought do not involve huge outgo from the government but if these reliefs can be given now, these can go a long way in providing succor to the stressed sector failing which many tour operators would shut down."

Emaar Hospitality Group launches special IPL packages for Indian travellers

With the 13th edition of the IPL scheduled to be held in United Arab Emirates, the frenzy has begun with the teams reaching UAE to self-quarantine before the season due to COVID-19. The excitement and adrenaline rush begins from September 19, 2020.



From world famous hotels such as Armani Hotel Dubai, Address Downtown Dubai, Address Boulevard, Palace Downtown Dubai, Emaar Hospitality Group offers the most luxurious hospitality experience that a traveller looks for. To make the most of the cricket season, guests travelling from India can make use of the IPL packages with offers available across all signature hotels of Emaar Hospitality Group.

Vida Emirates Hills, Vida Downtown Dubai, Manzil Downtown Dubai, Address Dubai Marina are offering spectators travelling from India to Dubai for IPL, an exclusive 'Hit a 4' package, where guests can book their stay on a flexible rate and/or flexible rate BB and avail special discounts on F&B.

Downtown Dubai is the place to stay when visiting the Emirate. The lavish neighborhood is surrounded by the incredible landmarks of Dubai, such as the luxuriant Dubai Mall, the famous Dubai fountains just to be awed by them and the colossal Burj Khalifa. Located in the iconic hub of Downtown Dubai are- Armani Hotel Dubai, Address Downtown Dubai, Palace Downtown Dubai, Address Boulevard, and Address Dubai Mall offering the ultimate leisure getaway with a 'Hit a 6 or Take a wicket package'. Guests can book their luxury stay at special flexible rates and/or flexible rate BB.

TBO Group announces salary revisions

The group recently announced that salaries are being restored to pre-pandemic levels. TBO Group has confirmed that it has reversed some of the stern measures made this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ankush Nijhawan, Co-Founder, TBO Group, said, "I would like to extend my profound gratitude to my dedicated team and colleagues at TBO, for their sincerity and commitment towards TBO during these out of the ordinary times. The organisation regards the unfaltering support by its workforce for it in good as well as hardships. We continue to strive to excellence, by providing a seamless experience to our clients."



Turkey announces single entry visa with two years validity for Indian travellers

In an attempt to boost the arrival of Indian tourists to Turkey the Embassy of The Republic of Turkey in India recently announced to offer long validity visas to Indian applicants. Under this decision, the Turkish consulate will offer single entry visas with 2-year validity for applicants.

In addition to this, Turkey will issue a new sticker visa free of charge for the applicants who already have a sticker or an e-visa but were not able to use it because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The new visa thus issued will also have two-year validity. If the applicant could not travel due to pandemic, the applicant can re-apply for the visa free of charge.



IATO's 36th Annual Convention postponed to September 2021

The 36th IATO Annual Convention was scheduled to be held in Ahmedabad in September 2020 and was supported by Gujarat Tourism, the host state.

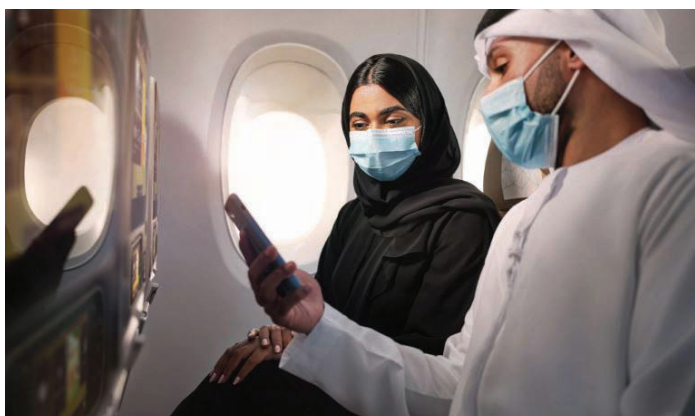
Unfortunately, the present pandemic situation does not seem to be very conducive to having the high attendance convention due to rapidly growing cases of COVID-19, travel restrictions by various state governments, restrictions imposed on gatherings, guidelines of MoHFW and MHA, etc. Thus, the convention has been postponed to September 2021 with the hope that by that time tourism will be back on track and they can have a full-fledged gathering of members from all across the country. Gujarat Tourism has acceded to the request and has agreed to hold the convention in September 2021. Dates for the convention will be finalised in due course and will be decided mutually by IATO and Gujarat Tourism.

IndiJo Consulting to represent Utah Office of Tourism in India



In order to increase awareness, support product development, and build the Utah brand in India, The Utah Office of Tourism has appointed IndiJo Consulting as its official representative in India. IndiJo Consulting will carry out Sales, Marketing, and PR activities on behalf of the tourism board. These include webinars, trade training, co-op promotions, social media initiatives, support product development, trade and media relations.

Etihad Airways introduces free global COVID-19 health insurance



Etihad Airways introduces COVID-19 global wellness insurance cover as part of Etihad Wellness, the airlines new health and hygiene programme. Guests who are diagnosed with COVID-19 during their trip won't have to worry about medical expenses or quarantine costs when they fly with Etihad.

All Etihad tickets regardless of the date of the booking, travelling between now and December 31, 2020, will include COVID-19 insurance. Guests with existing bookings don't need to do anything – they are automatically enrolled into the programme. The insurance is valid worldwide for 31 days from the first day of travel.

Uttarakhand launches 'Tourist Incentive Scheme'

The Uttarakhand tourism department has launched a pilot project to boost tourism under which tourists opting for e-bookings for a minimum 3-day stay will get a rebate of ₹ 1000 or 25 per cent of the stay charge per day, whichever is less. The tourists will be given the discount coupon while registering themselves on the government portal under the tourist category. They will then be able to use the coupon during their stay in a hotel or homestay in the tourist spots of the state. The discounted amount will be reimbursed by the government to hotel and homestay owners within 15 days on producing necessary documents regarding the bill charged from the tourist.

The scheme will be launched as a pilot project for one month which will probably cost the government ₹ 2.70 crore. If it's successful, then it will be extended for two more months.



Madhya Pradesh Government allows water tourism activities



The Madhya Pradesh government has allowed resumption of water tourism in the state with 50 per cent capacity. Boat operators and their staff will need to undergo regular medical check-ups and submit self-declaration forms that if found infected with coronavirus, they will immediately inform the local administration and management.

Guidelines issued to prevent the spread of COVID-19 will have to be followed during the operation of water sports facilities. Boat operators will also need to maintain a record of visitors and tourists, including their names, contact numbers, address, body temperature and Aadhaar card number. Visitors will be allowed entry in the boat club through paperless tickets.

There are nearly a dozen water tourism spots in the state, including in Bhopal, Hanuwantia (Khandwa), Tawa dam (Hoshangabad), Bargi dam (Jabalpur), Sailani island (Khandwa), Orchha (Niwari) among others.

Andhra Pradesh Govt. issues AP Tourism Trade (Registration and Facilitation) Guidelines 2020

The Andhra Pradesh government issued the 'AP Tourism Trade (Registration and Facilitation) Guidelines, 2020' to position the state as a premier tourist destination by improving the standards of services. The new guidelines are aimed at offering tourism services to world-class standards and strengthening the tourist ecosystem in the state by establishing better industry linkages.

Andhra Pradesh has emerged as one of the most-visited destinations in the country and the number of visitors has been growing significantly every year. To meet the growing demand and position the state as a premier tourist destination, it is important to improve the standards of tourism services offered. The state so far did not have a mechanism to register the tourism trade operators, which was essential for the maintenance of statistical information for planning and development.

The guidelines will encourage the improvement of standards and offer the best quality tourism services. They will provide a simple mechanism for registration of tourism trade similar to those in practice at the Union Ministry of Tourism and states such as Goa, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Karnataka. The AP Tourism Authority would now be able to collect statistical information from service providers and establish a database on tourism for the planning and development of tourism in the state.

This would also ensure linkages with tourism departments of other states, national and internationally-renowned travel and tourism players, travel and tourism-related associations and societies. Under the new guidelines, registration would now become mandatory for all tourism-related trade establishments and service providers to be eligible for any government-sponsored initiatives, incentives, subsidies and schemes.

Odisha to revive river cruise tourism

The government of Odisha is planning to commence river cruises in order to boost tourism in the state. Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy has directed the Department to revive River Cruise Tourism under the Public-Private Partnership model.

Tourism Secretary Vishal Dev said that there are three prime river cruise circuits, which can be developed on the Mahanadi river, Chilika Lake and Dangmala reserve forest including the National Water Way-5 from Dhamara to Paradip. Bhitarkanika circuit can connect the spots such as Chandbali-Aradi-Dhamara-Khola to other spots in Bhitarkanika. This circuit can be a five nights and six days cruise.

Chilika circuit can connect Chilika, Kalijai-Nalabana-Honeymoon island-Mangalajodi-Satapada-Rajhans island-Satapada and Puri. It could be a three-night and four days cruise.

flydubai offers passengers free global cover for COVID-19

flydubai passengers travelling between September 01 and November 30, 2020, will automatically receive free global cover for COVID-19.

The new service covers passengers' health expenses and quarantine costs if diagnosed with COVID-19 during their trip and is valid for 31 days from the time they take their first flight

on their itinerary. The service enables passengers to benefit from coverage for their medical expenses up to EUR 150,000 and quarantine costs up to EUR 100 per day for 14 days. The service is valid for all bookings done through flydubai.com, the flydubai mobile app, the flydubai Customer Centre or Travel Shops, the Holidays by flydubai portal, travel agents or any of flydubai's travel partners.

ADTOI Rajasthan organises a FAM for its managing committee



In a bid to bring confidence to travel among the public at large and domestic travellers in particular and to revive domestic tourism, an ADTOI delegation comprising of its Managing Committee members led by President P.P. Khanna undertook a FAM trip to visit some of the properties to see their preparedness to receive the tourists in these days of COVID-19.

The trip was organised from Sep 4 to Sep 6, by the ADTOI Rajasthan Chapter team to unlock Rajasthan. The delegation visited WelcomHeritage Indrapur and Mandawa Castle and Mandawa Desert Resort. Members were very happy to see the arrangements made for their stay. The properties adhered to all the norms, guidelines of WHO, Govt. of India, ICMR and the State Government.

Concept Hospitality launches a new brand, 'The Zinc Hotels'

Concept Hospitality has inducted a new, hip, lifestyle hotel brand, The Zinc, under its portfolio with the inauguration of the first Zinc hotel in the garden city of Bengaluru, Karnataka. This is the largest hotel opened in India during the lockdown period, with 193 keys. The hotel has also announced an inaugural offer of ₹ 1 per room per night, with an all meals inclusive plan costing ₹ 1999 per person extra.



There are three distinct brands under the Zinc umbrella, each tailored to a different target audience and their requirements – The Zinc, The Zinc Journey and The Zinc Living. Each brand offers a distinct experience that fuels the brand's vision forward and etches a life-long memory which their guests can associate with and always cherish.

Railofy, India's first-ever WL & RAC protection raises ₹ 70 million



Railofy, India's first-ever WL & RAC protection, has raised ₹ 70 Million in a seed round from Chiratae Ventures to solve the Waitlist problem in India that affects 300M+ railway passenger trips annually. With WL & RAC protection, railway passengers get flight close to train prices to their destination if their train ticket is not confirmed after chart preparation. For shorter distances, Railofy provides buses at nominal prices if the train ticket is not confirmed after chart preparation. This ensures that passengers reach their destination conveniently, in time and at the lowest possible price, ultimately introducing predictability into the overall travel experience.

Railofy started trials in January 2020 on select trains originating from Mumbai. In just 1.5 months of operations (before pandemic induced lockdown), Railofy witnessed more than 60K+ visits, selling hundreds of WL & RAC protections on these routes. The funding from Chiratae validates the strength of the business model. Railofy will use this funding to scale presence across India post lock-down. The protection is available for all special trains currently running.

IndiGo commences flights between Male and Kochi under Air Bubble

In-line with its vision to strengthen international connectivity from India, IndiGo has commenced two weekly flights between India and Maldives under the air bubble. The first such arrangement in South-Asia was decided after the agreement between officials from both the governments. IndiGo will operate flights on the Kochi-Male-Kochi route twice a week, while adhering to all the precautionary measures, ensuring a safe and hassle-free travel experience on-board a lean clean flying machine.

AAI building a new terminal at Leh airport with enhanced capacity



Perspective Boarding Area of the Airport

Situated at 3,256 m (10,682 ft) above mean sea level, Kushok Bakula Rinpoche Airport at Leh is gearing up for a new world-class terminal building.

With an existing terminal capacity, Leh airport has handled more than nine lakh passengers per annum in recent years. To meet out the traffic growth and growing demand, construction of a state-of-the-art new terminal building with modern facilities is underway at ₹ 480 Crores. Equipped with all essential passenger-friendly amenities and conveniences, the airport will be able to handle 20 lakh passengers annually after the completion of construction work in December 2022.

The upcoming new Terminal Building will be 4-star GRIHA rated energy-efficient building with 18 check-in counters, inline baggage handling systems and centralised cooling and heating systems for providing passenger comfort during extreme winter. The terminal is designed with various levels to protect the natural profile of the landscape and will be well connected with elevators, escalators, and staircases to ensure the smooth flow of passengers. The design of the building will reflect the philosophy of ancient Buddhist wisdom intertwined with a modern ethos and closely incorporate Buddhist design elements in the overall look and feel of the building.

Reuben Kataria appointed as General Manager of The Leela Hotel and Residences Bhartiya City Bengaluru

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts recently announced the appointment of Reuben Kataria as the General Manager of the upcoming The Leela Hotel and Residences Bhartiya City Bengaluru. Recognised for his astute business acumen in managing hotels, Reuben is a veteran in the hospitality fraternity.



His professional experience in working with leading global chains includes The Oberoi, Hyatt and Marriott International. With more than two decades of experience in managing hotel operations for both Business Hotels and Resorts and with extensive practical knowledge of Food & Beverage operations, hotel development, product enhancement, up-gradation and concept development, he brings with him the ideal skill set required to help open, launch and position The Leela Hotel and Residences Bhartiya City Bengaluru in a highly competitive market.

In his new role, he will oversee the complete pre-opening strategy, operations and management of the hotel and guide the hotel senior leadership team with his vision.

Speaking on his appointment, Anuraag Bhatnagar, Chief Operating Officer, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, said, "We are delighted to have Reuben Kataria join us at the helm of The Leela Hotel and Residences Bhartiya City Bengaluru. Having someone of his experience and dedication leading the team coupled with his people management skills and a deep understanding of a highly competitive market like Bengaluru will help us launch and position the hotel as a market leader within the luxury space."

Emirates returns over ₹ 9,985 crore to customers in refunds

Emirates has revealed that it has returned over ₹ 9,985 crore (US\$ 1.4 billion) in COVID-19 related travel refunds to date, making strong and steady progress on its commitment to customers to complete pending refunds.

More than 1.4 million refunds requests have been completed since March, representing 90 per cent of the airline's backlog. This includes all requests received from customers around the world up until the end of June, save for a few cases which require further manual review.

Since the pandemic hit, Emirates has invested additional resources to ramp up its processing capability. The airline also continues to work with industry partners to facilitate refunds for those who have booked their Emirates flights through travel agents, this includes enabling direct refunds processing via global booking systems (GDS).





10 YEARS OF IMPACT