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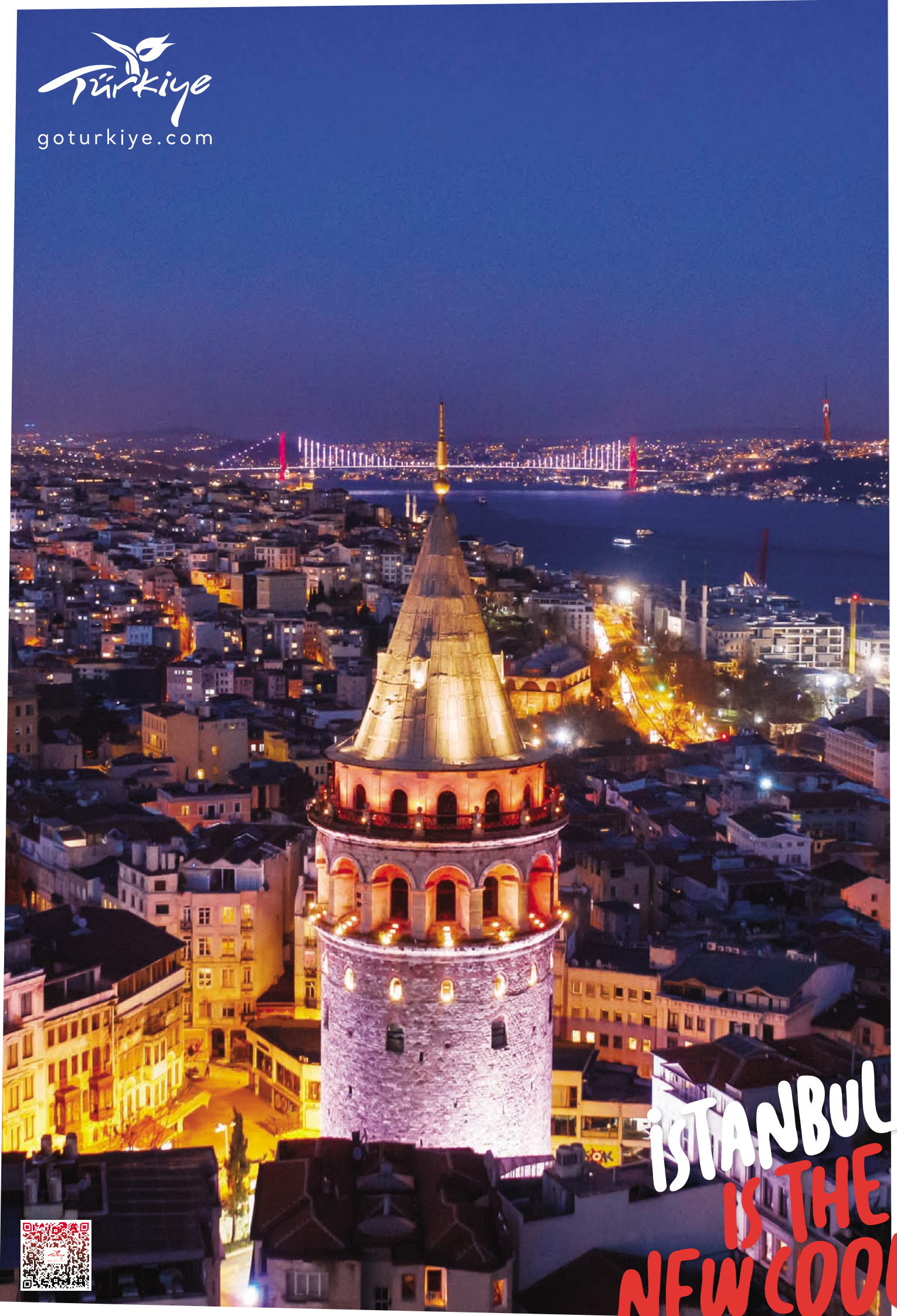
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NEW COOL



Caravan Tourism has tremendous potential in Maharashtra: Valsa Nair Singh

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

In order to boost tourism in Maharashtra, the state government has introduced a Caravan Policy.

The policy aims not only to provide a different kind of experience to travellers, but also promote tourism in the state's remote areas and create job opportunities.

According to the policy, caravans and camper vans will be able to provide all the facilities to tourists in areas where permanent construction is prohibited. Caravan parks will be places where recreational vehicles can be parked, and all the facilities including water refill, battery charging and disposal of sewage will be made available. In addition, there will be food courts and



information provided regarding local sights. These parks will be set up in the buffer zone of a forest, near a dam or a fort.

Talking about the importance of the policy, Valsa Nair Singh, IAS-Principal Secretary, Tourism, Excise & Civil Aviation, Govt of Maharashtra, said that there are many scenic places in Maharashtra which fall under CRZ (Coastal Regulatory Zone), forest or forest buffer area or irrigation zone (near dam) where construction is not allowed. "However, in such destinations parking of Caravan is allowed and here comes in our Caravan Policy playing a great role. We are helping the caravan players to tie up with hotel groups," she said. According to her, Caravan tourism has tremendous potential in Maharashtra, as



the state has very good roads. "Not only that, good law and order situation also offers huge scope for Caravan tourism. Mumbai to Goa is one of the best road trips in the world. Besides this, Mumbai-Pune, Mumbai-Nashik, etc. also offer huge scope for development of Caravan tourism," she opined. The state government intends to create permanent caravan parks in around five spots, including the Gangapur dam near Nashik and Malshej and Karla near Pune. ♦

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

Bullish on Indian market, Qatar Tourism to launch global campaign here soon

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

Qatar Tourism is all set to launch its global campaign in the India market and before the full-fledged launch the organisers had organised a event in Mumbai to provide a sneak-peek preview of the destination to a well-attended gathering. "Rich in art, culture and tradition, Qatar is a country waiting to be discovered. It is centred around the generous hospitality characteristic of the local culture and the world's best hotel and restaurant brands have created an oasis of luxury in the heart of the Middle East," said Deveekaa Nijhawan, Global Head of International PR & Communications, Qatar Tourism, while speaking exclusively to **TravelBiz Monitor**. She said that they have already launched their global campaign in their priority markets like

Europe and America.

Qatar Tourism held back their campaign in the India market because of the prevailing Covid situation at that point of time. "We postponed our campaign in the India market because of rules and regulations and India was in the Red list of Qatar. But now, the situation has vastly improved and we are all set to launch our campaign in India," pointed out Nijhawan.

Describing India as a very important market, she said that Qatar Airways flies over 19 cities in India. "Vistara is soon starting its operation to Qatar, besides this, you



DEVEEKAA NIJHAWAN
Global Head of International
PR & Communications,
Qatar Tourism

have IndiGo and GoAir as well. Being a short-haul destination is also an added advantage for us," she said.

Qatar caters to every need of a tourist be it beach holiday, adventure & Sports, art & culture, city break, romantic getaway etc. "We are targeting our important market India not based on demography but on demand basis. I must say Qatar is a best kept secret in the Middle East," said Nijhawan.

Talking about the target audience, she said that

currently they are focusing on weddings and MICE. "Destination weddings have very

Contd PG. 4 ►

Visit Utah organises its first B2B virtual sales mission in India

TBM Staff | Mumbai

With the mission of creating awareness about Utah as a potential tourism destination for Indians, AVIAREPS India along with Utah Office of Tourism organised its first exclusive B2B virtual sales mission in India recently. The virtual event was attended by the representatives of Utah partners like Visit Salt Lake, Kane County Office of Tourism, Bryce Canyon Country, Explore Utah Valley and Utah Office of Tourism among others. Indian trade partners like Thomas Cook, Flamingo, Make my Trip, N. Chirag, Kesari were also a part of it.

Zach Fyne, Global Markets Specialist, Utah Office of Tourism, said, "India has been among the Top 10 markets for the state of Utah in international visitation over the last five years, so we're excited to further increase our efforts and exposure of what our state has to offer to the Indian visitor. We are confident

the Indian market will be delighted by the experiences and beauty Utah that has to offer from our Mighty 5 national parks and 44 state parks, to skiing the Greatest Snow on Earth at our 15 world-class ski resorts, to taking in the night sky at the 24



internationally-recognised dark sky areas and parks, to everything in between that is connected by driving through our 28 scenic byways. We're excited to welcome more people from India to the beehive state!"

Elaine from San Juan County shared,

"We are happy to participate in the first of hopefully many, virtual India B2B sales missions. We know we already have travellers from India who are visiting San Juan County, so we are really looking forward to the opportunity to speak directly with travel trade partners in India to not only learn more about what Indian travellers are looking for and how we can better serve them while they're here, but also share our amazing landscapes, culture, and history with Indian travellers."

Mansi Oza, Account Manager-India, AVIAREPS India said, "We are very optimistic about travel to the USA given the ease of restrictions and the positive sentiments of the Indian traveller. As AVIAREPS India, we are working together with Utah office of Tourism to welcome Indian travellers to Utah and showcase its unique offering." ♦

Laguna Phuket targeting evolving travellers in India

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Laguna Phuket, an integrated destination in Asia, is ready to welcome Indians with their exquisite range of experiences ranging from luxurious stays, island activities, gastronomical spread, wellness, and rejuvenation targeted at friends, couples and families. The brand is reaching out to the evolving traveller segment in India across key target markets and enticing them through sustained marketing and PR activities by projecting the destination's post-COVID readiness and plethora of holidaying activities.

Laguna Phuket's portfolio of properties includes Angsana Laguna Phuket, Angsana Villas Resort, Banyan Tree Phuket, Banyan Tree Veya Phuket, Cassia Phuket, Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket, Laguna Holiday Club

Resort and Saii Laguna Phuket.

Speaking on the destination's inclination to strengthen its India market outreach through sustained marketing and communications activities, Ravi Chandran, Managing Director, Laguna Phuket, said, "We're delighted to have direct flights from India again and are ready to welcoming the Indian market back to Laguna Phuket. As a popular integrated destination, Laguna Phuket features 8 luxury hotels with 1400 rooms and villas. With travellers' quest for safe and



RAVI CHANDRAN

purposeful travel post-Covid, we are geared to welcome multi-generational family units, digital nomads and couples. Our magnitude of hotels caters to each segment. Additionally, we are known as the perfect venue for hosting Indian weddings, elevated by authentic cuisine by our expert Indian chefs and our unique location." ♦

Bullish on Indian market....

CONTD from PG 03 ▶

good potential as we have world-class hotels which are second to none when compared with other destinations. We are also in touch with wedding planners and hopeful about the outcome," she said. On MICE, Nijhawan said that they are also capable of hosting large MICE groups as they have Qatar National Convention Centre. "Leisure segment is also critical for us, especially after Covid," she said.

As far as travel trade engagement is concerned, she said that at present their focus is training and education. "Our focus now is to work with right travel trade operators, DMCs and give them training and create awareness in the India market. We really want to work with the right partners, for us it is quality rather than quantity. Qatar has everything for every kind of travellers that the message we want to send in this market," pointed out Nijhawan. ♦

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in



Madhya Pradesh

A Teaching and Preaching Trail of Lord Buddha

- ❖ The Great Stupas of Sanchi are the first commissioned by Emperor Ashoka.
- ❖ If you are in search of inner peace, then explore Sanchi and other places of Buddhists Circuit.

Bhopal. India is known as land of Buddha and the heart of India 'Madhya Pradesh' have roots of Buddhism in it. Sanchi is a Buddhist complex, famous for its Great Stupa on a hilltop at Sanchi Town located nearly 50 kilometres in the northeast of Bhopal is perhaps the earliest archaeological evidence of Madhya Pradesh's Buddhists connection.

Attractions in and around Sanchi to Visit

- Mahabodhi Temple
- Buddhist Theme park
- Sound and Light Show
- World Peace Centre
- Fairs and Festivals
- Udaigiri Caves
- Heliodorus Pillar
- Bijamandal
- Archeological Museum, Sanchi & Vidisha
- Neelkantheshwar Temple, Udaypur

Designated a world Heritage site by UNESCO in 1989, Sanchi in Raisen district is the most well preserved and famous of those survives, among all the monuments Ashoka (The Grandson of Chandragupt Maurya, who founded the first imperial dynasty of the sub-continent) have Commissioned. But it is not about Sanchi, which is hub of Buddhism in Madhya Pradesh, the other Buddhist settlements in the region like Andher and Murelkhurd in northeast of Sanchi and Sonari and Satdhara in the Southeast and Southwest of Sanchi, respectively. These are the spiritual homes of the monasteries of Buddhism, religious temples and sacred shrines, where the followers of Buddhism are associated with the teachings of the Lord Buddha himself. Buddhist pilgrimage centres have developed as tourist centres not only for the followers of Buddhism but also for others. Grand Stupas, ancient monasteries, meditation and worship amidst Buddhist chants, are seraphic experience for Buddhist pilgrims.

The rise, fall and renewal of Sanchi

'Then hear my brothers, all that comes to existence must fade away. Let your striving alone never come to an end!' The rise and fall

The Buddhist Circuit of Madhya Pradesh Includes

- Sanchi
- Satdhara
- Sonari
- Andher
- Murelkhurd
- Ujjain
- Kasrawad

and renewal of Sanchi encapsulate the truth of these last words of Lord Buddha. One of the notable rulers of world history, Devanampiya (Beloved of the Gods) King Ashoka, created 84,000 stupas and reallocated the Buddha's ashes in all of the places. In Sanchi, a circumambulatory path was constructed around the Stupa which was surrounded by a stone railing which is also called the Vedika. Parikrama or Pradakshina is an important part of rituals and devotional practices in Buddhism. In addition, a Harmika (a square structure) was also added to the stupa. The Harmika is placed at the top of the Stupa and has a three-tiered Chhatra or Chhatravali that represents the three jewels of Buddhism – Buddha, Dharma (the teachings of Buddha) and Sangha (Buddhism class). There are a number of important Historical Archaeological Monuments in Sanchi that dates back to 2nd and 1st centuries BC. The construction of the Sanchi Stupa is amazingly designed and its glory can be experiment through the Stupas and the elegant carvings on its frontage.

When to come

The best time to visit Sanchi and the nearby Buddhist sites- Sonari, Satdhara, Andher,



Murelkhurd- is from October to march. The days will be pleasant and sunny, and during peak winter (December to February) visitors will need woollens or jacket. While Sanchi itself will be beautiful during the rains (July to september), the Buddhist sites around Sanchi might become inaccessible.

November is special

Every year on the last Sunday of November, the Mahabodhi Society displays the relics of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana at the Vihara. Devotees from the entire world gather here to pay their respects.

Tourists Footfall

Sanchi is most visited place among tourists. In 2020 total 1,19,807 and in 2021 1,16,824 domestic and international tourists visited Sanchi. ♦

HOW TO GET THERE

By Air- The nearest airport is Raja Bhoj Airport in Bhopal (46kms vis Diwanganj and 78kms via Raisen) that is connected by regular flights to Delhi and Mumbai. Devi Ahilyabai Holkar Airport in Indore is 181kms away.

By Rail- Vidisha (10 kms) has the closest major railway station from Sanchi. Bhopal (46 kms) is the most well connected to Delhi and Mumbai.

By Road- Good motorable roads connect Sanchi with Bhopal, Indore, sagar, Gwalior, Vidisha and Raisen. Buses, both State-run and private, leave from Bhopal at frequent intervals.



Experience Seychelles webinar offers Indian travel trade a virtual unforgettable holiday experience

The Seychelles Islands has recently conducted a webinar 'Experience Seychelles - The Islands of Love' in association with TravelBiz Monitor. The aim of the webinar was to showcase the various activities one can do in the destination to make for an unforgettable holiday experience.

The Seychelles Islands, located in the east of Africa, comprised 115 breath-taking islands. On any trip, a traveller can easily visit around 4-5 of these stunning islands. This makes Seychelles one of the best island-hopping destinations on the Indian Ocean. It offers both the luxury and comfort of a peaceful island getaway and an opportunity to explore the beauty of multiple islands on a week-long holiday.

The webinar informed that vaccinated visitors to Seychelles will no longer need a negative PCR test to travel to the island nation as the Ministry of Health revised the entry and stay conditions.

Travellers to Seychelles who are fully vaccinated, are adults who have had two vaccine doses, typically, and one booster as well,



only if 6 months have passed from receiving the first two doses. Such vaccinated visitors will still need to submit a travel authorisation form online and have valid travel and health insurance.

Seychelles are home to a tropical, warm climate the whole year, with an average temperature between 26 and 32 degrees. Air Seychelles is offering a direct flight from Mumbai to Mahe Island Seychelles, 1 flight every week. The beautiful island also offers a smartphone app called The Seychelles Island, one can check the details of activities, attractions, accommodations through the app of their website.

Islands such as Mahe, Praslin, La Digue



are extremely beautiful and popular amongst travellers. The webinar informed that travellers can easily do island hopping through government-owned and run ferries.

Mahe island is home of the capital of Seychelles, Victoria. The place offers sightseeing of Beau Vallot, Grand Anse, Petite Anse, Anse Royale, Anse Intendance, and Eden Island.

Praslin Island offers UNESCO Heritage Site Valle De Mai, where travellers can witness Female Coco de Mer nuts.

La Digue Island offers crystal kayaking. Since it is a car-free island hence tourists can explore the island through electric buggy, cycling, and walking. ♦

KTO brings the spotlight on new destinations through two webinars

Using the opportunity to educate the Indian travel trade about the varied facets of South Korea, Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) in association with TravelBiz Monitor organised the second edition of South Korea Webinar Series 2022 on March 17 and 22, respectively.



The first webinar was focused on Incheon, which is a city in South Korea on the coast directly to the west of Seoul. Incheon is South Korea's largest airport and is also known as the land of wellness and healing. Incheon stands out as a healing city that blends history and modernity harmoniously. Travellers can enjoy a relaxing spa and enjoy their stay.

Another attraction of Incheon is The Sorae Ecology Park, it was once a facility used to

produce salt until 1996. In May 2009, it was revived as a biological stop. This stop has a salt field, mud level, and wetland as the bed of different living animals and natural surroundings for transitory winged animals; one can explore the park by walking and exploring its wooden windmills.



Guests can also choose a temple stay option along with staying in a luxury hotel.

Art-tainment Resort Paradise City is the first Korean style resort complex in Northeast Asia combining multi-purpose hospitality and entertainment facilities such as a hotel, casino, convention, shopping, art gallery, spa, club, carnival and performance. Paradise City offers the most exciting entertainment one can ever experience.

The second webinar in the series introduced the agents to the Gangwon Province and FNFKorea Travel & DMC.

The Gangwon Province is home to 18 cities and counties with tourism characteristics. There are convenient transportation services one can use to reach Gangwon-do from the airport. Its key highlights are wellness, activities, venues, K-Wave, and SNS Hot Place.

Hongcheon is a mountain village good for one to escape from the city buzz, with no access to mobile connectivity. In Jeongseon, Park Roche Resort & Wellness allows guests to undertake meditation therapies and trekking. The High 1 Resort HAO Program offers high-end wellness programme, and Osaek Greenyark Hotel is another fascinating property for wellness enthusiasts. The Donghae Mureung Health Forest offers heat therapy with its salt themed sauna.

As far as activities are concerned, one can enjoy zip wire, curling game and surfing in Gangwon Province.

The Museum SAN, located in Wonju, focuses on art and nature. Oak Valley is a purpose-built resort that houses the museum which stretches 700 metres along a mountain top. At Jeonggangwon, one can experience making of traditional food. ♦



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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & CEO

Sheldon Santwan

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Prasenjit Chakraborty

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

+91 9819263364

EDITORIAL TEAM

MUMBAI

CHIEF SUB-EDITOR: Disha Shah Ghosh

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

SR.REPORTER: Asmita Mukherjee

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in

CONTRIBUTORS

Hugh & Colleen Gantzer, Anurag Yadav,

Hector D'souza & Amala Dantas

MARKETING TEAM

MUMBAI

HEAD - SALES & MARKETING

Ajay Wadode

+91 8087127814

ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in

GOA

HEAD - GOA

Harshad R. Bhonsle

+91 8999047490

harshadrhonsle@gmail.com

COORDINATION, SUBSCRIPTION & DATABASE

Gauri Sawant: +91 8369080796

gauri.sawant@saffronsynergies.in

*Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act



Saffron Synergies

Sterling House, 5/7 Sorabji Santuk Lane,
Opp. Dr. Cawasji Hormasji Street, Dhobi Talao, Marine Lines (E),
Mumbai 400 002

Tel: 91-22-6101 1700 / 701 Fax: 91-22-6712 1854

KEEP THE BUBBLY CORKED

Though the opening of air travel has got the industry excited and travellers hopeful, it's best to not go overboard with joy yet.

What happened to aviation last year was worse than what even pessimists had projected. Worldwide, there was an average of a forty per cent fall in number of seats offered by airlines. The reduction in numbers of passengers was still higher. In India, where airlines as it is have been surviving on a wing and a prayer, the impact was much more severe. The relief visible today thus appears larger than life.

The 'air bubble' agreements, held out as the saving grace was limited and hence ticket prices had soared high. Since March end all those limitations are gone. From this month onwards now that almost 60 airlines from 40 countries will be connecting India to the world during the just starting summer schedule, a new buzz has gripped the optimists' fancy.

This little bit of good news is being touted as a sign of hope indicating airfare relief for passengers. The buzz was that domestic fares might go up but international fares will definitely wind down. Many have gone on to project a forty per cent drop in fares. Travel agents and operators would like to uncork the bubbly but everyone is being prudent and careful at the moment.

Air fares to the UK and most western countries, in normal times, tends to rise post April. Any fall in fares will be offset by this factor so no point in putting on ones dancing shoes.

As the year progresses, it is likely there will be a consolidation within the industry. As mentioned in this column earlier, all travel related businesses will perforce have to explore alternate revenue models and even business diversifications to stay afloat.

Airlines are stirring to diversify into other businesses, such as catering or insurance. Not only low-cost carriers but the grapevine suggests even so called legacy carriers could be contemplating convincing customers to pay for 'extras' beyond the seat like in-flight snacks, extra luggage capacity or car-hire. Someone even suggested airBnB style options!

Considering the apprehensions lurking on the global stage, nothing will ever be beyond experimentation.

Anurag Yadav
Industry Expert

Anurag Yadav is a travel author and columnist, writing on hospitality and design. An avid traveller, he has published five books and divides his time equally between Delhi and London.

The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.

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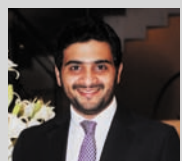
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Q How has Asego evolved as a business during the pandemic?

The Covid-19 pandemic was the first truly global crisis we witnessed in our lifetime. With rampant uncertainty related to health, mobility and economy, businesses around the world had a hard time adjusting to its impact. However, the pandemic created positive disruption also, providing a plethora of opportunities spearheaded by technology and innovation. We are glad that our business, Asego, is also a part of this great revolution.

We are about to launch our all-new tech-platform which will allow our partners to issue policies on-the-go in just 3 clicks. Furthermore, we have moved to a multiple underwriter model which will provide our partners more flexibility and freedom to customize products and services as per their customers' needs.

Q How does Asego function differently in case of travel emergencies?

What differentiates us from other companies is the way we work. During emergencies, we immediately bring together all stakeholders such as the affected family, the underwriter, hospital etc. on the same platform and everyone is kept apprised on the progress and gravity of the situation. This helps us to maintain complete transparency amongst all stakeholders and ensure that assistance is provided with the fastest TAT.

Apart from providing cashless claims and reimbursement facilities to the customers in need, we also

‘We offer standalone products like quarantine cancellations, Visa refusal, flight delay trip interruption covers, gadget protection etc.’

Q Any new product launches this season?

Our bouquet of travel assistance services and new-age bundled

provide relevant assistance services to travellers including doctor on call, support during baggage loss and missed flights, advice on Covid

“ Apart from providing cashless claims and reimbursement facilities to the customers in need, we also provide relevant assistance services to travellers including doctor on call, support during baggage loss and missed flights, advice on Covid -19 protocols in different countries ”

products have always been customer favourites. Nevertheless, we realised that tailoring offerings at a micro level is the need of the hour. We are now offering an array of relevant standalone products, such as quarantine cancellations, Visa refusal, flight delay / interruption covers, gadget protection etc. pertinent to the current scenario.

This will not only help our partners to design customised, relevant travel protection plans for their customers, but also give them an up-selling edge to increase revenue.

-19 protocols in different countries and other related services.

Q What is the current business trend in Travel Insurance?

Awareness and need for the right travel protection has increased manifold. Many countries have made it mandatory to travel with the right insurance coverage and it is no longer limited to the United States, Canada and the EU.

Also, on analysing customers' recent buying patterns, we realised that they have now grown highly product sensitive.

They now seek more value, rather than just going for undervalued and inexpensive ones.

Travellers are looking for products with higher sum insured and value-added services relevant to their needs. For instance, we witnessed higher growth in our February 2022 business as compared to the pre-covid February, not because the sales volume increased, but the value and coverage chosen by the customer became more accretive. Customers today are willing to pay more for their products, provided the price of the product justifies the value they offer.

Q Kindly elaborate on the new business proposition for your partners?

The pandemic related uncertainties has increased the demand for all kinds of insurance, not just travel. This has created a need for other relevant ancillary services that our partners in the travel trade can offer to their customers. Our new proposition and value-added services have not only opened up enhanced revenue opportunities for our partners but will also ensure customer stickiness and satisfaction. ♦

We witnessed higher growth in our February 2022 business as compared to the pre-covid February, not because the sales volume increased, but the value and coverage chosen by the customer became more accretive, says **Dev Karvat, Founder & CEO, Asego**, in a conversation with **TravelBiz Monitor**.



Indian delegation meets 61 tourism professionals at Atout France's 'Marhaba 2022'

✍️.....By TBM Staff | Mumbai

The Atout France office in Middle East organised the 8th edition of its B2B showcase 'Marhaba 2022' last month held on the occasion of the Dubai Expo 2020. This edition was a special one as the showcase hosted 120 professionals from 11 countries, including the Middle East, and for the first time delegates from India and Israel had the opportunity to meet and interact with 61 tourism professionals from France.

A delegation of 17 key members of the travel

trade fraternity pan India represented at Marhaba 2022. The two-day event at the Expo 2020's Pavillon France and the Raffles Hotel Dubai, was the first of a joint collaboration between the Atout France offices of Dubai, Israel, India and Russia.

By bringing together travel professionals from these markets, the event aimed to encourage business across the source markets. The attendees had the opportunity to interact

Explore France™
Powered by Atout France

with regional French tourism boards, iconic French tourist attractions, high-end shopping options, hotels,

palaces, DMCs, transportation companies and amusement parks.

A total of 1,900 pre-programmed one-on-one interactions took place over 2 days enabling French tourism stakeholders such as DMCs, accommodation partners, catering services, transporters, leisure and entertainment parks and shopping centres to showcase their touristic offers.

The event kicked off with an official opening ceremony at the Sofitel Obelisk Hotel and continued with the first workshop session at the French Pavilion at the Dubai Expo. The Paris Regional Tourism Board and La Vallée Village organised a special Paris soiree that took place at the Sofitel Obelisk. The second day started at the Sofitel Obelisk Hotel with a presentation of the Destination Cote d'Azur to tour operators and travel agencies, followed by the second workshop session in the ballroom of the Raffles Hotel.

A press lunch with Destination Cote d'Azur was held, as well as a press conference with Galeries Lafayette. Marhaba 2022 ended with a White Party at the restaurant La Cantine du Faubourg where our guests enjoyed a final evening of networking. ♦



Sheetal Munshaw
 Director Atout France India



“Marhaba 2022 was indeed special for us as it is the first time after 2 years that members of the Indian trade networked and interacted with the French partners in person. In the last 2 years, we have been interacting only virtually with our partners and this event will be a semblance of what we knew in pre-pandemic times. It is also special as it’s a first regional collaboration with our own counterparts. Like most organisations, the pandemic divided us geographically but united us virtually and broke many barriers. This is one such foray into bringing our network closer and proving versatile platforms and opportunities for our key stake holders to engage and enrich their business opportunities. As borders open up and travel resumes, Marhaba was the perfect occasion to revive exchanges between our key stake-holders”.



EXHIBITOR PERSPECTIVE

Patrick Branco Ruivo, Director General & MD, SOCIETE D'EXPLOITATION DE LA TOUR EIFFEL SETE

India is a great country and it represents for us a market with a lot of opportunities. Before sanitary crisis, Indian people represented 3% of foreign visitors at the Eiffel Tower, and I think that this number will rise in the future. The Indian market is a one in which we believe very much and offers good prospects for recovery. To better welcome Indian visitors at the Eiffel Tower, we're thinking about adapting our offer including in the Gustave Eiffel room which is dedicated to B2B events. We're also in process of setting up personalized visits that we are setting up next fall 2022. All this contributes to provide the best visitor experience.

Participating in Marhaba 2022, I came back delighted and had the opportunity to make many contacts and to explain what we are doing at the Eiffel Tower to attract our visitors. It was so nice to be together after these two years of crisis without any travels. As the GM of the symbol of France, I could see the growing interest of Indians for our country, especially for the celebration of important events. It was very important for me to meet the travel agents from different parts of India and listen to their requests. For example, I understood that it was important to offer vegetarian food in our restaurants or in our Gustave Eiffel room if we wanted to welcome better our Indian guests. The travel agents are also very interested by our strategy to avoid queue with our on line ticketing.

The improvement of the sanitary situation will allow Indians to start travelling again. India represents a country of future for the French tourism market, and the desire to travel is still strong among Indian travellers. I could notice it during Marhaba 2022, individual tourism is developing more and more and the Indians are in perpetual research of new, unique and original travel experiences. And what could be better than a visit to the Eiffel Tower to excite your senses! ♦



‘Overall Indian lounge market is forecasted at INR 5,800 cr by 2030, huge opportunity’

DreamFolks is upbeat about expanding its footprint with the growth of airports and airport infrastructure in India. **Liberatha Peter Kallat, Chairperson and MD, DreamFolks Services Limited,** in a conversation with **Disha Shah Ghosh** speaks about their partnerships and impending IPO.

Q What kind of footprint does DreamFolks enjoy in India?

DreamFolks is India's largest airport service aggregator platform facilitating an enhanced airport experience to passengers leveraging a technology-driven platform. We facilitate access to 100% of the 50 lounges currently operational in India. As of December 31, 2021, we had exclusivity to provide access to 11 domestic lounges constituting around 22% domestic lounges for India-issued credit cards and debit cards. We enjoyed a market share of over 95% of all India-issued credit card and debit card-based access to airport lounges in FY2020. Further, as of December 31, 2021 through our partnerships with other service providers, we have a global footprint extending to 1,259 touch-points in 121 countries across the globe, including India.

We have an asset-light business model that integrates global card networks operating in India, credit and debit card issuers, OTAs and other corporate clients including airline companies to various airport lounge operators and other airport related service providers

on a unified technology platform. Our services include access to lounges, food and beverage, spa, meet and assist, airport transfer, transit hotels/nap rooms, baggage transfer, and other such airport related services.

Q Enumerate on your technology platform. How does it seamlessly integrate service offerings on the DreamFolks app alongside second- and third-party channels?

DreamFolks' business model has a strong focus on technology. Our technology platform is aimed at ensuring that all entities on or availing of our platform i.e., client, operators, and consumers, have a seamless & 'hassle-free' experience. Our

proprietary technology has been a crucial element in our ability to ramp up our business by introducing increasing levels of automation and, thereby, simplifying transactional and process aspects for both clients and service providers.

The platform also enables clients to run usage and spend-based campaigns for their users. We leverage our configuration-driven extendible platform with solution templates for flexibility, reliability and customisation, to provide solutions through multiple access models. Our hybrid model enables omni-channel access for card-based transactions, through membership cards, and also facilitates digital access like our client's banking apps (called 'in-app'), or our DreamFolks mobile application.

Q What are some of the new partnerships forged in the past two years to extend your service offerings?

Our service offerings have increased significantly, and we have continued to augment our client base over the years, which includes India's prominent card networks and card issuers. We have been associated with the airport lounge programmes of clients such as RuPay, ICICI Bank Limited, HDFC Bank Limited (in respect of debit card lounge program), Axis Bank Limited, and Standard Chartered Bank. Further, we have had long association with a number of our clients. Our top 5 Clients, as of September 30, 2021, have been associated with us for over 3 years out of the 8 years that we have been operational. Our client portfolio also includes prominent airlines, a telecommunication company, an online travel agency (OTA) and other corporates in India who generally make available these services to customers of their choice. We have also, over the years, broad based our client profile by bringing in more corporate clients into our fold by augmenting our bouquet of services which they could add onto their product offerings for their customer engagement programs.

Q In terms of customer engagement, what do your partnerships bring to the table for corporate travellers vis-à-vis leisure tourists?

We have expanded our client portfolio from card networks/issuers to include airlines, OTAs, corporates thus making our services accessible to not just the business travellers but also families, leisure travel and the MICE segment. Our product suite is now being leveraged for a variety of consumer engagement and employee engagement programmes. We facilitate end-to-end assistance to the consumers at the airport.

- **Lounge Access:** We offer a unique value proposition to our Clients by enabling access to the Consumers to a network of all operational airport lounges in India.
- **Food and Beverage offerings:** We have tie-ups with various F&B entities where Consumers can select from the curated 'DreamFolks' menu a variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian food and beverage combinations ('combo' offerings).
- **Spa Services:** As part of our focus on making air travel as enjoyable and relaxing as possible, consumers can avail of specified massage therapies such as head, neck and shoulder massage, and foot reflexology.
- **Meet and Assist:** These services are available at select airports to Consumers at arrival and departure terminals of select airports in India. We have also entered into an agreement with an international airport concierge service provider. We also provide an option to facilitate 'medical meet & assist' at arrivals at select airports in India.
- **Airport transfer services:** We facilitate airport transfer, i.e., airport 'pick-up and drop' facilities in 47 cities across India and in 145 cities outside India, as at December 31, 2021.
- **Transit Hotels / Nap Room Access:** In Mumbai and New Delhi, through our tie up with

Niranta Airport Transit Hotel & Lounge (a unit of International Airport Hotels & Resorts Private Limited) and Holiday Inn Express New Delhi International Airport T-3 (a unit of Devaryaa Hospitalities Private Limited), we facilitate access to hotel rooms. Further, in Bengaluru, Cochin and Mumbai, we also facilitate access to 'nap rooms' or 'sleeping pods', i.e., specialised facilities which allow passengers, particularly transit passengers, access to private rooms / compartmentalised sleeping quarters, with rest-room access.

- **Baggage Transfer:** We have tied up with a service provider to provide baggage pick-up and drop-off facility to and from airports across Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and New Delhi.

“ Our ability to fund our minimal capital expenditure from our internal accruals, and our efficient working capital management are testament to our prudent financial management. We fund our operations and capital requirements primarily through cash flows from operations. We expect that cash flow from operations will continue to be our principal sources of cash in the long term. The IPO is an offer for sale. Besides, the listing of the equity shares will enhance our visibility and brand image. ”

- **Other:** In addition to providing Services at airports, we have also, in the current Fiscal, forayed into the railways sector and, we have entered into contracts to provide lounge access at 5 railway stations in India.

Q It is expected that by 2040 India will be home to 295 airports. What kind of opportunity does this mean for airport lounge service providers?

The overall Indian lounge market which includes passengers accessing both domestic and international lounges is estimated at around INR 817.5 crore (FY 2020). This is forecasted to reach 5861.9 crore by FY2030, which is

a huge opportunity for us.

Currently, there are approximately 50 lounges in India, and the overall number of lounges will increase in line with increasing traffic and passengers. It is important to note that the overall growth in lounge also includes the growth in lounge area in the existing lounges which are not included in the 143 new lounges which are expected to be added in between the years 2021-2040. The total number of lounges is expected to be 193 by 2040; these include the additional lounges across existing airports and new lounges across greenfield airports.

Q DreamFolks has filed draft papers for going public. What is the expected timeline for launching the IPO?

We filed the Draft Red Herring Prospectus with SEBI towards the

be guided by our bankers and legal experts on the way forward.

Q Since DreamFolks operates on an asset-light model. What kind of capital are you planning to raise through this IPO, and where will the funds be utilised?

We are an asset light business model. Our ability to fund our minimal capital expenditure from our internal accruals, and our efficient working capital management are testament to our prudent financial management. We fund our operations and capital requirements primarily through cash flows from operations. We expect that cash flow from operations will continue to be our principal sources of cash in the long term. The IPO is an offer for sale. Besides, the listing of the equity shares will enhance our visibility and brand image.

Q What is your expansion plan? Any plans of foraying into new businesses?

We intend to penetrate deeper into our existing sectors that we cater to by expanding our client base. We plan to increase the number of our clients in the banking, telecommunications, OTA, airlines sector. While some of these sectors such as banking have a number of entities that we could focus on, other sectors such as telecommunications despite not having many players are critical since each player added could significantly increase the number of passengers that we could cater to. Further, we propose to cater to the diverse requirements by continuing to develop and build bespoke domain-specific solutions, tools, and portals for integration and management of the various airport services.

In addition, we also want to focus on customer engagement and loyalty solutions for corporate clients and build specific solutions for, amongst others, loyalty companies, e-commerce companies, new age digital companies, companies in the hospitality sector, and neo banks. We also plan to create ancillary revenue opportunities for clients in the online travel agency and airlines industries. ♦

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

The 11th edition of Kerala Travel Mart will showcase the prospects of Caravan and Adventure tourism in the state. Besides this, the event will also introduce a new range of destinations and experiences to the world after two long years of a pandemic-induced halt. **TravelBiz Monitor** reports.



Kerala Travel Mart 2022, Unleashing the Tourism Potential of the State

The 11th edition of Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) will be held from May 5-8, 2022 in Kochi. Earlier it was scheduled from March 24-27. Like earlier additions, the 11th edition of KTM will showcase many new products. This time Caravan tourism will be highlighted in a big way. Besides this, it will be a paperless KTM. The event will take place at the Sagara and Samudrika Convention Centre in Kochi. The KTM is expected to give an impetus to the efforts to revive the pandemic-hit tourism sector by attracting visitors from across the globe. Besides Caravan tourism, the Adventure sector will also be in focus in a big way.

The event is expected to give an impetus to the efforts to revive the pandemic-hit tourism sector by attracting visitors from across the globe. KTM 2022 will give greater prominence to domestic tourism which is seeing a revival during post-Covid times. A minimum of 1,500 buyers are expected to participate in the event.

The aim of the exhibition is to promote tourism in Kerala, and facilitates meetings involving buyers, sellers, media, government agencies and others. Exhibitors of the event are owners and operators of hotels, resorts, houseboats, Ayurveda centers, hospitals, tour operators and agents. The KTM enables visitors to know and learn



about as well as explore Kerala.

According to Dr. V. Venu, Additional Chief Secretary (Tourism) KTM is a stellar example of the public-private-partnership in tourism. He also said that there is a new range of destinations and experiences waiting to be introduced to buyers from across the world in this edition of the KTM.

Promotion of lesser-explored regions of Malabar as well as advertising the state as a popular wedding destination will also be the focus of the biggest tourism buyer-seller conclave.

The organisers are highly optimistic about the prospect of Caravan tourism in the state. They are of the view that since travel is changing and Caravan tourism has immense domestic and international tourism potential.

In Kerala, Caravan parks are being set up in lesser explored destinations which will aid in their promotion.

The inaugural function of the KTM will be held at Hotel Grand Hyatt in Bolgatty on May 5. It will be followed by business meets on May 6 and 7 at Sagara and Samudrika Convention Centre in Willingdon Island. Members of the public will have access to pavilions at the convention centres from 1 p.m. on May 8. The green-compliant conclave at the 100,000-sq.ft. venue will have more than 2,000 delegates, including buyers, sellers, and policy-makers from within the country and abroad, said an official release.

In 2021, KTM was held online from March 1 to 5. A virtual buyer meet at the event saw the participation from all over the world, including India. The majority of international buyers were from the US and UK. The others in the category included Brazil, Germany, Spain and Canada, Mexico, Oman, UAE, Australia and France.

Most of the domestic buyers were from Maharashtra, a chunk of them based in Mumbai. Delhi, Gujarat and Telangana also figured prominently in the list. ♦





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Rajat Bhatia



Vikas Banga

‘India accounts for 85% of Fareportal’s manpower’

In an interaction with **Disha Shah Ghosh, Rajat Bhatia, Director on Board/VP -People & Culture (International)** and **Vikas Banga, VP-Products, Fareportal** shed light on their technology innovation, manpower and and customisation for corporate travel needs.

Q How does Fareportal bridge the gap between a booking site and an agent?

Fareportal provides high quality and high touch customer care 24/7 through its captive contact centre with phone numbers displayed on every web page, providing wide variety of travel products and assisted buying for our customers.

Q How do you position Fareportal in the global market vis-à-vis competitors in the same space?

Fareportal’s main business focus is in the Flights domain, and thus being amongst the top three largest flights OTA in North America. Additionally, Fareportal provides high quality and high touch customer care 24/7 through its captive contact centre with phone numbers displayed on every web page.

Q Enlighten us on some of the back-end technology innovation from the Fareportal stable?

Fareportal has been instrumental by leading industry-first integrations of airline ancillaries and NDC with the world’s top airlines. There are also many

technology backend innovations like the chatbot, enhanced customer interactions through RPA and using machine learning backed search engine to provide

“Fareportal has been instrumental by leading industry-first integrations of airline ancillaries and NDC with the world’s top airlines. There are also many technology backend innovations like the chatbot, enhanced customer interactions through RPA and using machine learning backed search engine to provide most appropriate travel products to our customers.”

most appropriate travel products to our customers.

Q Talking about the Indian market, traditional travel agents still play an important role. Keeping this in mind, where do you think the OTA market is heading for, especially after the pandemic?

The OTA market will continue to

see significant growth and we can see significant signs of recovery post the pandemic. The key differentiator, however, will be technology and personalisation. Customer loyalty and retention, assisted buying and flexible booking options, at a good price will differentiate OTAs.

Q There is a need for skilled manpower in the travel industry to drive businesses with technology. In that sense, what is your manpower requirement for India and plans for maximising your staff strength?

India accounts for 85% of our global manpower. We will continue to invest in high skilled manpower, to drive growth and high-end technology solutions for our customers

Q In terms of customisation for corporate travel needs, what are your service add-ons with new travel norms in place for overseas travel?

A. Fareportal provides travellers with detailed information related to travel norms, and visa restrictions during the booking process and till the time customer

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

Pain 'n' pleasure!

Making sense of dark tourism

By Dr Nimit Chowdhary, Professor of Tourism,
Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Jamia Millia Islamia

Kashmir Files is the talk of the town. So, like most others, I decided to watch the movie. I was aware of the genocide of the Kashmiri Pandits in the 1990s- I have heard many stories of those untoward series of events, yet I felt goosebumps as I walked into the theatre. I wanted to watch the movie and feel for myself the pain and suffering of those persecuted. I



Dr Nimit Chowdhary is a Professor at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He has more than 28 years of academic experience, of which he has been a full professor for 15 years in India, China, and Mexico. In addition, he was a visiting faculty at Gotland University (Sweden), the University of Girona (Spain), IIM Sirmaur, IIQM, and EDII. He is a recipient of many academic awards and recognitions who has authored 13 books and more than 150 academic papers. He has travelled extensively to around 40 countries and almost all states.

wondered why I was longing to know and feel the pain. Perhaps what litterateurs refers to as the inherent dichotomy of life is that we need to know pain to know joy. Psychologists refer to this as a *hedonic reversal*- perceiving an unpleasant experience as pleasurable.

People often travel to places associated with pain and suffering to connect with them to incite a sudden short feeling of an unpleasant emotion ache within themselves. Researchers refer to this as *benign masochism*.

So why do we seek unpleasant feelings? Richard Solomon puts forward an **Opponent Process Theory** to explain this. He believes that an opposite reaction gets activated for each pleasant/unpleasant invocation. This is a human mechanism to achieve a kind of balance. For example, when in Mumbai, I decided to visit Leopold Café, which became infamous for the 26/11 terror attacks, to connect to the horror that victims of the attack might have experienced. During my stay, I try to internalise that horror and pain, and as my visit ends, hedonic reversal happens, resulting in some kind of pleasure. Furthermore, this state of pleasure lasts longer than the state of one's induced suffering, which would explain why one engages in unkind experiences. Thus it can be argued that it makes sense to experience some pain to have extended pleasure later. A possible explanation is that since the negative experience is not real, and as it is removed at the end of this curated encounter, pleasant feelings emerge as we feel relieved not to be experiencing that stimulus anymore.

While recalling the recent immersion, visitors are still aroused by the negative emotion, which gets reversed into pleasure- there is a transfer of excitation. This phenomenon is also manifest in *runner's high*, which is a brief, deeply relaxing state of euphoria because the brain produces many endorphins and other hormones to soothe the pain in the legs when one runs. Biologically, this is the human body's way of maintaining homeostasis, preventing over-reactions in the body.

Even if it is not for all palates, for many travellers, spicy Indian or hot Mexican food

is a pleasure worth trying at least once in a lifetime. Tourists report enjoying the sensation of the burn of spices or other bold condiments, even if it is isolated from other flavours. While Solomon argues that the absence of burn later will cause pleasure, Rozin, Ebert, and Schull have another explanation. They suggest that the unpleasant or pleasant feelings do not follow each other instead, they are coactivated simultaneously. So, for example, spices, the negative stimulus, activate the burn, but it is the *cognitive distancing* from the stimulus- realising that the spiciness is not the real danger- and that simultaneously causes pleasure. This **Coactivation** or **Cognitive Distancing Theory** explains travel to places associated with human misery, suffering and death- call it by any name- dark tourism, black tourism, grief tourism, thana tourism or morbid tourism. While visiting the Museum of Medieval Torture Instruments of Prague or the Holocaust tourism to Auschwitz or Murambi Technical School, which is now converted into a museum of the Rwandan genocide, is a hair raising experience; cognition allows visitors to realise that the horror they are experiencing isn't actually a threat. This cognitive distancing theory suggests that relief comes not from removing the stimulus but from removing the perception of the danger of the stimulus. Nevertheless, at the same time, humans still like to engage in negative experiences, either because of sensation seeking or curiosity to learn from the events associated with the sites being visited. Similarly, the adrenaline rush during adventure thrills is exciting when there is a realisation that there is no real danger. Then, it is simply the pleasure of survival.

Is Galwan next on my bucket list?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:

Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of
saddest thought.

- Percy Bysshe Shelley (To a sky Lark) ♦

'The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.'



Start-Up Forum

Bringing Innovations to the Forefront

Darwin Travel Tech Pvt Ltd

By TBM Staff | Mumbai

Anticipating the impact of technology, 15 years ago, **TravelBiz Monitor** introduced an industry-first live news portal, with hourly online reporting on travel, tourism, aviation and hospitality industries. Since then, we have created a niche for ourselves by providing analytical stories and statistical information to the travel trade on a regular basis. To keep this momentum going, the Editorial team has decided to showcase new-age technology products and services every month that have the potential to disrupt the market further. Moreover, the time now is also appropriate as the on-going pandemic has further widened the scope of using technology.

For this unique initiative, TravelBiz Monitor has partnered with 'Start-up Mentor Board', a visionary platform with credentials in business, technology, e-commerce, digital market place, payment solutions and IT infrastructure, to highlight the stories of new-age technology ideas. Start-up Mentor Board has been set-up as an initiative to mentor and guide the travel technology driven start-ups and facilitate collaboration in the larger travel ecosystem.

Website – <https://startupmentorboard.vgmrtechsolutions.com>

The Board is spearheaded by well-known thought leader Ashish Kumar, who is also the Co-Chairman of FICCI Travel Technology Committee. It comprises Bharti Maan, who has led start-ups to scale rapidly; Patrick Richards, an experienced travel industry leader in the UK; Chetan Kapoor, an analyst with deep understanding of the travel and tourism business and trends; Kartik Sharma, an artificial intelligence practitioner; Karthik Venkataraman, a digital transformation & an e-commerce visionary; Jure Bratkic, who led innovative solutions in the USA and Kyasha Bhoola, with expertise and advanced insight into the travel industry across Africa.

*One can register for the SMB Program at

<https://startupmentorboard.vgmrtechsolutions.com/form.html>

Startup Name: Darwin Travel Tech Pvt Ltd

Core Team: Aditya Darooka

Nikhil Kulkarni

Founding year: 2016

Company Website: www.tripdarwin.com

Description: tripdarwin.com is a portal for making customised holiday packages for India. With inventory of specially contracted car rates, hotel, sightseeing, flights across India, their technology is able to help travel agents globally to create and book customised holidays packages for India. The company's international partners need not go to multiple suppliers for different parts of India. With TripDarwin, they get a trusted single point of contact for all travel services. Its inventory is real time. Travel agents can also get itinerary with travel agent mark up included making it easy to provide quote the customer quickly.

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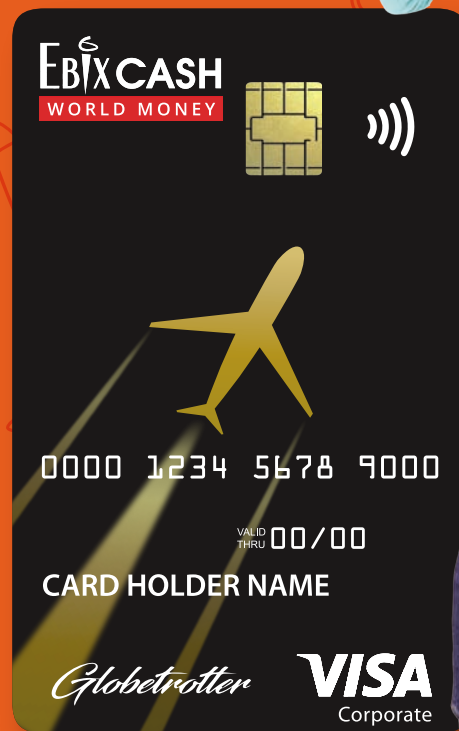
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