

Vision 2030: 100mn tourists annually; WTTC commits over USD 10bn investments to Saudi Arabia at Global Summit

TBM Staff | Riyadh

The recently concluded WTTC Global Summit brought the global spotlight on the host country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). World tourism leaders and members of WTTC have pledged investment worth USD 10.5 billion in the coming five years in Saudi Arabia, said Julia Simpson, President & CEO, WTTC.

This announcement comes at a time when the Kingdom has set its sights on raising its international profile to emerge as a competitive tourism player, globally, with an aim of welcoming 100 million visitors, annually, by 2030.

Having identified tourism as an important revenue generator and its potential to contribute more than 10% to its GDP, the KSA has earmarked a budget of USD 500 billion towards tourism development and special projects. This ambitious multi-billion dollar

target spend will be utilized in realising its Vision 2030, an economic, social and transformative plan to elevate the Kingdom's international profile, keeping in mind the target to attract 100 million visitors by 2030.

Talking about this plan, Alhasan Ali Aldabbagh, President, APAC Markets, Saudi Tourism Authority, said, "Tourism is the core of Vision 2030. And as part of this vision by 2030 we want to achieve 100 million visits in Saudi Arabia. This is very ambitious. We want to make Saudi one of the top five destinations in the world for tourism. We have already set



Julia Simpson
President & CEO,
WTTC



Alhasan Ali Aldabbagh
President, APAC Markets,
Saudi Tourism Authority

out on a road map to achieve this target going forward, and also to increase our tourism GDP to 10 per cent by 2030," informed Aldabbagh. In 2021, Saudi clocked 62 million visits, which were predominantly domestic tourists and only around

three million international visitors.

The Vision 2030 entails huge infrastructure development of new cities, entertainment and cultural complexes, world-class accommodation options, construction projects as well as leisure tourism sites. ♦

FOR FULL INTERVIEW TURN TO PAGE 6 ►

ETAA revamps national body, vows to strengthen its footprint

The association will celebrate 2023-24 as silver jubilee year

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

The Enterprising Travel Agents' Association (ETAA) held its National Board meeting in Mumbai and took some important decisions to strengthen its national presence further. In this meeting they have appointed two new chapter chairmen for Western and Northern regions. Jeevan Hendre and Saurab Tuteja have been appointed as Chairmen for Western and Northern regions respectively. Kaushik Banerjee and Princy K D will continue as chairmen for Eastern and Southern regions. "We appoint a new chapter chairman once he or she completes 5 years in that position. This is the tradition of our association," said Carl Dantas, Chairman Emeritus, ETAA. The board also appointed Abhijeet Khadilkar, former National General Secretary and Dipti Thakoor as additional directors. Khadilkar will look after membership services while Thakoor will be responsible for sponsorship and events. Jagat Mehta and Dharmesh Advani will continue as President and National General Secretary of the association. "We are re-grouping in the post-pandemic scenario and trying to take ETAA forward in our silver jubilee year," said Dantas. ETAA will celebrate 2023-24 as its silver jubilee year. To mark



its 25th year, the association will organise two conventions-domestic and international. "In the next eighteen months we will organise domestic and international conventions and for that we have already initiated discussion with our people. Besides this, we have also decided to organise one large event in every quarter" revealed Dantas.

It was also decided in the meeting that ETAA will closely work with every state tourism board of the country. "We will support the domestic tourism sector also along with international tourism boards. Pandemic has taught us a big lesson and it is not prudent to depend only on one sector," pointed out Dantas. According to him, an alternate source of income is imperative and they are going to introduce the concept among the ETAA members soon. "Our members must not depend only on travel business rather they should have allied products as well. We will soon initiate discussion with mobile service providers like Vodafone, Jio for roaming services. Besides this, we are also looking to tie up with luggage companies to make the travel experience better for the clients of our members," said Dantas..

CNTD ON PAGE 4 ►

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Disha Shah Ghosh

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

NH Hotels willing to explore opportunities in India

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

Spanish hotel chain NH Hotels, part of the Minor Hotels, with a strong footprint in Europe and Americas, is expanding its presence in the larger Asia Pacific region, with its latest hotel set to open in Dubai. Provided with the right opportunity, the four-decade old hotel company is open to the idea of opening a property in India.

Talking to **TravelBiz Monitor** during the Mumbai leg of its recent three-city roadshow in India, Diana Marin Acosta, Sr VP Sales & Distribution, NH Hotel Group, said, "India has always been an important market for us, but as of 2021, it is one of the fastest growing markets after the Middle East and Australia... We are expanding in Malaysia, Australia and China, and India is also on our radar since it would be the best way to expand in this market. Our owner is willing to explore potential opportunities here."

From India, while Mumbai and New Delhi are important source markets, Acosta said they are keen to tap other metros and Tier cities since the opportunity in a vast and diverse country of India is huge.

Moreover, weddings and film industry, especially Bollywood are their important target segments. "We have strong value proposition for the entertainment industry in our destinations." She went on to say, "The slowdown of China and Russia has impacted bookings for Europe. And India has the wider



potential to grow. We are trying to push governments in Europe and facilitate visas, because it is a huge issue currently for travel to Europe."

one of the biggest hotel operator in Europe and America, with a strong presence belongs to Minor Group since the end of 2019, 500 hotels all over the world in more than 30. We operate in more than 29 countries.

Delegation of 25 properties from APAC and

Europe, We are bringing the Minor brands into Europe, we are expanding NH Collection in the Asia Pacific, we are opening in Dubai.

India has always been an important market for us, but as of 2021, is one of the fastest growing market after the Middle East, and Australia.

From India, Mumbai and New Delhi are key cities, Strongest in weddings and Bollywood.

Filming

La Tomatina after Zindagi

We have strong value proposition for the entertainment industry in our destinations.

We are expanding Malaysia, Australia and china, India is on our way since it would be the best way to expand in the market, and our owner is willing to explore potential opportunities in this market.

The slowdown of China and Russia has impacted bookings for Europe. And India has the wider potential to grow. We are trying to push the government to help with the visa process, because it is a huge issue. We are willing to try to facilitate the visa issue in Europe.

We are kind surprised with the popularity of NH Collection hotels in India, we are bringing more Minor brands into Europe.

We have a strategic agreement with our Indian partner, and are here to elevate the partnerships with wholesalers and tour operators. ♦

disha.shah@safronsynergies.in

Rhaetian Railway achieves world record

TBM Staff | Mumbai

In October this year, Rhaetian Railway (RhB) successfully made its world record attempt at being the longest passenger train in the world, travelling on the UNESCO World Heritage route from the Albula Tunnel in Preda to the famous Landwasser Viaduct near Filisur. Several thousand guests and railway fans attended the public event in Bergün or positioned themselves along the route to experience this unique journey.

RhB travelled along the Albula

Line on Saturday afternoon, 29 October 2022, with 25 fourpart Capricorn railcars from leading Swiss manufacturer Stadler. The 1,906-metre-long record train was lined up like a string of pearls in the Albula Tunnel during the night from Friday to Saturday and on Saturday morning. It then set off in Preda at 2.20 pm. Shortly after 3.30 pm, the record-breaking train reached its destination: the spectacular crossing of the Landwasser Viaduct. "After intensive preparation, we are overjoyed to have achieved this world record.

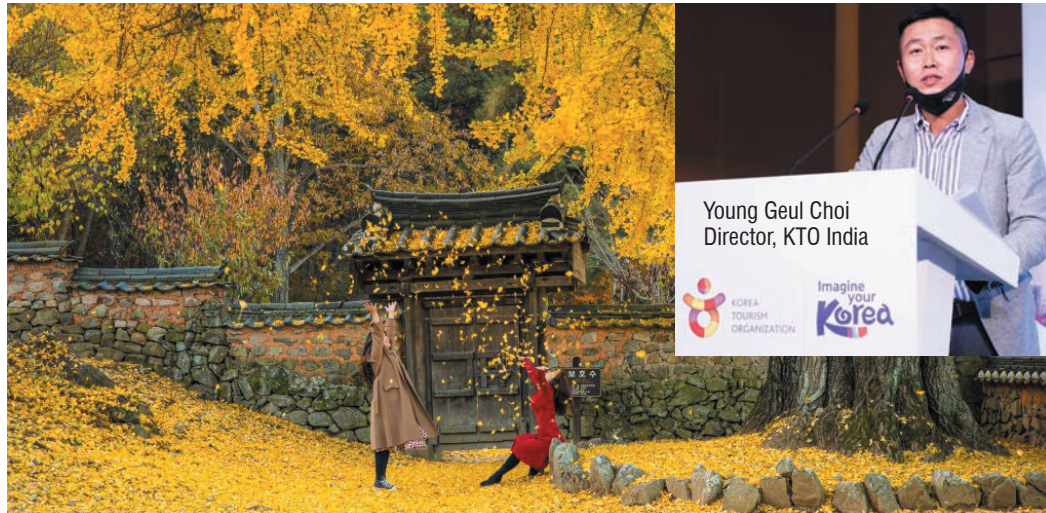


Not only did we have a wonderful railway festival here in Bergün, but we were able to present ourselves around the world as a fascinating and innovative mountain railway thanks to our dedicated partners, sponsors and an incredibly dedicated team," says Renato Fasciati, Director of RhB shortly after the world record was set. The success of

the world record was officially confirmed on site by GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™. The route from Preda to Alvaneu is 24,930 metres long. The train covered a difference in altitude of 789.4 metres (Preda = 1,788.7 m a.s.l.; Alvaneu = 999.3 m a.s.l.). The world record-breaking journey crossed 48 bridges and went through 22 tunnels. ♦

Corrigendum: In the **TravelBiz Monitor November 2022** issue, the story on Tourism Australia wrongly carried the year 2024 in the headline and body text. It should instead be 2023.

Korea targets luxury premium travellers & student segment in India



Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) India, the tourism arm of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Korea recently organised their Sales Call Mission 2022 – South Korea at Hyderabad in the Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel, Banjara Hills.

The event saw participation from travel agents based in Hyderabad and nearby cities with several dignitaries in attendance such as Young Geul Choi, Director, KTO India, Suresh Chukkappalli, Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Korea in Hyderabad, Sk. Monik Dharamshi and Valmiki Hari Kishan from Skal Hyderabad.

Korea as a travel destination reopened for tourists without any restrictions, last October.

Choi mentioned that after the pandemic, flights to Korea have been reduced drastically impacting tourist footfall. Due to this impact, the number of foreign tourists received by the country has now shrunk to 40% per cent of what the country used to receive before the pandemic. While speaking exclusively to **TravelBiz Monitor**, Choi expressed, "After the pandemic, only a handful, as less as only 9 flights are available to travel to South Korea from India, that too only from Delhi. We are receiving only 40% of tourists as compared to the pre-pandemic numbers. Due to this, our prime focus is now to increase the footfall into the country by increasing the number of direct flights from various cities in India."

Choi informed us that to increase the number of direct flights, they are contemplating

tie-ups with various other destinations and airlines to direct travellers to Korea. "We are planning to have a word with Singapore Airlines to check whether we can design a packaged tour for travellers interested to visit Singapore, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand etc.. Though it's in a very nascent stage, we are still evaluating all the ways to increase the number of travellers in our country."

The country which is mostly receiving MICE and corporate tourists is now targeting high-income groups to increase its luxury premium travel numbers.

"Our target for next year is to focus mainly on two segments. One is the luxury premium market, as after the pandemic things changed and travel expenses have now gone up for travelling to Korea. The second segment is that of students. We receive a lot of students for educational tours; these are our target markets going forward," he added.

According to Choi, cultural bonding between both countries is a must for encouraging the young population to travel to Korea. K-Pop and K-Drama have played an influential part to spread awareness about Korean culture amongst the young Indian crowd. He also added that apart from Delhi and Mumbai which were the focus areas in India till now, they are exploring markets such as Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad etc., as these cities are emerging as potential markets for their target groups. ♦

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in

ETAA revamps national body....

CONTD from PG 01 ▶

Meanwhile, ETAA had organised a knowledge session for its members in Mumbai on November 25. The session threw light on Vietnam as a destination and Global Destinations, an eminent Mumbai based representation company, made an elaborate presentation. Post Pandemic, the demand of Indians choosing Vietnam as a desirable destination has continued to increase. Venkatesan Dhattareyan, Regional Director, West & Central Region, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, also attended the event as a special guest.

Speaking to **TravelBiz Monitor**, Jagat Mehta, President, ETAA, said that they have selected Vietnam as the destination is fast emerging. "Besides this the country is tourist friendly and also a value for money destination for travellers," pointed out Mehta. He also said that another workshop is slated to be held on December 9 with Argentina tourism. "The workshop will

take place at the Argentina Consulate office in Mumbai," Mehta revealed. ETAA is also taking its members for an educational trip to Nepal early next year. "In February next year, we are taking our members to Nepal for an educational trip with a discounted rate and the response is very good," he said.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Pruthvi Khetani, COO, Global Destinations, said that Vietnam has emerged as the number one destination for the Indian tourists this year. In this direction, he appreciates VietJet airline's effort to connect important cities of India with Vietnam. "The duration of flight is between 5-5.30 hours only, hence making it a short haul destination," Khetani pointed out.

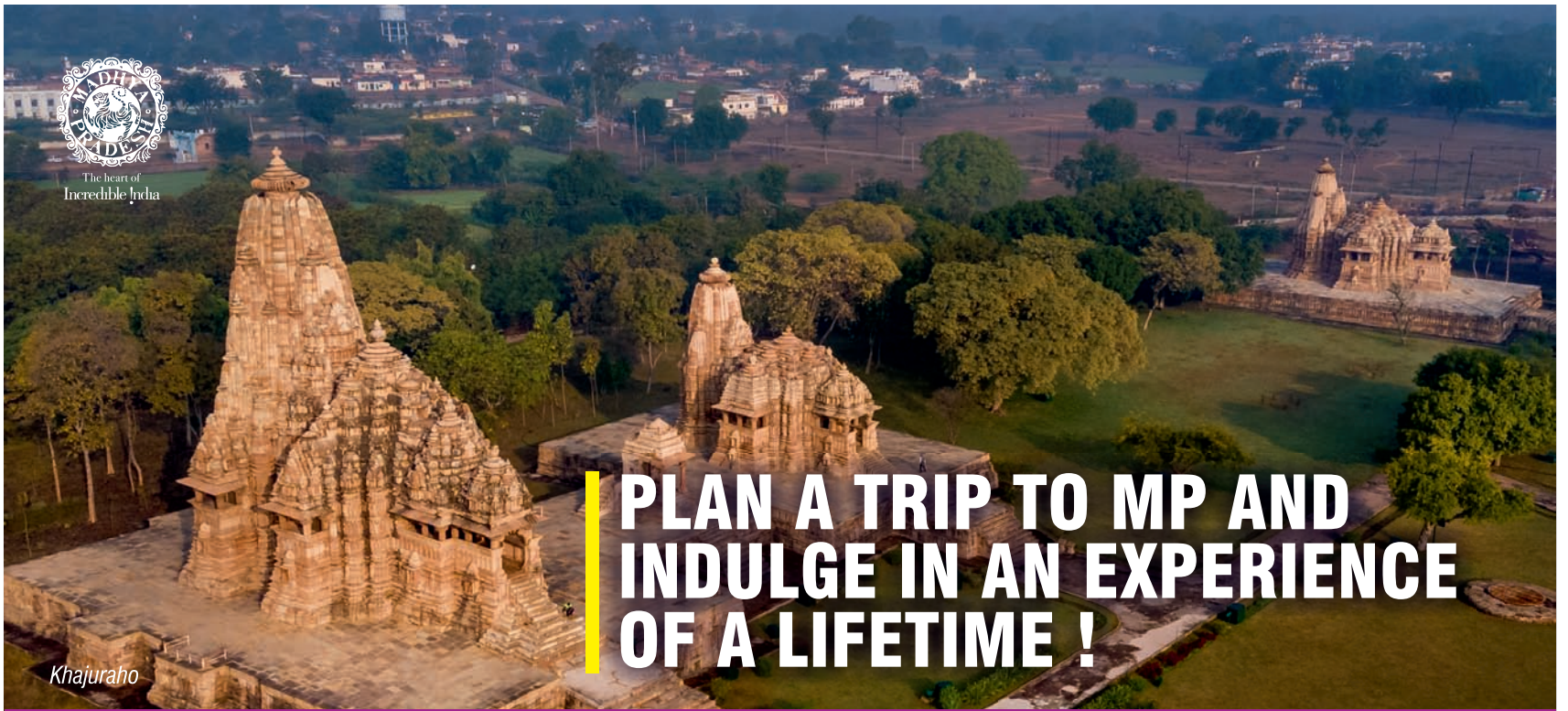
The most in-demand destinations by Indians include Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Phu Quoc, Quy Nhon, Danang, Hoi An, Nha Trang, Phan Thiet, Dalat, and Halong. Khetani believes that Indian travellers are giving preference to Vietnam over Thailand and Singapore

now. "No doubt, Thailand remains a number one destination for the Indian travellers today but Vietnam is giving a stiff competition to them," he said. According to him, Vietnam is getting a good response from travellers from Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad and Delhi. "Now business from the Eastern region of India is also picking up. As far as segments are concerned, Fits, Honeymooners, luxury and Mice contribute most in the business," he said.

Khetani is optimistic that Vietnam as a destination would register a healthy growth in the next 3-4 years in terms of the arrival of Indians. "There are many Indian restaurants in the tourist places of Vietnam which will help fuel the growth," he pointed out. ♦

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in





Khajuraho

PLAN A TRIP TO MP AND INDULGE IN AN EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME !

Let's have a small tour of incredible Madhya Pradesh

Some destinations are immutable. They grow on you slowly but their magnetism is eternal. Welcome to Madhya Pradesh... the land of Khajuraho, Sanchi and Bhimbetka, all UNESCO World Heritage sites. And then there are the equally famous medieval townships of Mandu and Orchha which house matchless forts, palaces and temples. The vast plateau of Madhya Pradesh is dotted with the spectacular Satpura and Vindhya mountain ranges, verdant valleys and life-giving rivers like Narmada, Shipra, Betwa, Chambal, Ken and Sone. Situated at the mounting height, the state's most verdant charm, Pachmarhi is the most pristine among the hill-resorts in the country. The state also has many holy cities including Ujjain, Omkareshwar, Maheshwar, Maihar, Chitrakoot and Amarkantak that attract millions of pilgrims from all over the world. The state which is known as, the "Tiger State of the India" also gained the tags of "the Leopard State, the Vulture State, the Ghadiyal State and the Wolf State of the country" as the heart of incredible India is decked with numerous wildlife hotspots that include 11 National Parks & 24 Wildlife Sanctuaries. This is just a small introduction, as Madhya Pradesh is not only a state to explore its heritage sites but also activity filled tourist destinations, tribal culture, adventure activities, camping, water sports, natural

scenic beauty, wildlife, spiritual, food, rural and wellness destinations. The state is also a hub to experience amazing arts and crafts that give tourists a lifetime memory by taking home some unique keepsakes to cherish.

Madhya Pradesh Tourism (MPT) brought together gram stays, farm stays and homestays as a safe and culturally rich stay options under rural tourism which was also praised on the international stage. The rural tourism is slowly gaining popularity among travellers and why not? Exploring rural destinations can help to know the traditional roots of a state!

Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, tourists explore the village mud houses, taste simple yet delicious meal and enjoy the splendid natural and unpolluted surroundings to soak in the rural culture. MPTB was also felicitated on international stage for its rural tourism and safe tourism for women projects. The local community are involved in tourism activities including high-class lodging and boarding facilities, local food, folk music and cultural activities, rural sports, local art and crafts and skill development in the youth. This initiative is not only giving new experiences to tourists but also benefit the local community by generating employment.

Madhya Pradesh has also become the hub of 'film shooting' and a good number of filmmakers are coming to shoot their films. Government is promoting film tourism in a big way by providing subsidies and all permissions and clearances through single window online system. Till now, more than 150 projects including feature films, TV Serial/Series, TVCs and Reality shows have been shot in Madhya Pradesh.

The state also has a treat in store for a solo woman traveller who is free-spirited soul and her passion to travel doesn't get hampered even in the absence of any companion. This vibrant state offers destinations where travelling alone is not just comfortable but one can also get to taste of freedom and fun without fear. Now, let's talk about those who as a tourist, really got bored of those regular travel trips and are eager to try out some adventure activities. The heart of the

country has a lot for them too. Many thrilling and soft adventure activities are being conducted in the state for the adventure lovers. From river rafting, mountaineering, jungle safari, heritage walk to food walk, there is something for everyone. MPTB's adventure department has introduced various adventure activities to attract tourists including jungle safari, off-road luxury car rally, cycling activity in tiger reserve, camping, tree camping and gypsy camping at Satpura National Park. Tourists experience stargazing, bonfire, and dusk drive, swimming, riverside jungle trail with bird watching and tribal cuisine with barbeque in the jungles of Satpura. Apart from this, the travel bugs also enjoy



Pench National Park

water sports activities in the heart of the country. The state offers many activities including windsurfing, water parasailing, water zorbing, jet-skiing, speed boats ride, cruise boats ride, sky diving, paramotoring, banana boat ride, hot air balloon ride, zip line, yoga camp, wellness and spa etc.

Madhya Pradesh is a paradise for wildlife lovers and the best way to discover national parks and wildlife sanctuaries is by opting for a safari ride. When you visit the heart of incredible India, try different safari experiences offered at our various sites. Balloon safari in Bandhavgarh, elephant safari in Kanha, boat safari in Satpura & Chambal and jeep safari at all national parks of MP.

As we said this is just a small introduction, if you want to know more about this state then visit the heart of incredible India Madhya Pradesh. We are eager to welcome you!



Homestay, Ladpura Khas



‘Our plan is to increase Indian arrivals in the Kingdom to 1.3mn over the next one year’

Talking to TravelBiz Monitor on the sidelines of the WTTC Global Summit in Riyadh, Alhasan Ali Aldabbagh, Chief Markets Officer, Asia Pacific, Saudi Tourism Authority shared his ambitious plans for raising the international tourism profile of the Kingdom by the end of the decade with large scale investment and developments on the infrastructure front. He also spoke about expanding the profile of visitors from India in the coming decade.

Q Saudi Tourism Authority made its grand debut in India at SATTE this year. Tell us about your vision for the Kingdom in the coming decade?

The recently concluded WTTC Global Summit brought the global spotlight on the ‘Authentic Home of Arabia’, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. World tourism leaders and members of WTTC

have pledged investment worth USD 10 billion in the coming five years in Saudi Arabia. This announcement comes at a time when the Kingdom has set its sights on raising its international profile and emerge as a competitive tourism player, globally, with an aim of welcoming 100 million visitors, annually by 2030.

Having identified tourism as an important revenue generator and its potential to contribute more than 10% to its GDP, the KSA has earmarked a budget of USD 500 billion towards tourism development and special projects. This ambitious multi-billion dollar target spend will be utilized in realising its Vision 2030, an economic, social and transformative plan to elevate the Kingdom’s international profile, keeping in mind the target to attract 100 million visitors, annually by 2030.

Q Which some of the projects in the pipeline to realise this dream?

The Vision 2030 entails huge state-of-the-art infrastructure development of new cities, entertainment and cultural complexes, world-class accommodation options, construction projects as well as

Each one of these projects is offering a different value proposition to attract different traveller segments. There is no other destination in the world today that is investing in tourism today as much as we are. It shows the level of commitment that we are putting forward to achieve our ambition. All of these projects are among the flagship projects under Saudi Vision 2030 currently under various stages of development, with some, like AIUla, already attracting visitors.

Q India and Saudi Arabia share close ties due to long-standing cultural and historical connections. How does the Indian market play an effective role in achieving your Vision 2030?

India is an important market for Saudi Arabia, especially for economic and religious purposes. Currently, we welcome

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leisure tourism sites.

Tourism is the core of Vision 2030. And as part of this vision, by 2030 we want to achieve 100 million visits in Saudi Arabia. This is very ambitious. We want to make Saudi one of the top five destinations in the world for tourism. We have already set out on a road map to achieve this target going forward, and also to increase our tourism GDP to 10 per cent by 2030.

This development plan includes nine mega-projects and giga-projects as NEOM, the Red Sea Project, and Diriyah city. Also in development are places with an emphasis on adventure and cultural holidays, like Saudi’s Arabian Highlands and the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Hegra in AIUla. Saudi Arabia is targeting to build the world’s largest airport by 2030 with a capacity of welcoming 100 million passengers annually. More than 3,500 tourism investment licenses have already been issued as part of Vision 2030 in the Kingdom.

3,000-4,000 pilgrims from India annually, and part of our plan in India is to increase this number across various segments to 1.3 million over the next one year.

Both countries enjoy rich cultural and historical connections, and every year, thousands of Indian pilgrims travel to the Kingdom for Hajj and Umrah.

In order to reach this milestone, Saudi Tourism Authority is heavily banking on Bollywood films and weddings segment in India. While preparing the destination to cater to the Indian tourist, plans are underway to specialise in offering Indian food, especially vegetarian and Jain meals since that is a main concern for Indian travellers.

With regards to Bollywood, currently, actor Shahrukh Khan’s movie Dunki is being filmed in Saudi Arabia, and Director Raj Kumar Hirani was in the Kingdom recently for his upcoming project. ♦

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & CEO

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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

THE THIN ICE OF INFORMED CONSENT

As technology comes centre stage, it will be wise for its beneficiaries to also watch their back.

A few years back an American journal had reported that a certain company had utilized data analytics to determine that Mac users may pay higher rates for hotel rooms than their PC-using counterparts. Deductions about just any consumer behaviour have always been used by analytics to manipulate customer segments. As AI and the keen arm of IoT extends deeper, many raise concerns over how much customers (read guests in travel parlance) would be comfortable with having their info being dabbled with.

As personal data gets more easily exposed and available, businesses in any field increasingly face ethical decision dilemmas. Correlating data can provide interesting sidelights and even serious information that can give economic benefits. There is, prima facie nothing sinister about using data to develop customer knowledge patterns. The field of big data is now more user-focused. This opens the possibilities of treading on thin ice of the contours of 'informed consent'.

How a simple guest detail can be utilized by a travel business is always open. The customer can not know or understand what will be garnered from her data or how it will be used.

At the same, the parameters of informed consent have widened of late. They have also been specified as either 'broad consent' or 'tiered consent'. The former pre-authorizes secondary use of data info and the latter implies consent to specific secondary uses.

Now how does this impact the travel business? Companies either mining the data or gleaning it off clients' social media presence are not directly the arm of travel companies themselves. But by sheer linkages, the future legalese jungles could throw up new and unexpected encounters.

Of course the industry must venture out and utilise all info available freely (or even at a price) to develop its business and market. However the time is near when caution will not be merely a statutory line in fine print. Not being alarmist, but it might actually be more prudent for marketing to work in close liaison with the legal department in the near future!

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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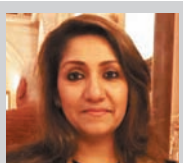
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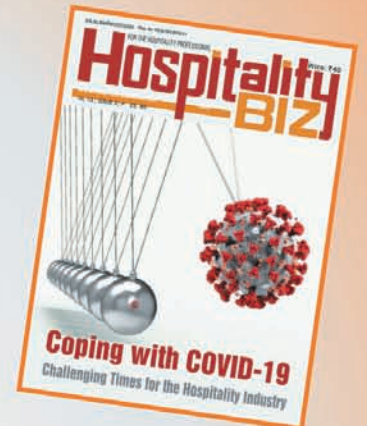
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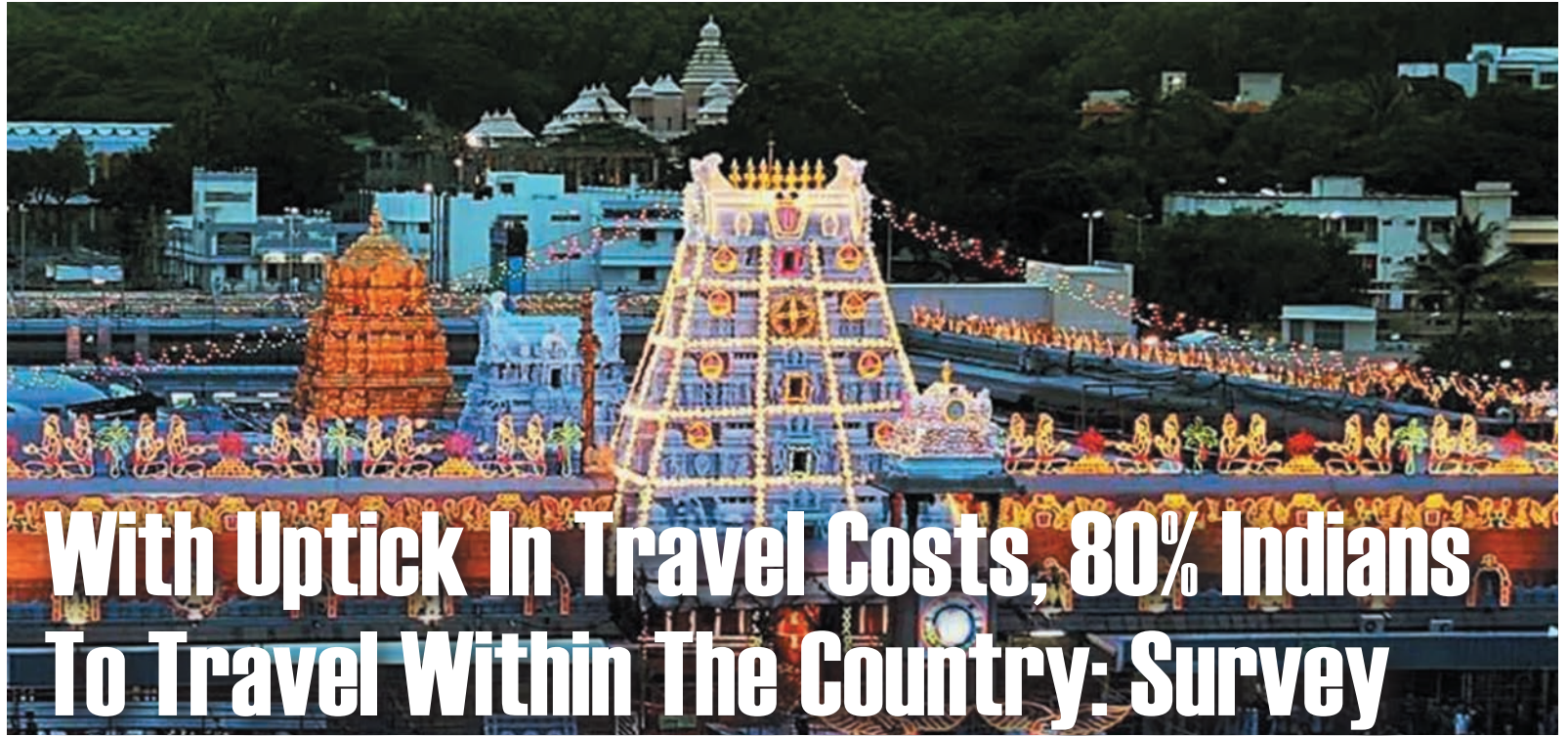
Contact Us

Ajay Wadode: +91 80871 27814
ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in

Pooja Nalawade: +91 97690 52241
pooja.nalawade@saffronsynergies.in

For Subscription

Gauri Sawant: +91 8369080796 | gauri.sawant@saffronsynergies.in



With Uptick In Travel Costs, 80% Indians To Travel Within The Country: Survey

UserTesting, a video-based human insight, conducted a survey to understand consumer travel trends during this holiday season. The survey revealed that ongoing inflation has had a massive impact on the travel plans of Indians due to price hikes across the globe. Out of the 80% of Indians making travel plans this holiday season, about 60% stated that due to rising costs, they were forced to significantly reduce their travel budget and limit spending this holiday season.

The survey also revealed that 60% of Indian respondents indicated an uptick in flight and train costs, while 20% reported that accommodation costs have had the sharpest hike. They further mentioned that to keep up with the rising costs, they are cutting down the frequency of their vacations.

Indians Prioritize Domestic Over International Travel

With the consumer spending power substantially decreasing, 80% of Indians are opting for travel in India itself to stay within their travel budgets. Here, the most popular money-saving tactics include choosing cheaper destinations and accommodations (40%), participating in less expensive activities (30%), and taking fewer trips (20%).

Beaches Are The Most In-Demand Travel Destinations

After a two-year-long halt in travel plans, people across the world are

striding back to the pre-pandemic normal. Indians are also showing confidence in planning vacations to their dream destinations this holiday season. According to the survey, 50% of Indians prefer beaches over mountains (40%), while only 10% wish to visit the countryside.

Another interesting finding revealed that 80% of Indians will be taking their next vacation with friends instead of family (20%).

The Evolving Travel Preferences of Indians

One of the most powerful impacts of COVID-19 was a change in consumer lifestyle and priorities. Related to this change, Indians are now giving prime importance to savings. Interestingly, the survey found that over 80% of respondents are cost-cutting by traveling in buses and trains instead of taking expensive flights on their next vacation.

When asked about the type of trips they are planning, 20% of Indians indicated taking simple low-key vacations to visit family/friends. On the other hand, 30% are showing keen interest in luxury travel with maximum amenities with minimum inconvenience.

Interestingly, out of the Indians who are not traveling, 60% prioritize savings, whereas 30% plan to make personal expenses. The remaining 10% intend to make bigger investments such as property, jewelry, etc. ♦



Amadeus Study reveals Indian organisations prioritize digital transformation but struggle with T&E integration

Amadeus through its Amadeus Cytric Solutions, released the findings from a study conducted by Forrester Consulting titled, 'Digital Transformation For Travel And Expense', which found that while Indian firms recognize the need to modernise their travel and expense (T&E) tools, they struggle with the integration with other systems. Amadeus commissioned Forrester Consulting to conduct this survey of finance, procurement, travel management, IT, and HR leaders at large enterprises to explore the current state and challenges they face with T&E processes and tools. Each of the 525 senior decision makers questioned represents a corporation with revenue ranging from USD 100 million-USD 5 billion and from 1,000+ to 20,000+ employees. The study shows that accelerating the digital transformation of travel and expense (T&E) will further be vital to improving the employee experience and achieving corporate goals next year.

Mani Ganeshan, APAC Engineering Head and Centre Head, Amadeus Labs, said, "New digital technologies such as automation and machine learning have led business efficiency to emerge as a key focus for several organizations. Expense management is a critical aspect of digital transformation that offers new levels of efficiency and better ways of working. The promise of a single, integrated solution to manage all corporate travel and expense needs is, thus, enticing. It is no surprise that companies are now thinking transversally, looking to improve their T&E processes and tools across departments."

The global study was based on a survey of 525 decision-makers involved in travel and expense management for large corporations across nine markets and five in-depth interviews. It revealed progress toward automation, with 80% of global respondents stating that T&E is more digitized compared to other processes within their companies. These findings are compared to a figure of 67% when the survey was conducted in 2020. But current T&E management still presents several challenges.

Many firms have poor integration between T&E tools; manual processes and security concerns remain top challenges.

Globally only 52% of survey respondents' organizations utilized fully integrated T&E solutions, while 44% used solutions that were only partly integrated. 4% had solutions that were not integrated at all. When addressing the main challenges of T&E processes in India, the survey highlights:

- 34% of Indian organizations face challenges managing compliance for travel, like visas and work permits.
- In India, 36% of organizations have privacy

and security concerns, as against 31% globally.

- 23% of Indian organizations say submitting, approving, and processing expenses as well as reconciling invoices and payments were still very manual tasks putting a strain on employees' productivity as compared to a 30% global figure.
- On average, only 36% of systems integrate with organizations' T&E solutions leading to sub-optimal performance and poor employee experience in India.

AMADEUS

Improving T&E processes is critical to achieving business efficiency and enhancing employee experience.

Worldwide only 8% of finance leaders reported being close to fully digitized expense reports. On top of this, some organizations (24%) still relied on spreadsheet-based solutions for managing travel expenses. The study reveals that the difficulties companies face with their T&E tools have implications on business and employee experience. Nearly half of respondents noted these inefficiencies resulted in decreased productivity, and 44% reported poor employee engagement and reduced employee satisfaction with technology. Low adoption of company tools was the top business impact, which might also lead to lower compliance to travel policy.

- However, respondents whose firms have an integrated tool experienced this less (36%) compared to other firms (43%). Only 31% of respondents' firms with an integrated T&E tool indicated difficulties in negotiating travel supplier contracts compared to other firms (42%).
- Almost all (91%) Indian organizations agree that improving their T&E processes and tools is critical to reducing cost and increasing efficiency in business operations (Global: 82%) T&E management tools need to enable a collaborative and efficient travel booking, payment, and expense experience 79% of global corporate leaders acknowledge that challenges with T&E processes have a negative impact on employee productivity and engagement. 73% of Indian leaders believe improving how they manage T&E is critical to improving employee experience.

Improving T&E processes, integration, and employee collaboration remain top T&E priorities.

The study revealed that across all organizations, the top employee complaint was that employees had to pay trip expenses from their own pockets and then had to submit an

expense claim – a situation organizations can overcome by deploying virtual cards and other integrated solutions. Firms with integrated solutions have less employee complaints - 6% of global organizations had no complaints. Survey results also show that improving the integration between T&E technologies and other enterprise systems was top priority for 72% of Indian organizations.

- 69% of Indian organizations desire to improve the end-to-end experience for T&E.
- For 72% of Indian leaders, virtual payments are the most valued functionality in an end-to-end travel and expense management platform. 63% of Indian respondents believe that one of the biggest advantages gained from virtual payments is better visibility and control over travel spending.
- Separately, 41% of Indian respondents considered this technology to be helping them reduce the risk of fraud, vs., compared to global respondents at 48%. Meanwhile, almost half (46%) of the respondents said the tools improved VAT recovery processes, with India at 38%.
- Respondents worldwide looked to gain actionable insights from T&E analytic (69%), increase automation to reduce manual tasks and processes (67%) and provide employees with the ability to manage T&E on mobile (67%).

"The uniqueness of this study arises from merging three research areas for T&E solutions—employee experience, end-to-end integration, and virtual payments. These research results can help organisations understand the landscape better and transform their corporate travel program, deliver frictionless experiences for employees, and optimize travel spending. At Amadeus, we understand the hassles of managing travel expenses which gives us the edge to provide a new generation of fully integrated tools for organizations to leap-frog traditional T&E processes and rebuild a better corporate travel experience," adds Ganeshan. At Amadeus, we understand the hassles of managing travel expenses which give us the edge to provide a new generation of fully integrated tools for organizations to leap-frog traditional T&E processes and rebuild a better corporate travel experience," adds Ganeshan.

Successfully implemented, new solutions can increase compliance with travel management policies and ease reporting. The risk of not implementing digital solutions is also real, with 38% of surveyed finance and travel management Indian decision-makers in India stating they audit all expense claims – leaving more than half open to fraud, human error, and compliance concerns (Global: 41%). ♦



Investing in Our Future Panel

WTTC Global Summit

Saudi Arabia, the New Focus of World Tourism

The recently concluded WTTC Global Summit in Saudi Arabia witnessed a huge turnout of global leaders and industry representatives, the biggest ever showcase of the global body till date. **TravelBiz Monitor** presents highlights of the event.

The World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) largest ever Global Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia closed with more 3,000 delegates attending the event with 85 countries participating and 50 ministers making their presence felt. Under the theme "Travel for a Better Future" the event focused on the value of the sector, not only to the global economy, but to the planet and communities around the world.

The Summit saw speakers such as former UK Prime Minister Theresa May, former United

Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, and actor, filmmaker, and Golden Globe winner, Edward Norton.

Addressing the media, Julia Simpson, President & CEO, WTTC, announced that the event taking place this week is set to break all records, with more international business leaders and foreign government delegations attending than ever before.

Simpson also revealed over the next five years, WTTC Members are set to invest more than USD 10.5 billion in the Kingdom.

Simpson said, "Our Global Summit will be our biggest

Fahd Hamidaddin
CEO, Saudi Tourism Authority

ever in terms of business leaders, international media and governments from around the world. Our event is bringing together many of the world's most powerful Travel & Tourism business leaders to discuss and secure its long-term future, which is critical to economies, jobs, and livelihoods around the world."

His Excellency Ahmed Al Khateeb, Minister of Tourism for Saudi Arabia, said, "The Kingdom is proud to welcome the 22nd WTTC Global Summit to Riyadh. With more government ministers and world leading CEOs than ever before, it will be a true display of the future we want to create. A future founded in public and private sector partnership, with sustainability and innovation at its core" During the event, WTTC and the Ministry of Tourism of the Kingdom Saudi Arabia launched the Environmental & Social Research (ESR). This groundbreaking new data details the climate footprint of the global Travel & Tourism sector, and in a world-first, this the research covers 185 countries across all regions, and will be updated each year with the latest figures.

WTTC also launched its Cities Economic Impact Report (EIR). Sponsored by Visa, the report shows cities remain the powerhouses of global tourism and will drive the recovery of the sector and economies around the world.

Simpson added, "Saudi Arabia will be the next major destination for visitors as it invests USD 800 billion in showcasing the Kingdom to the world. From the Red Sea to snow-capped mountains, Saudi is full of surprises."

First Global Travel & Tourism Climate Footprint Data

Between 2010 and 2019 the sector's GDP has grown on average 4.3% annually while its climate footprint increased by just 2.4%. The WTTC has unveiled ground-breaking data detailing the climate footprint of the global Travel & Tourism sector.

The findings were launched by WTTC and the Saudi-based



Julia Simpson with His Excellency Ahmed Al Khateeb, Minister of Tourism for Saudi Arabia

Sustainable Global Tourism Center.

In a world-first, this comprehensive research covers 185 countries across all regions and will be updated each year with the latest figures.

Simpson announced the findings of the Environmental & Social Research (ESR). In one of the largest research projects of its kind ever undertaken, WTTC can for the first time ever, accurately report and track the impact industries within the sector have on the environment.

Previous estimates have suggested that the global Travel & Tourism sector was responsible for up to 11% of all emissions. However, WTTC's pioneering research shows that in 2019 the sector's greenhouse gas emissions totalled just 8.1% globally.

The divergence of the sector's economic growth from its climate footprint between 2010 and 2019 is evidence that Travel & Tourism's economic growth is decoupling from its greenhouse gas emissions.

These emissions have been falling consistently since 2010 as the result of technological developments, as well as the introduction of a number of energy efficiency measures across industries within the sector.

Between 2010 and 2019 our sector's GDP has grown on average 4.3% annually while its environmental footprint has only increased by 2.4%.

The broader Environmental

& Social Research (ESR) will include measures of the sector's impact against a range of indicators, including pollutants, energy sources, water use, as well as social data, including age, wage and gender profiles of Travel & Tourism related employment.

WTTC will continue to announce new data on how the sector fares against these indicators throughout 2023.

Governments around the world now have a tool to inform their decision-making and accelerate environmental change more accurately.

Simpson said, "Until now we did not have a sector-wide way to accurately measure our climate footprint. This data will give governments the detailed information they need to make progress against the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

"Travel & Tourism is making huge strides to decarbonise, but Governments must set the framework. We need a steely focus on increasing the production of Sustainable Aviation fuels with Government incentives. The technology exists. We also need greater use of renewable energy in our national grids – so when we turn on a light in a hotel room, it is using a sustainable energy source.

"8.1% is the stake in the ground. The key is to become more efficient and decoupling the rate at which we grow from the

amount of energy we consume from today, every decision, every change, will lead to a better and brighter future for all."

Saudi Arabia Minister of Tourism, HE Ahmed Al-Khateeb added, "We are proud to be a partner to the WTTC in this important research that will monitor impact for the future. Saudi Arabia recognises that travellers and investors want policies that promote sustainability in the industry and we have embarked on a journey that will make the Kingdom a pioneer in sustainable tourism.

"Under the Saudi Green Initiative, we launched more than 60 initiatives in the past year to do just that. The first wave of initiatives represent more than USD 186 billion of investment in the green economy."

Global Summit 2023

Kigali, the capital of Rwanda will host the 2023 edition of the WTTC Global Summit, marking the first time the event will visit Africa. Rwanda, the home of the International Gorilla Conservation Programme, will showcase the power of sustainable tourism to protect biodiversity and create thriving communities.

"We are incredibly excited that Rwanda will host our next Global Summit in 2023. An amazing country famous for its conservation work, Rwanda is building its reputation as a must-see destination," said Simpson. ♦

Opportunities and Challenges - What Medical Tourism has in store

By **Rajeev Taneja**, Founder and CEO of Global Care

India is one of the top 10 countries in the world for Medical Value Tourism (MVT) aiming for a massive share of the Global Medical Value Travel market. Involving two major sectors - healthcare and hospitality, MVT in India has become a major contributor to the economy.

Growing to become a major source of economic diversification in India, MVT is currently valued at USD 6 billion and the sector is expected to grow at a CAGR of 21.1% from 2020 to 2027 (SourceKamala

do seek treatments elsewhere because of steep costs in their locations but they do expect state-of-art facilities and treatments at par with international standards. To offer these advanced treatments, therapies and techniques regularly to patients, the medical tourism sector is required to stay ahead of the curve. Investment is needed not only to build infrastructure to match the International standard but also to address the lack of adequately trained medical staff.

Besides this, one of the major bottlenecks currently in the industry is standardization. Different healthcare providers and facilitators are offering different packages for similar treatments. This leads to confusion amongst patients and a loss of trust in many cases. Therefore, treatments and costs need to be standardized to some extent so that patients can enjoy the ease of access and correct information.

Adding to the above-mentioned hurdles are travel requirements, facilitation of visas, pre-and post-treatment care, overseas patient outreach, and inter-country travel, a unified portal for ease of access to information. Managing the nuances of national security and curbing illegal immigration while making it easier for overseas patients to travel is one of the major concerns of the MVT sector.

Taking care of these challenges will ensure the correct dissemination of information which will help in furthering the medical tourism industry. While the challenges do post some restrictions and resistance, the opportunities are umpteen and very lucrative.

The increased awareness regarding medical tourism has led the town to increase in the influx of patients and businesses. The medical value tourism industry has crossed 3 Billion Dollars in India and the projected target is set at 9 Billion Dollars. Currently, medical value tourism accounts for almost 70% of the total medical services inbound traction/forex in India.

Both the behemoths in the industry and start-ups are availing these opportunities to advance the sector forward and ensure its positive growth. Healthcare institutions stand to gain much from investing in the right technologies and processes to facilitate

treatments for overseas patients. From skilled support staff and competent doctors to easy access help desks and interpreters at the clinic, the opportunities for businesses and stakeholders are wide and paramount.

Besides this, opportunities for facilitators and businesses that help connect patients to the right healthcare provider considering a budget while ensuring the best possible treatment are also a steadily growing sector. The pre and post-treatment rehabilitation, facilitating the entire process of travel, interpretation etc are also taken care of by medical tourism companies. These multiple steps involved in facilitating MVT provide multiple opportunities for both large-scale and small-scale businesses.

For the government and economy as well, medical tourism is helping in creating more jobs not just in the healthcare sector but also in tertiary sectors like tourism, hospitality, welfare etc. This increased job generation in the form of support staff, travel agencies, accommodation, interpreters, airport arrival help desks, hospital help desks, entertainment venues etc help in keeping the economy of any country healthy.

Thronged by a multitude of opportunities, the MVT sector in India is witnessing a positive graph. ♦

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



Vardhana Rao, DG (Tourism) and C&MD, ITDC, in an article dated 27th Sep 2021 in Financial Express)

Constantly evolving and growing, MVT accelerated bid to bring economies back to a stable state, the burden of preventive measures, the world finally opening access for travelling and expensive healthcare in the home countries are a few factors that have contributed to this growth.

The medical tourism industry is peppered with opportunities but there are a few challenges that are like roadblocks in the path of growth. One of the major requirements is a heavy investment to build a strong foundation on which the medical tourism industry can grow. Patients

Rajeev Taneja is one of the leading authorities in the medical tourism sector. Founder and CEO of Global Care, a unit of Lavanya Medicare Solutions, Rajeev founded Global Care with the vision of leading the growth of seamless medical tourism globally. Under his supervision, the company has grown by leaps and bounds.

After completing his graduation and a specialization course in E-commerce management, Rajeev founded his career as a recruitment specialist catering to behemoths like Dell, HCL, Accenture et al, recruiting more than 600 personnel for ITS companies.



‘In the next 10 years, we plan to increase our portfolio aggressively in South India’: Thakur

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

Larisa Hotels & Resorts – a 22-key boutique property brand started its journey in 2015 with its first property in Manali. The brand believes in exclusivity and considers its people as an integral part of its growth. While explaining their growth journey Priya Thakur, Founder, Larisa Hotels & Resorts said, “After seeing a lot of success in Manali, we went on to open in Goa, Mussoorie and Shimla subsequently.” Moving forward with an ambitious spirit, the brand is planning an aggressive expansion in the southern region of India in the near future.

Thakur believes in growing slowly but steadily. Most of the properties that have been introduced by the brand are because of the fantastic response that it has received from consumers. She believes that consumers are the catalyst which fuelled Larisa’s growth.

Thakur gave an example of the effect of consumer response on their growth by saying, “After a fantastic response to our Morjim property in Goa, we decided to open another exclusive resort in North Goa - Larisa Resort Ashwem. The property boasts 2.5 acres of



Priya Thakur

gorgeous Goa greenery and simple elegance.” While speaking about their near term ambitions, Thakur stated that Larisa is currently targeting properties in the extreme northern locales such as Rajasthan, Varanasi etc, and has plans to target South India in the future. “In the next 10 years, we plan to increase our portfolio aggressively in South India,” she added.

The brand which is self-funded and follows a mixed business model is planning to go asset-light in the future. “We are looking to bring in strategic and financial partners along with raising debt as and when required. Currently, all our projects are self-funded. However, going forward we are working only on asset-light properties,” informed Thakur.

As the industry is seeing higher growth amongst domestic travellers, various small and boutique properties have mushroomed to capture the huge market luxury boutique hotel segment. Speaking on the challenges that Larisa faces from the same segment, Thakur commented, “All markets where we exist currently are all very popular destinations. Competition is there across all the markets, however, Goa has seen a lot of new options with various hotels, resorts and villas opening. In my opinion, one has to stay true to their beliefs; in our case we believe that customer experience is our utmost priority.” However, Thakur mentioned that locations are Larisa’s USP. “We try our best to create & curate memorable stays for our guests. Choosing the correct location has always been another priority for us, which also gives us an edge over our competitors. All our properties are a bit away from the hustle and bustle of the main city area, so people prefer to come and enjoy their stay at our property. We are preferred by travellers for our luxurious ambience, nature trail, amenities, and local food. We also hire local staff to make sure to support the local community,” she added.

The brand is also contemplating

on expansion in consulting and F&B businesses along with taking their business operations to a new country. Thakur stated, “We intend to open 1-2 properties every year. Our aim is to have more than 10 properties under the brand in the next five years. Two upcoming properties are Larisa Goa – Ashwem and Nubra. We definitely want to go global and have an international presence, especially to locations which are in the range of 5-7 hours travel distance. We aim at being Larisa enterprises, providing hospitality, consulting, FnB services, etc.”

COVID-19 has taken the world by surprise and has had a decisive impact on the hospitality industry. During those trying times, Larisa survived and learned the lesson through the setbacks, Thakur said.

“As Covid came with its own challenges and setbacks for the hospitality industry. We have sailed in the boat as others but fortunately have sustained due to the strategies and support from our colleagues. There were negative as well as positive learnings. We have learnt to sustain and manage in difficult times and it has been a huge learning curve. On a positive note, we got time to do self-introspection,” she concluded. ♦

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in



‘Adventures Overland strives to become the market leader in self-drive expeditions’

Having raised its second round of funding, New Delhi-based Adventures Overland is keen to invest into a fleet of 4x4 SUVs and globally marketing its expeditions.

Tushar Agarwal,
Co-founder
& Director,
Adventures
Overland talks to
Disha Shah Ghosh
about the meticulous planning for their road trip itineraries, growth in cross border expeditions, and upcoming departures for 2023.

Q What kind of scope does a niche vertical like expedition have in the Indian market?

We are witnessing a steady growth in the road travel segment, and within these travellers are opting for niche experiences. The pent-up demand has translated into good numbers in 2022. We see an increasing appetite in travellers who want to drive in diverse terrains such as Brazil, Laos, Turkey, Morocco, to name just a few, and have expeditions to cater to these routes. The defining trend we see is the rise of cross-border excursions and international road trips where people would be interested in fly-and-drive expeditions. We are already leaders in the segment and looking to grow further as the pie expands.

Q What is your strategy to tap this kind of adventure traveller?

While cross-border expeditions may seem expensive at first, our trips offer tremendous value propositions to travellers with all the expertise and experiences we offer. EMI options are available for travellers who wish to stagger their expenses. We offer luxurious niche packages, which include taking care of the accommodation, meals, vehicles and their upkeep, visa formalities, safety, and other travel nuances; our customised tours, fixed departures & epic journeys target different subsets.

With disposable incomes at hand

and the trend of personalisation picking up, we are confident that our passion for customer service and merchandise give-away to instil a sense of belonging and focus on a time-effective route and itinerary will continue to fructify. We ensure each traveller has the opportunity to have an immersive experience and a brush with the gastronomical and cultural aspects of the destination. At times, we have even added on a few impromptu destinations as a last-minute call owing to the situation at hand, which is welcomed and truly thrills the travellers.

Q Which are some of your planned departures for 2023?

We have a few planned journeys, the forthcoming being one to Laos, a country traversed by the Mekong River and known for its mountainous terrain, French colonial architecture, hill tribe settlements and Buddhist monasteries. This will be followed by an expedition to Iceland, a natural wonder like none other; the magical and mysterious land of lava rocks, mesmerising beaches, larger-than-life mountains, ancient glaciers and rugged fjords – indeed a country of extreme contrasts and ideal for travellers looking for a destination that offers a plate full of diversity.

Yet another exciting expedition planned is to Morocco, a picturesque country offering contrasts ranging from UNESCO world heritage sites, cultural galore and desert regions to views of the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea and rugged mountains with breathtaking views of the Atlas ranges. This country, home to parts of the hottest desert in the world, The Sahara desert, truly bustles with life with bespoke kasbahs and the best-known squares in Africa. This will be followed by the expedition to Jordan, one of the most iconic ancient cities in the Middle East; it shares borders with several Middle Eastern countries - neighbours being Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia and is rich with archaeological, religious and tourist sites. Our guided, small-group

self-drive trips allow travellers to experience new destinations while driving in convoys. We are excited to bring a superlative travel destination such as Jordan to our travellers. They can enjoy the Jordan expedition without worrying about breakdowns, language barriers and navigating rugged terrain.

We believe in offering distinctive travel experiences to passionate travellers. Each expedition is curated keeping in mind the natural bouquet of experiences the destinations offer; each journey is an experience in itself and hence, different in its way. While travellers embark on this journey in an individual capacity, they often end up befriending co-travellers, and by the end of the trip, the memories made are unforgettable. Additionally, the thrill of a self-driven convoy-style journey across varied terrains in Land Rover Defenders or Ford Raptors makes it worthwhile.

Q You have recently raised funding. Tell us about your expansion plans.

As we look West, the stage is set for the second phase of Adventures Overland's evolution. Self-drive holidays are a way of life in the US and UK. Still, there aren't many players in the guided, small group self-drive segment that allows travel enthusiasts to drive in convoys with radio sets in each car through remote parts of the world such as Central Asia, Alaska, along the west coast of South America through the Andes or the thick forests of Africa, without any worries of break downs, language barriers, navigating through rugged terrain etc.

The funding will be deployed towards taking the brand footprint across the globe. We plan to open offices in 6 continents and invest in a fleet of 4x4 SUVs. A sizeable chunk of the funding will also be used for global marketing, infrastructure upgradation, product development, content creation, and expansion into Tier-II cities.

Adventures Overland strives to become the market leader in self-drive expeditions worldwide and build a global community of road trippers by inspiring, motivating, and engaging like-minded travellers using various platforms. ♦

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in



Start-Up Forum

Bringing Innovations to the Forefront

Flyzy

By TBM Staff | Mumbai

Anticipating the impact of technology, 16 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: Flyzy

Core Team: Deepak Meena, CEO
Arjit Singh, CMO
Hansraj Patel, CTO

Founding year: 2021

Company Website: <https://ilyzygo.com/>

Description : Flyzy is a travel tech startup which works mainly in the field of B2B travel. The flagship product of Flyzy is ZERO, an AI-based travel marketplace and CRM that matches travel suppliers and facilitators with verified clients. Suppliers can list their service packages in minutes and cater to their leads through the built-in CRM. Our white-labelled App for their clients helps in finding verified packages, seamless communication with suppliers, trusted payments, and entire itineraries with alerts in one place, and much more.



Heritage liberates!

By **Dr. Nimit Chowdhary**, Professor of Tourism,
Faculty of Management Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia

Heritage is what we have inherited from the past- both the recent past and the distant past. The way we think and the way we conduct ourselves is an outcome of what we believe and the way we process the stimuli from our surroundings- in short, our perspective. Thus, our perspectives are shaped by how we interpret the animate and inanimate elements of our surroundings. Therefore, heritage is not just a collection of historical buildings and artefacts as they have been passed on to the progeny.

Since people arrive from different backgrounds- including upbringing and circumstances, which shape their experiences, their perspectives are different. Therefore, they are likely to interpret the same thing differently. The wider the difference in backgrounds, the more significant the difference in perspective. Thus, when one travels to another part of the world, which is very different from their routines, they are often mesmerised by a very different way of life which is just another way of existence. This is both educative and entertaining and therefore exciting and thus motivation for travel.

A person often does not travel to see or view places. Instead, they travel to feel the place by internalising it through a cascade of experiences set in a cultural landscape- that Geographer Otto Schlüter referred to as *Kulturlandschaft*. According to him, the natural landscape or the original landscape, which he referred to as *Urlandschaft*, shapes the cultural landscape as per the doings of a cultural group that resides there. Thus, culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result.

To make sense of our surroundings, we may look at them as natural and built environments. Both are carried forward as an inherited legacy of the host community. Heritage may therefore be classified as natural or cultural heritage. Cultural heritage may be further understood as tangible heritage like buildings, architecture, arts, painting, dress, etc., or intangible cultural heritage

like folklore, traditions, festivals, language, music, etc. Furthermore, with remember that nature has a bearing on culture.

Heritage thus does two things- one, it personifies a place, and two, it helps differentiate one place from another. We realise that the feel of one place is different from another, and we would like to travel to a place that returns an experience very different from ours.



Heritage has spiritual connotations too. For the host, it tries to answer the quintessential question who am I? It helps me locate myself in my perpetual search for identity- my place, my people, my things. I cling to these to define myself. On the part of the visitor, it liberates by raising her consciousness. One realises that what she has clung to or what she believed was the only truth or the only way forward was actually ignorance. They realise that the world exists and exists happily and securely with a very different logic of existence. Horizons are broadened- and so the famous Chinese saying- travelling a thousand miles is better than reading a thousand books.

The importance of culture and heritage is reflected in numbers. The market size of heritage tourism in 2021 was around USD 560 b. For ready comparison, it is almost a fifth of the Indian GDP. 40% of all tourism is heritage tourism, where almost 80% of business travellers also visit at least one heritage site during the trip. Moreover,

cultural tourists are affluent and more educated and tend to stay longer and spend 60% more.

It is high time we rethink the management and marketing of heritage to visitors. Creative tourism entrepreneurs must package and present the "feel of the place" to the visitors. The first step in this direction is to decipher the heritage of the place and interpret it in an idiom that excites the guests- be it unravelling the vernacular architecture or facilitating the participation of guests in cultural mores and events, or explaining the culinary traditions of the place, or simply offering a window into the daily lives of the community.

There may be a few caveats as well. While there is no question that the heritage needs to be protected and preserved, the same should not be achieved by isolating it from the community. Heritage should be accessible so that experiences can be monetised to generate necessary revenues for the upkeep of heritage. Technology, like multi-sensory experience assistive technologies, should be increasingly used to increase access and augment visitors' experiences. Further, more heritage-anchored events are required. ♦

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

Dr. Nimit Chowdhary is a Professor of Tourism with the Faculty of Management Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia. He has more than 29 years of the academic experience of which he has been a full professor for 16 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. He has 16 books and more than 175 academic papers and chapters to his credit. He has travelled extensively to around 40 countries and almost all states within the country.



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