

'Hong Kong is no longer to be seen as a destination for business travellers only'

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

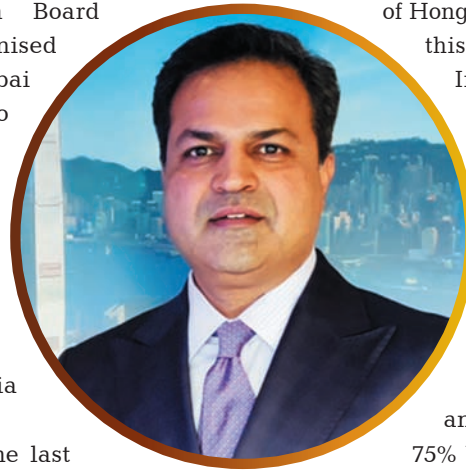
The Hong Kong Government has announced that it will be providing 5 lakh free air tickets to all those wishing to visit the city. This move is to boost tourism in the region. Hong Kong recently launched the promotional campaign Hello Hong Kong globally. They are also offering 'Hong Kong Goodie bags'; each bag has a voucher of HKD 100. And visitors can redeem it at dining, attractions, shopping etc. It is valid till December this year.

Puneet Kumar, Director, South Asia & Middle East, Hong Kong Tourism Board, while speaking to **TravelBiz Monitor** on the sidelines of an event in Mumbai, said that this is actually the biggest invitation to tourists across the globe to visit Hong Kong. When asked to comment, how many air tickets are allotted to India? He said, "It will be decided after discussing with airlines and airport authority." Talking about the response, he said that it is too early to say anything now but the response from the media across the world, including India is quite encouraging.

Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) recently organised two roadshows in Mumbai and Delhi. The two events witnessed the participation of airlines, attractions, DMCs, etc. and exhibitors interacted with the Indian partners to reactivate the business. "It is our step forward to re-engage with the India market," said Kumar.

He also said that in the last three years there have been many developments in terms of infrastructure, tourism products and new experiences. "All these offer new opportunities for travel brands to sell Hong Kong and beyond," pointed out Kumar.

Hong Kong is no longer to be seen as a destination for business travellers only. "Green Tourism and soft adventure are the other aspects



PUNEET KUMAR
Director, South Asia & Middle East, Hong Kong Tourism Board

of Hong Kong Tourism. I am sure, with this Hong Kong will attract more Indian tourists," he said.

Have you set any target from India for the year 2023? "Now, we are looking for a return of air capacity. Because this is (return of air capacity) coming in phases. Right now, Cathay Pacific is operating 30% of their pre-pandemic frequency and it is expected to reach 70-75% by the year end. So, business recovery will happen in phases not immediately."

Talking about connectivity, he said that besides Cathay Pacific, Vistara may launch flights to Hong Kong. "The announcement should come from them. We have also spoken to IndiGo to re-start their flights from Bengaluru, and they express their eagerness to do so," he said. ♦

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Rail Europe hopeful of reaching pre-pandemic bookings in 2024

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

During his first ever international visit after having taken over as President and CEO of Rail Europe in November 2022, Bjorn Bender spoke about the potential of the Indian market, scope of growth and their B2B outreach activities.

Talking to **TravelBiz Monitor** at the Rail Europe office in Mumbai, Bender said that they are positive about the outlook for 2023-2024. "India has already shown signs of recovery for us in 2022; and is the second best market for us after the USA. We are planning to reach pre-Covid level of bookings by next year, depending on the industry at large, and the pace of



BJORN BENDER
President and CEO
Rail Europe

recovery overall. India is a very relevant market for a train tech company like Rail Europe."

Bender said that they closely work with European states' destination promotion agencies to offer rail journeys to the Indian clientele.

"Train journeys are a unique way to explore Europe in all its glory. The high speed trains remain our top selling product in India. Indians love Switzerland, and the Swiss Travel Pass and EU Rail Pass are very popular among the Indian clientele."

However, the visa delays continue to remain a big deterrent for Indians willing to travel to Europe, and Bender said that they have received assurance from their partners that in the days to come, the situation will see some improvement. "In India, we work

very closely with Switzerland Tourism, German National Tourism Organization, Atout France, and the feedback we are getting from them is that they are working closely with Embassies and Consulates to address the issue. It has been a pain point from the last year; we have received positive feedback from them that in the days to come, the situation will streamline further."

In terms of trade outreach, Rail Europe is conducting onground trainings, and has seen increased traction from the Tier-II markets of Lucknow, Indore, Guwahati, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Nagpur and Nashik, besides the main metros. "We are participating in trade shows like SATTE, OTM and ITB India either directly or our channel partners. We are revisiting our existing partnerships with the travel trade in India, and our message is clear, travelling via trains is easy and comfortable. We are also evaluating new partnerships with some OTAs in India." ♦

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Saudi Tourism bullish on India; consolidates its marketing strategy

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Keen on making India as its number one inbound source market, the Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) has a comprehensive plan in place to position the Kingdom as a



ALHASAN ALDABBAGH
APAC PRESIDENT
SAUDI TOURISM AUTHORITY

preferred destination of choice for leisure tourists, pilgrims as well as women travellers.

As part of this initiative, STA plans to set up offices in India this year, open 9 visa offices in India, offer additional and extensive air connections through Saudia and flynas to multiple destinations

in India, and extend its 96-hour stop-over visa to Indian travellers, alongside looking at various trade partnerships.

Sharing insights on this, Alhasan Aldabbagh, President, APAC, Saudi Tourism Authority, said, "Our vision is to double our visitation numbers from, India and by 2030 our ambition is to reach over 12 million Indian visitors. Our aim is to attract over two million visits from Indian tourists by the end of this year, and we plan to utilise the popularity of Bollywood, football, and cricket icons to draw visitors to Saudi Arabia."

In 2023, the Kingdom is witnessing an increase in preference among travellers towards immersive and culturally rich experiences with extensive itineraries. "Among one of the critical factors driving this unique trend is the availability of direct connections to popular and exciting destinations. With several airlines operating direct flights between the major cities of both countries, travellers can opt for quick and convenient commute to reach their destination."

"We are happy to share that

STA has signed a partnership with Twenty 20 cricket league, the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL). An event to announce this partnership was held in Mumbai, attended by Secretary of Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Jay Shah, Vice President BCCI, Rajeev Shukla, and Honorary Treasurer of the BCCI, Ashish Shelar, along with representatives from the Saudi Tourism Authority, including Alhasan Aldabbagh, President of APAC.

Through this partnership, STA aims to tap into a strong fanbase between the two countries, encourage affinity and increase awareness of Saudi as a leading destination for Indian travelers, especially among young people. With more than half of its population below the age of 30, India shares a similar demographic profile with Saudi Arabia, where 58 per cent of the local population is in the same age group.

Partnerships like IPL are a key pillar of Saudi's tourism strategy as they bring fans, athletes and nations together, while sparking curiosity from those that may want to be among the first to visit Saudi as a destination.

until last month we opened 5 new Tasheer VFS offices to increase the accessibility and connectivity for Indian travellers to enter Saudi. For ease of access for the Indian traveller to Saudi, we also offer a 96 hours stopover visa, and 1 night complimentary hotel stay, which makes the Kingdom more accessible than ever. The Stopover Visa is open to all leisure, business and religious travellers travelling on

Saudia and flynas. We are the first to digitally integrate the Stopover visa with an airline booking engine. Furthermore, the visa will be issued in just three minutes."

In order to entice travellers and add to its attractiveness, the Kingdom has upcoming mega-projects such as Red Sea Project, Qiddiya, Neom and 'The Mukaab' development in downtown Riyadh. ♦

Melbourne Convention Bureau debuts in India; keen to tap Incentives segment

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

The Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB) is keen to establish a long-term connection in India with travel trade partners and corporate entities. Marking its first foray in India, an MCB-led delegation visited the cities of Mumbai, Bengaluru and New Delhi to meet with tour operators, OTAs and corporate entities to understand their requirements and redesign the offerings to meet the needs of their Indian clientele. Beautiful Planet is the agency representing MCB in India from June 2022.

Talking to **TravelBiz Monitor**, Joanna Garrie, Director Corporate Meetings, and Incentives, MCB, said, "We have decided to be proactive in India after we saw the opportunity here, especially post-Covid. We have witnessed organic growth from India, especially from the incentives segment. In the past 9 months since June when we started working with Beautiful Planet, we have seen an uptick in demand for incentives travel to Melbourne. Therefore, we decided to step up our activities here. 95% of our business from India is from the corporate incentives segment, with one or two business meetings as



part of their travel plan."

Currently, MCB is focusing on three cities due to direct (from New Delhi) or one-stop flight connections to Melbourne. MCB will be offering insight about their incentive programme to the trade and corporate alike. Garrie said, "We have an incentive programme for corporates to offset the cost of hosting 150 (or above) pax for a minimum stay duration of three nights. This will help bring the cost down of the tour; this is an important part of our messaging here in India. This programme is available for corporate groups globally."

Melbourne is the second largest city in Australia, and it is very easy for a group to be anchored in Melbourne and undertake day trips to wineries, rainforests and watching animals (penguins) in their natural habitat, she said. ♦

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LVG Learning partners with TravelBiz Monitor to offer e-learning programmes globally

TBM Staff | Mumbai

London-based LVG Learning & Networking, the leading Europe-based online B2B e-learning and networking platform for the travel fraternity, has announced its strategic partnership with India's leading e-learning and B2B travel media brand, **TravelBiz Monitor** to create a one-of-its-kind global learning platform with a hybrid model of online and offline learning courses for a large number of international destinations and products across the world. The aim is to make the ROI of destinations visible and measurable by enabling old and new staff in tourism companies to generate more sales with the unique content-driven model curated jointly by the two platforms.

The collective reach and network of the two partners encompasses an unmatched global database of well over 100,000 qualified travel professionals across Europe, the Middle East, India, South-

East Asia and Australia that destinations, products and services can engage with.

Gurgaon-based travel consultancy Auxilia Networks, headed by industry veteran and former India Head of Destination New South Wales, Paramjit Bawa, will manage the engagement programme with the trade for the project on a global basis.

Seda Cetinoglu, CEO, LVG Learning & Networking, said, "We are excited about the growth of our Learning – Marketing – Networking structure, which we established in 2020, and now with a wider infrastructure via our new partnership with TravelBiz Monitor. This project will present our versatile hybrid services for global DMOs, combining innovative solutions, technology, media and a reputable network. Times are changing for everyone and everything, and with this newest product of our collaboration with Sheldon and Paramjit, the results of all your B2B destination promotions will become more visible and measurable. We will share our



Sheldon Santwan with Seda Cetinoglu

success stories with our trade fraternity soon."

Sheldon Santwan, Editor & CEO, TravelBiz Monitor, said, "We are very happy to partner with a global learning platform like LVG. With over a decade of experience in the e-learning and online training space, I am sure we will benefit from each other's strengths. This collaboration will also help TBM and its partners to reach out beyond the

current Indian subcontinent and Middle East to also other parts of the globe, and take all our online trainings to a worldwide audience, if our clients require the same.

This partnership with result-oriented approach will see various interactive education courses offered for agents to enable them to offer more inclusive itineraries and immersive experiences to their clients. ♦

Australian Attractions appoints Auxilia Networks as Sales & Marketing Rep in India

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Australian Attractions Pty. Ltd., Australia's leading specialist inbound tourism consultancy and representation company, having a portfolio of exclusive products and experiences across Australia, has announced the appointment of Auxilia Networks, headed by Indian tourism industry veteran Paramjit Bawa (PB), as their sales and marketing arm for India.

Auxilia will promote marquee Australian products such as BridgeClimb & Pylon, Sydney Zoo in Sydney, Scenic World in the Blue Mountains, Oakvale Wildlife Park and Irukandji Shark & Ray Encounters in Port Stephens, Hunter Valley Resort and Balloon Aloft in the Hunter Valley, among other products, across multiple Australian states.

Ken Corbett, Managing Director, Australian Attractions, said, "We are delighted to be working with PB and Auxilia in the Indian market. India has proved, on the resumption of travel post-Covid, to be the most important Asian market into Australia and to Sydney and Melbourne in particular. India, with its multiple major



PARAMJIT BAWA

FOUNDER & PRINCIPAL, AUXILIA NETWORKS

cities and many excellent travel companies, clearly shows that the value of having inmarket support is critical to our clients' success.

We cannot be more pleased than to team up with PB and gain his extensive knowledge of Indian outbound travel and of Australia as a destination."

Paramjit Bawa, Founder & Principal, Auxilia Networks, said, "We are thrilled and privileged to now add Australian Attractions Pty. Ltd. to our very select list of international clients. They have what I believe is a product portfolio unmatched in its diversity and quality by any company in Australia - pick any product and it is the benchmark in its category. Auxilia will promote this exclusive portfolio to the India travel fraternity through a hybrid mix of online and offline channels, and we can't wait to get started on this exciting project, as we believe the range is ideally suited to Indian outbound for leisure as well as

MICE. This is the perfect time to be planning Australia itineraries that include some or all of these fantastic offerings from Australian Attractions. We look forward to the continuing support of our Indian trade network." ♦

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'Mayfair Elixir aims to scale quicker & establish a greater presence across India'

Mayfair Hotels & Resorts through its arm, Elixir is keen to expand its footprint across India using the management route. **Bjorn Noel DeNiese, Managing Director, Mayfair Elixir** spoke to **Disha Shah Ghosh**, about their new property in Goa, upcoming projects and brand standardisation.

Q Mayfair has been a hotel brand with a geographical footprint largely concentrated in East India. What brought about the change in expanding your presence beyond the region?

Yes, Mayfair has been predominantly focused on the East. However, we have had a presence in Goa for some time now. The Mayfair On Sea at Morjim is a new Mayfair property that comes under Mayfair Elixir - the management arm of Mayfair Hotels & Resorts. Through this arm, the brand intends to scale quicker and establish a greater presence across the country through our management offering. In the West, we have several properties in the pipeline including Alibag and Shirdi.

Q Till now, Mayfair has been an asset heavy company,

what made you take the management route?

With a steady evolution of the industry and a clear focus on brand expansion adding on the management wing was a matter of time. While Mayfair may continue to create and acquire new assets, Elixir will clearly focus on the strategic expansion of the brand in focus areas.

Q Especially for Goa which has a huge presence of branded, independent and boutique properties, what does Mayfair on Sea Morjim bring to the hospitality landscape of the city?

We will be opening with an initial inventory of 96 rooms, and will have all 200+ ready by the year end. Besides this, we are also launching in Purnia, Bihar shortly with 110 rooms. This is an untapped city where we see great potential. Alibaug will also be opening by October in our second offering on the West coast. The Mayfair presence in the West will be further strengthened by the Shirdi property which we're looking at for late 2024.

Q Which are the new revenue generating channels that you're exploring B2B as well as B2C?

We're definitely putting a lot more focus on enhancing the experience for both B2B as well as B2C channels. These include preferred partner programmes for



Mayfair has always been associated with very luxurious and opulent low-rise properties ensconced with greenery. Besides being an amazing beachfront resort, the rooms and facilities at the resort make it perfect for leisure travellers with curated music and poetry events happening regularly. It's a great option for buy outs as well having 35 rooms and a 3 bedroom sea-front villa with an expansive private deck.

Q Tell us about your new hotel openings in the pipeline.

We're all set and excited about the new property being launched in Guwahati, Assam shortly. This is scheduled to open in April, and we are currently taking bookings.

B2B agents and a better website experience along with loyalty for B2C and B2B.

Q How will you ensure standardisation in service across your owned and managed properties?

We, of course, have our SOPs that we've been following within the group. Ensuring that the management is handpicked, familiarised with the Mayfair modus operandi and then introduced into the new properties is something we are doing. All hotel chains have their unique orientation programmes and at Mayfair we do too. Being a new vertical, this will continue to evolve in the days ahead. ♦

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THE ADVENT OF CHATGPT

Every time a new tech surprises us, sceptics have a field day.

I remember the day my dad came home excited- gushing over a new 'electronic typewriter' acquired by his office. He was excited that it automatically jumped to the second line without him having to manually crank the typewriter lever.

Ten to one I suspect very few readers will even know about a lever that had to be cranked to move to the next line while typing. As it is, most would prefer to say 'writing' instead of 'typing' since no one writes anyway.

In the nineties, there were concerns over the dwindling role of travel agents and booking offices. This evolved into worries over booking engines trampling on travel aggregators and finally morphing into exasperation over keeping up with mutating traveller profiles and trends. All that would appear mellifluous compared to the tremors that AI might bring about in the travel business.

Wise (and optimistic) persons will call it 'inevitable' or a smooth transition into the future'. Yet while chatbots, which were merely irritating pop ups on various sites during off hours, just transformed themselves into almost sentient beings last December.

ChatGPT just became the new blue-eyed boy of our travel times (if the blatantly racist assertion in this expression is ignored). Globally customers want a hassle-free experience and seem to respond favourably to artificial intelligence as it makes things apparently simpler. Experts say that for a better user experience, 62% of customers are eager to even give AI bots access to their data.

Indeed ChatGPT can process large amounts of data and possibly help tour providers scale their operations without adding additional staff. Whether this can create a better customer experience remains to be seen.

Many aver that it will help reduce the workload of customer service staff and hence improve customer satisfaction. Now that could be a marketing spiel but the proof lies in the pudding. Sceptics warn that replacing human interaction could only go this far.

Travel destinations are now creating 360-degrees AI tours with augmented reality for potential tourists and it appears as an inviting selling idea.

So should we actually worry that future travellers could simply be content enjoying travelling, plonked on their sofas, popcorn in hand?

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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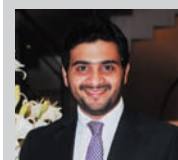
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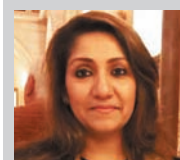
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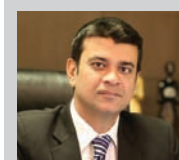
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Visit Gandhi Sagar

The pinnacle of offbeat destinations in 'Heart of Incredible India'

Nature and Adventure lovers can now summon themselves in the Mandsaur District to embrace Asia's first floating festival and explore the unique GandhiSagar Wildlife Sanctuary.



Madhya Pradesh; The 'Heart of Incredible India' is a state of immense untapped tourism potential. The Gandhisagar Dam is one of the 4 major dams which are built around the famous Chambal River which houses one of the most undiscovered Wild Life Sanctuaries of Central India, the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary.

In addition to that, The Gandhi Sagar dam also hosts the newly emerged, and Asia's first floating festival, the Gandhi Sagar floating festival.



Gandhi Sagar Floating Festival

For the lovers of adventure, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board has introduced Asia's first ever floating festival in Mandsaur. A unique and first of its kind floating festival which will have land, air and water-based adventure activities.

The Floating Festival is a great opportunity for nature lovers and adventurers, allowing them to get away from all the noise of cities. The festival includes a floating stage, floating market, boat spa, boat safari and live music. Apart from these, many exciting adventure activities will be organized alongside the Gandhi Sagar reservoir.

• The festival was organized for 5 days from 1st till 5th February 2023

• The tent city for tourists will continue till 30th April 2023

• Adventure activities will continue till 30th July 2023



Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

Gandhi Sagar has a wildlife sanctuary situated on the northern boundary of Mandsaur and Neemuch in Madhya Pradesh. The wildlife sanctuary is spread over an area of more than 300 square kilometres adjoining Rajasthan. The Chambal River passes through the sanctuary dividing it into two parts; The western part, which is in the Neemuch district and eastern part is in the Mandsaur district.

The Sanctuary is open to visit throughout the year except monsoon months, and offers a varied terrain of wooded hills – the forest being dry, mixed and deciduous- and flat grasslands around Gandhi sagar dam submergence, it offers abundant opportunities of sighting a variety of wildlife. The range of tree species found in the Sanctuary are Salai, Kardhai, Dhawda, Tendu, Khair, Palash etc. The predominant species of animals which inhabit the sanctuary are the deer, of which the most easily sighted are the chinkara or Indian Gazelle, Nilgai and Sambar. In addition, the Indian leopard, Langur,

• Bhanpura Museum is located in Bhanpura, about 30.0 km from Gandhi Sagar dam and around 120kms from Mandsaur in north-east direction. The museum depicts the popular art forms of Mandsaur

• Dharmrajeshwar is an ancient Buddhist and Hindu cave temple site of Mandsaur which was established in the 4th-5th Century. Dharmrajeshwar Temple signifies brilliant example of Indian rock-cut architecture.



Dharmrajeshwar Temple

Indian wild dog, Peacock, Otter, and Muggar crocodile are omni present in the forests of central India.



Point of Interest

Hinglaj Fort

Gandhisagar has many places of historical, archaeological and religious importance including Chaurasigarh, Chaturbhujnath temple, Bhadrakaji rock paintings, Narsinghijhar, Hinglajgarh Fort, Taxakeshwar temple etc.

• Chaturbhujnath temple, which is dedicated to Lord Vishnu, is situated around 8 km from GandhiSagar dam site.

• Hinglajgarh or Hinglaj Fort is an ancient fort situated near Navali village of Bhanpura tehsil in the Mandsaur district in Madhya Pradesh. It is a symbol Paramara period and it was established in the 18th century AD.

• Taxakeshwar temple or Takhaji is a place of significant religious and historical importance in Mandsaur

Connectivity

Roadways- Regular buses run to Mandsaur from all the major cities including Neemuch, Ratlam, Ujjain, Indore and Bhopal.

Railways- One can reach Mandsaur very easily as the town has a railway station (Ajmer- Ratlam line and Bhawani Mandi) States like Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Gujrat are also very well connected by train.

Airways- The nearest airports to Mandsaur are in Indore and Udaipur.

For more details, visit : www.gandhisagarfest.com



‘The Indian market is an important and growing source of revenue for the Israeli tourism industry’

We will utilise digital marketing and social media to reach millennials in India and promote Israel as a trendy and exciting destination, says **Sammy Yahia, Director, Tourism, India and Philippines, Israel Ministry of Tourism**, while speaking to **Prasenjit Chakraborty**.

Q India & Israel share close ties. How does the Indian market play an important role for Israel tourism?

India and Israel have a strong relationship, marked by close political and economic ties. India is a growing market for Israeli tourism and plays an important role in the growth of the Israeli tourism industry. Several factors contribute to the significance of the Indian market for Israeli tourism. Firstly, India has a large and growing middle class with increasing disposable incomes, making travel abroad more accessible. Additionally, India has a rich cultural heritage and a deep interest in spiritual and religious tourism, making Israel, with its historic religious sites and cultural attractions, a popular destination for Indian travellers. In recent years, the number of Indian tourists visiting Israel has been growing rapidly, driven by a growing awareness of the country's attractions and the availability of direct flights between the two countries. Overall, the Indian market is an important and growing source of revenue for the Israeli tourism industry, and both countries are working to strengthen their relationship and promote tourism between them.

Q What is your plan to get more millennial tourists from India?

We will utilise digital marketing and social media to reach millennials in India and promote Israel as a trendy and exciting destination.

Platforms such as Instagram and Facebook can be leveraged to showcase the unique experiences and attractions that Israel has to offer to this demographic.

Second is emphasise on adventure and outdoor activities. Millennial travellers are often seeking unique and adventurous experiences, so promoting outdoor activities such as hiking, kayaking, and diving could be a strong selling point for Israel. Besides this, offering affordable and flexible travel packages to millennials will also help a lot. Because, the millennials

often have limited budgets and are looking for flexibility in their travel plans. Offering affordable travel packages with options for customisation could make Israel a more attractive destination for this demographic.

Partnering with local influencers and travel bloggers can help to spread the word about Israel and showcase the country in a positive light. These influencers can create content that appeals to millennials and inspire them to visit.

Israel is rich in cultural and historical heritage, and promoting these attractions can be a powerful draw for millennial travellers who are interested in exploring new cultures and learning about history.

Q Could you tell us about your International Tourism Partnership Programs? Post-Covid what is your plan for the India market?

The international tourism industry has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and many countries and organisations have had to reassess their plans for attracting tourists.

Some of Post COVID-19 strategies that could be implemented to support the recovery of international tourism - implementing strict health and safety measures, such as regular COVID-19 testing and following protocols for social distancing, will be critical to restoring confidence in travel. Second is utilising digital technologies, such as contactless check-in, digital payments, and virtual tours, to enhance the tourist

experience and minimise physical contact. Besides this, encouraging collaboration between government, the private sector, and the tourism industry to create a supportive environment for the growth and recovery of the tourism industry. As travel patterns change, it will be important to understand the new preferences and requirements of tourists, and adjust products and services accordingly, to remain competitive in the market.

Q Israel pulled in a staggering amount of tourists in 2022, totalling a whopping 2.67 million. What is your target for 2023? What will be the contribution of India?

2023 will see more than 4.5 million travellers visiting Israel. From India i believe we will be in the same numbers as 2019 around 75000 travellers.

Q Which traveller segments are your focus areas in India?

Israel offers a variety of adventure activities, such as trekking, rafting, and wildlife safaris, making it an attractive destination for those seeking an adrenaline rush. Apart from this, Israel is home to several luxury spa and wellness resorts, as well as historic palaces and forts that have been converted into luxury hotels, attracting tourists seeking a lavish and rejuvenating experience. Cultural and Heritage Tourism is another segment we are focussing on.

Q How has tourism evolved in Israel in the last three years?

Israel is home to a number of religious sites that are of significant importance to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and religious tourism has been a major contributor to the growth of the tourism industry in the country. In recent years, the luxury tourism sector in Israel has experienced significant growth, with the development of a number of high-end hotels, resorts, and spas, as well as upscale dining and shopping options. Development of Adventure and Eco-Tourism is another segment which is also witnessing growth. The MICE sector has also been a growing segment in Israel. And we are also actively promoting sustainable tourism practices. ♦

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LA Tourism anticipates full-recovery in 2024; expects 110,000 Indian visitors this year

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board President & CEO Adam Burke made his first-ever visit to India last week, after opening a full-fledged office in Mumbai in 2019. Los Angeles is ready to roll out the red for Indian travellers in 2023. 130,000 Indians carpet visited LA in 2019, injecting USD 305 million in visitor spending to the local economy. It is estimated that 110,000 Indian travellers will visit Los Angeles County in 2023, with full recovery to pre-pandemic levels anticipated in 2024.

"As one of the world's fastest-growing markets for tourism, we're proud that Los Angeles Tourism was the first U.S. Destination Marketing Organization to open our own full-time office in India in 2019. We see tremendous opportunities to support the growth of the travel industry in India – particularly given how much our communities have in common," said Burke.

He added, "Beyond the long-standing connection between Bollywood and Hollywood as global leaders for cinema and the creative arts – Angelenos and Indians enjoy a shared love of sport, innovative



L-R: Christopher Heywood, Sr VP Global Communications, LA Tourism with Adam Burke, President & CEO, LA Tourism

cuisine, and spectacular natural beauty. With an exciting range of new activities and attractions, now is the perfect time to visit LA as we celebrate Hollywood's Centennial throughout 2023. We look forward to rolling out the red carpet for our guests from India

and providing unforgettable experiences you can't find anywhere else."

During his visit to Mumbai and Delhi, Burke and the LA Tourism delegation updated stakeholders about new offerings in and around LA and at the same time, gather insights about the changing trends amongst Indian travellers post pandemic. As tourism from India to LA grows, the tourism board also plans to expand its India regional office this year with the addition of new staff.

Burke met with key travel trade stakeholders, industry partners and media to provide information on new tourism offerings in the city, an epicenter of America's tourism & entertainment industry, as well as to discuss the upcoming activities planned for the year.

With several milestone anniversaries, new openings and infrastructure developments, Los Angeles Tourism is referring to 2023 and beyond as LA 2.0. Burke was accompanied by LA Tourism's Chief Marketing Officer Don Skeoch, Senior Vice President, Global Tourism Development Kathryn Smits, Senior Vice President, Global Communications Chris Heywood; and Regional Director of India Seema Kadam. ♦

Goyal appointed chairman of ICC's 'Aviation, Travel & Tourism Committee'

Shayan Mallick | New Delhi

Former IATO President and industry heavyweight Dr. Subhash Goyal has been appointed the Chairman of 'Aviation, Travel & Tourism Committee' of Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC). Goyal was handed over the reign by another industry stalwart, former ICPB (India Convention Promotion Bureau) Vice Chairman and outgoing Chairman of the ICC's 'Aviation, Travel & Tourism Committee' Chander Mansharamani.

Established in 1925, ICC is one of the important forward looking chambers of commerce with offices and membership spanning across the country. The chamber is known for taking up industry



issues and concerns of national importance while coordinating actively with both Central Government in New Delhi and other State Government across India.

ICC is presently led by Mehul Mohanka of Tega Industries

as its President along with Ameya Prabhu representing the Financial Services sector as Senior Vice President and Abhyuday Jindal of Jindal Steels as Vice President.

While accepting the new role, Goyal promised to contribute his

bit to mainstreaming the travel and tourism sector. He said that they are looking at a number of events that they want to organise at places like Delhi, Rajasthan, Kerala and one in Eastern Indian. ♦



‘Our core focus is on private tours for FITs and small/mid sized groups’

Khushboo Shah, Founder & MD, GO2 UK & Europe Travels



away from home” was a gap for Indians travelling to the UK and Europe: in many ways that become the genesis of Go2UK and Europe Travels.

GO2UK & Europe Travels focusses on private tours for FITs and small / mid sized groups (15-20 pax). We specialise in 4/5 star accommodation, one of its kind experiences, private chauffeur driven vehicles and meals. We provide tours in luxury cars like Bentley, Range Rover, Mercedes V class (for 5-7 people), Mercedes sprinters as well as tours in helicopters. Our chauffeurs are licensed and English speaking and can work with the clients to customise their tour based on their likes and dislikes. We can provide

Hindi, Tamil, Arabic speaking drivers as well if required. We cater to all religions and provide all sorts of meals which include Michelin, Vegetarian, Jain and Halal

Q What was your vision behind starting GO2UK & Europe Travels?

A. With a professional background in public relations (PR) and having worked in the travel industry what was clear to me was that there was gap in the market for a destination management company that understood the needs of the Indian traveller, and delivered a customer-centric service model for the luxury segment which broke barriers of language, food and at the same time was cost effective. Having travelled extensively in the UK and Europe and managed tours for high-net worth individuals and private groups from across the world, it became clear to me that the comfort of “being a home

Q How do you think Go2 differentiates itself in the market?

Customer experience is at very centre of our company ethos. Additionally, our core focus is on private tours for FITs and small/mid sized groups (upto 20 pax) with experiences and itineraries which are still untapped. All our suppliers and hotels are hand selected though a vigorous process which includes testing them on their ability to meet the customer experience which sets us apart. Our team is available to our customers all the time on tour and saying ‘no’ is not in their vocabulary!

Q What services does GO2UK & Europe specialise in?

Headquartered out of London,

Q What countries do you specialise in?

We offer tours for the UK and Europe. Popular destinations include England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Switzerland, France, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Scandinavia and Croatia. ♦

“ The ethos of the team at Go2 UK & Europe Travels, resonates with my sensibilities, and is aligned with my body of work in the luxury segment of the B2B platform in India. I am happy to be their marketing partner in India. **Renuka Natu, India Representative, GO2 UK & Europe Travels** ”

Oman Air to expand network with addition of 4 destinations & increase in frequency

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Continuing its ambitious and dynamic strategy of fleet and network expansion, Oman Air, the national airline of the Sultanate of Oman, has unveiled its summer schedule for 2023. The schedule specifies significant frequency increases on existing routes, and the addition of four destinations—representing a 60% increase in the number of flights from its hub in Muscat compared to the previous year. This will provide the market with approximately 60,000 more seats weekly across its network and provide greater convenience and connectivity for Oman Air guests.

The four additional destinations being introduced for the summer schedule are: four-weekly flights from Muscat to Chittagong (from March end); four-weekly flights from Muscat to Maldives (from June end); 12-weekly flights from Muscat to Lucknow, and five-weekly flights between Muscat and Thiruvananthapuram (from August).

The expanded network and schedule for 2023 demonstrates Oman Air's ongoing efforts to contribute to the economy of the Sultanate of Oman while also exhibiting its drive for increased global reach through its award-winning services and products, along

with its signature Omani hospitality both in the air and on the ground. ♦

Due to popular demand, the new summer schedule will see frequency increases to the following regions:

Far East	Indian Sub-Continent	Europe	GCC
Daily flights to Phuket (from March end, wide-body)	Double-daily flights to Mumbai (from March end, wide-body)	Daily flights to Moscow (from March end, wide-body)	Double-daily flights to Kuwait (from June)
Ten-weekly flights to Kuala Lumpur (from June)	Double-daily flights to Chennai (from March end)	Six-weekly flights to Paris (from March end)	Five-daily flights to Salalah (from July)
	Double-daily flights to Cochin (from March end)	Daily flights to Trabzon (from March end)	
	Double-daily flights to Kozhikode (from March end)	Double-daily flights to Istanbul (from June)	
	Double-daily flights to Hyderabad (from March end)		
	Daily flights to Dhaka (from March end, wide-body)		

NEWS ROUND UP



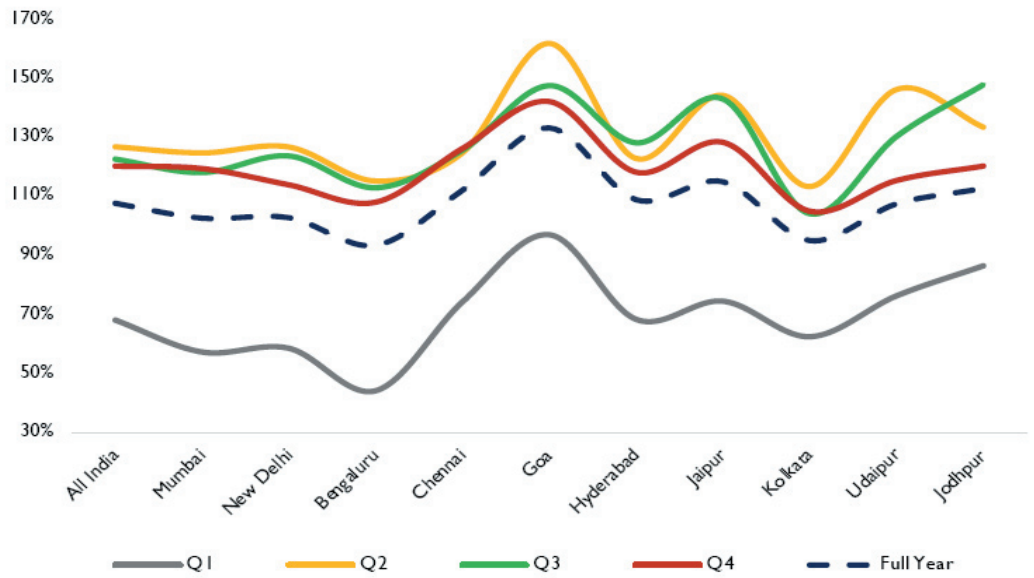


Overall hotel performance has been phenomenal in 2022: India Hotel Market Review



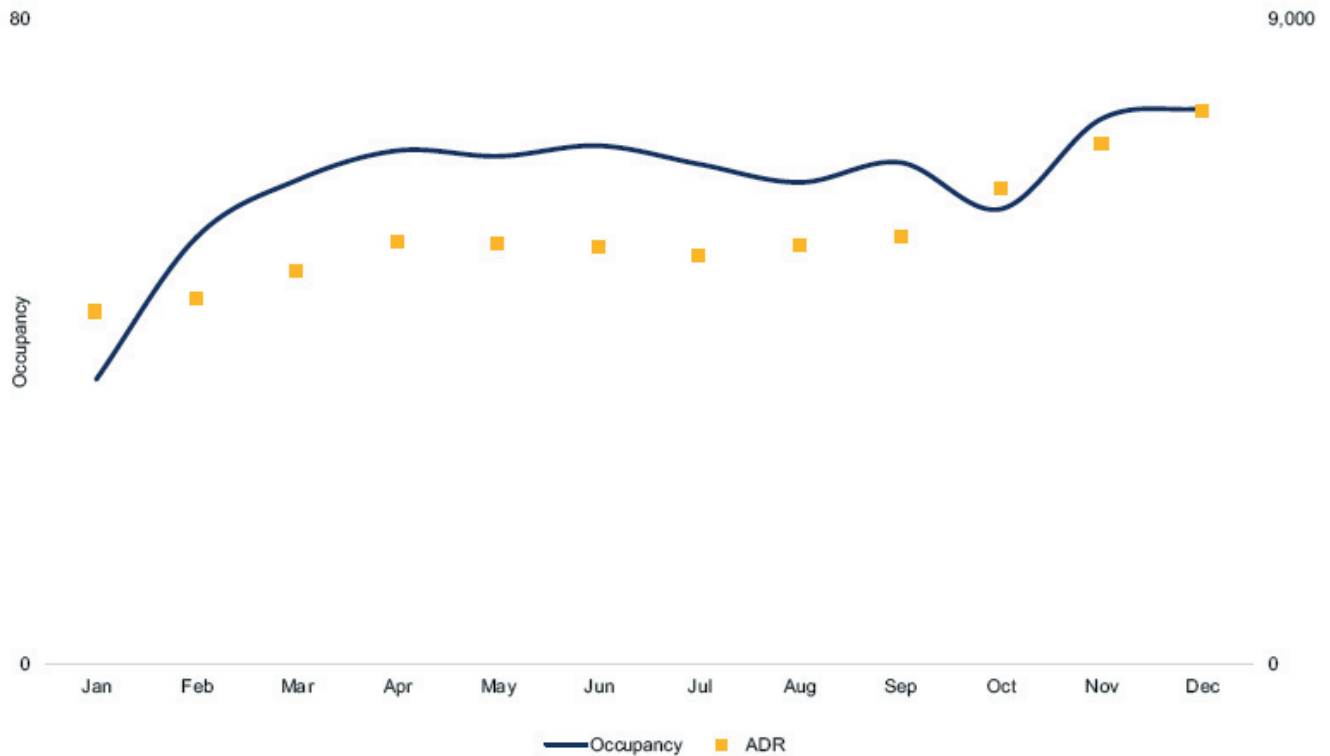
Horwath HTL, a leading global hospitality consultant, in its year-end report called 2022 a dream year for the Indian hospitality industry. The report said that the overall hotel performance has been phenomenal, despite Occupancy not breaking the pre-pandemic level the RevPar is the same as pre-pandemic. It also added that The drag is due to budget to economy hotels not performing well and cities where the market has IT dominance. Leisure hotels demonstrated they can perform very well as technically there is no cap to the ADR.

Same Store RevPAR Recovery – By Quarter



Source: STR

Overall Monthly Performance - India



Source: STR

The report also mentioned about Key performance points:

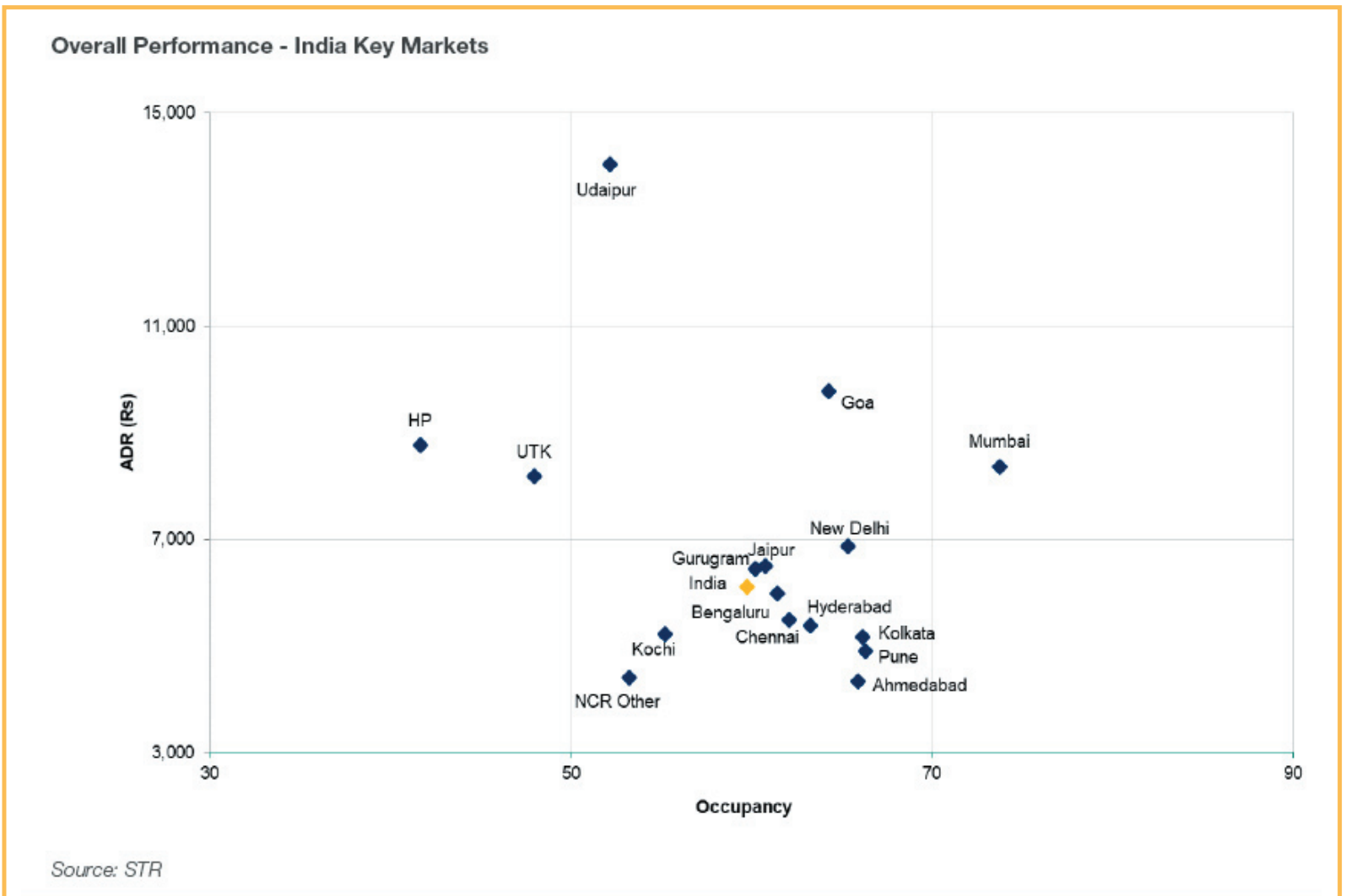
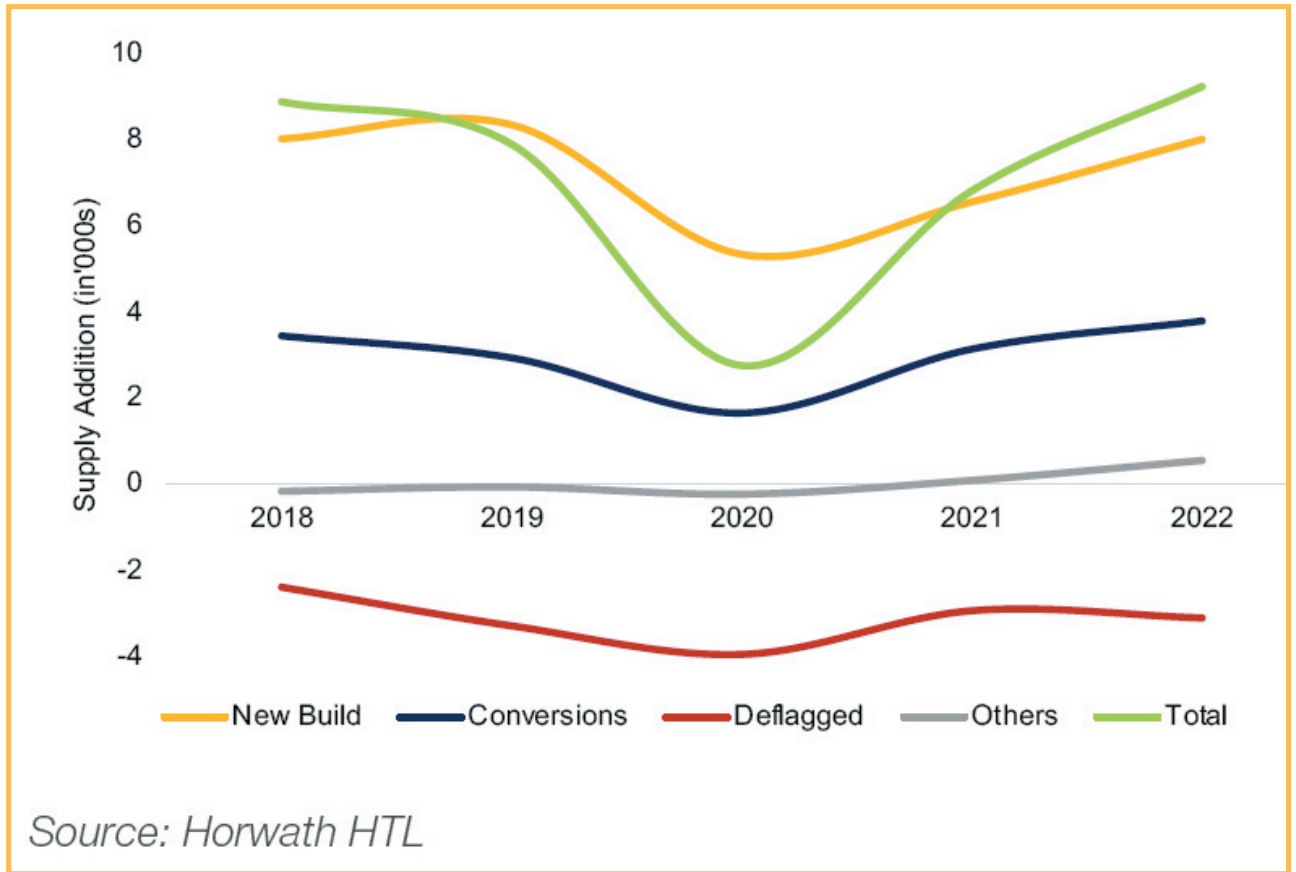
All India Occupancy at 59.8% with an ADR of INR 6.1k; near complete RevPAR recovery on all India level compared to 2019; The performance is even better in the upscale to luxury segment.

Leisure destinations leading in terms of ADRs, much higher compared to business cities, although seasonality prevails; overall RevPAR is led by Udaipur, Goa and Mumbai in that order. ADR for Udaipur was 13,000, followed by Goa at around 10,000 and Mumbai at around 9,000

Five markets – Mumbai, Delhi, Goa, Udaipur, and Jaipur, having 27% supply share have delivered 37% of room revenue earned in India in 2022

Rise in wedding spending and social events, while MICE remained soft during the year, it is expected to grow in 2023.

Promising Markets: North East, Kevadia (Statue of Unity), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh).. ♦



Rapid revival in FTAs, India will become a major tourist destination with government's development policy: Reddy

TBM Staff | Mumbai

According to Union Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy, one crore (10 million) foreign tourists are expected to visit India this year, reaching almost the pre-Covid peak tourists arrival of 2019 when little over 1 crore 9 lakhs (10.9million) foreign tourists visited the country. India welcomed around 61 lakhs (6.1 million) FTAs in 2022. Reddy was addressing the press on key achievements of the Ministry of Tourism during the last few years, and future strategy for promoting tourism in the country.

The Union Tourism Minister highlighted the approach followed by the Government in promoting and developing tourism sector in the country with focus on connectivity, civic infrastructure, tourist amenities and soft infrastructure. He said that the country is taking a new flight of development with the mantra of "Vikas Bhi aur Virasat bhi" under the guidance of the

Prime Minister.

Citing example of the phenomenal spurt in domestic tourism, Reddy pointed that in 2022, J&K received a staggering 1.84 crore tourists breaking all previous records since Independence. He also said that India is seeing a rapid revival of FTAs post Covid, and India will soon become a major destination of the world with the Whole of Government approach policy.

The Union Tourism Minister also announced initiatives for tourism promotion in the country in the presence of MoS, Tourism Ajay Bhatt. He launched a unique initiative 'Best Tourism Village Competition Portal' and Rural Tourism Portal. The Global Tourism Investor Summit 2023 portal was also launched on the occasion.

The MoT is organising 1st Global Tourism Investors' Summit from May 17-19, 2023 to showcase investible projects and opportunities in tourism and hospitality sector in India to domestic and international



investors. This is being organised in the backdrop of India's G20 Presidency this year.

India is also observing 'Visit India Year 2023' on which a presentation was made. In order to develop tourism in mission mode and to accelerate India's rise towards world leadership in tourism sector, the MoT has launched Visit India Year 2023. It is a unique, collective movement that invites the world to explore India during 2023 – a historical year of India's G20 presidency as well as grand celebrations

of India@75 Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.

Reddy also shared information on various developments under PRASHAD, Swadesh Darshan and other Centrally-funded schemes for tourism development as well as MoT's engagement with other ministries such as Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways; Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways; Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, among others, for the development of tourism that comes under other ministries ambit.

Furthermore, keeping in view the role of youth in all spheres of nation building, MoT has launched a programme for Yuva Tourism Club across the country to engage youth with tourism. It will provide youth with better understanding of their culture, heritage and tourism by engaging in a variety of activities. It will also create awareness about the career opportunities in the field of tourism and hospitality. ♦

Connaissance De Ceylan, Travel Design by CDC, and Thema Collection appoint Anjum Lokhandwala as India Representative

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Connaissance De Ceylan, Travel Design by CDC and Thema Collection, two destination management companies in the travel industry and a leading hospitality brand in Sri Lanka, have announced their collaboration with Ark Travels Group and the appointment of Anjum Lokhandwala as their representative in India.

The signing of the agreement took place at the recently concluded SATTE event in Delhi, India. This strategic partnership aims to increase the visibility and appeal of Sri Lanka as a preferred tourist destination in India.

Anjum Lokhandwala, Director of Ark Travels Group, has been tasked with marketing the products and services of Connaissance De Ceylan, Travel Design by CDC and Thema Collection in India. She brings with her a wealth of experience and expertise in the travel and tourism industry

and is excited about the new partnership. "Ark Travels Group is extremely elated with their

it a success story for both companies," said .Anjum.



association with such a prestigious brand and looks forward to servicing them and making

"We are confident that this collaboration will help us to promote and better serve the booming Indian market and further strengthen our position as leading destination management companies/hospitality brand in Sri Lanka," said Wickramasinghe, Chairman of Connaissance De Ceylan, Travel Design by CDC and Thema Collection.

The partnership with Ark Travel Group and the appointment of Anjum Lokhandwala is a significant step for Connaissance De Ceylan, Travel Design by CDC and Thema Collection in expanding their reach and tapping into the growing Indian tourism market. The companies are optimistic that this collaboration will bring mutual benefits and look forward to a successful partnership. ♦

The National Museum of Qatar: Depicting the country's history and progress through centuries

The museum houses 11 galleries through which visitors can witness the changing fortunes of this peninsular nation. Each gallery offers perspective, and a multi-sensory experience.



Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

The National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) is dedicated to the history of Qatar. Symbolically, its architecture evokes the desert, its silent and eternal dimension, but also the spirit of modernity and daring that have come along and shaken up what seemed unshakeable.

A visit to the National Museum, one will find gigantic flying saucers. Designed as a desert rose, the museum structure is pleasing to the eye. Besides the museum, the building itself is an architectural marvel. And also reflects meticulous planning on the design front. The entire journey (inside the museum) is immersive and at the same time experiential which tells the story of Qatar and its people from earliest times to today. Visiting the museum one will easily understand the peninsula's natural history, its rich heritage and culture.

Designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel, the National Museum of Qatar draws inspiration from and recreates the desert rose, a naturally occurring mineral crystal formations occurring solely in arid coastal regions. The desert rose is a natural architectural structure, created through the

interaction of wind, sea spray and sand over millennia.

Built around Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al-Thani's original palace, and the seat of government for 25 years, the National Museum of Qatar gives voice to Qatar's heritage whilst celebrating its future. It spans across a whopping 430,500 square feet and offers a visual tour of Qatar's early

- Spans 430,500 square feet
- Houses 11 galleries
- Have permanent and temporary galleries
- A 220-seat auditorium
- Separate facilities for school groups and VIPs
- Houses the earl carpet of Baroda

civilization and the formation of its cities. NMoQ charts the country's history and progress through the centuries. Exhibitions combine historic objects and contemporary influences, narrating a story and impact of the rapid change.

It is home to a multitude of archaeological and heritage objects, manuscripts, photographs, jewellery, and costumes. These

objects bring to life the story not only of Qatar, but also the region. Anchoring the collection is the pearl carpet of Baroda, commissioned by the Maharajah of Baroda, India in 1865. It comprises over 1.5 million pearls, as well as diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and sapphires set in gold and woven onto a base of silk and fine deer hide and illustrates how widely used gemstones were in the region.

The museum houses 11 galleries through which visitors can witness the changing fortunes of this peninsular nation. Each gallery offers perspective, and a multi-sensory experience. These are auditory through sound, such as music and oral histories, visual, through film and archival images, olfactory, with aromas evoking particular times and places. The museum complex includes permanent and temporary galleries, a 220-seat auditorium, two cafés, a restaurant, a gift shop, separate facilities for school groups and VIPs, heritage research centres, conservation laboratories and museum collection storage. No wonder, it also has support facilities like toilets for visitors and staff, baby-change facilities, prayer rooms, support-staff offices etc.

To be more candid, it's an engaging journey—every point of contact is unique, so one cannot anticipate what he or she will encounter next; the path contracts into narrow canyons and then bursts into expansive rooms, carrying everyone along in its current. The museum attempts to communicate the essence of a culture through archaeological finds, animal models, and cultural artifacts.

The National Museum is dedicated to the history of Qatar. Symbolically, its architecture evokes the desert, its silent and eternal dimension, but also the spirit of modernity and daring that have come along and shaken up what seemed unshakeable.

The NMoQ is easily accessible via car or a taxi (Uber is widely used, alternatively Karwa or Careem). The distance from Hamad International Airport is approximately 15 minutes. The nearest metro station is the National Museum, Gold line. ♦

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Good Services may be satisfying... ...however, it may not necessarily be a Good Experience!

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

I come across many passionate service providers in tourism and hospitality who work extra hard to create superior experiences for their patrons. They improvise their services and offer, believing they are creating an exhilarating experience. However, good services do not necessarily translate into a better guest experience.

Experience and receiving good services are related but distinct concepts in tourism. While good service is undoubtedly important, a good experience goes beyond just the quality of the service itself and encompasses the customer's overall interactions and feelings throughout the entire process.

You often visit a retail store. It might have friendly and helpful staff, but if the products are difficult to find, the layout is confusing, or the checkout process is slow and cumbersome, it could negatively impact the overall experience. A good experience for customers is one in which they are treated with respect, feel valued and involved, and where their needs and preferences are taken into account. It takes into account not only the quality of the service rendered but also the ambience of the setting, the accessibility of the site, and the convenience of the entire process.

Getting excellent services include factors like the cleanliness of the hotel room, the punctuality of the transportation, the quality of the food at restaurants, the courtesy of the staff, etc. For instance, you can say that you received good services if you stay at a hotel and the personnel is attentive, the room is tidy and comfy, and the food is delicious. On the other hand, experience is a broader concept that includes a wider spectrum of components, including emotions, perceptions, memories, and interactions with the environment, that create an overall impression or emotion. Experience is the summation of all the different elements of a journey that have an emotional impact on the traveller, such as the scenic beauty of the area, the thrill of the activities, the sense of adventure, the cultural diversity, etc.

For example, a restaurant might supply high-quality food and beverages and offer prompt, attentive service from the

waitstaff to provide exceptional service. However, if the ambience is unwelcoming, the furnishings are unpleasant, or the noise level is excessive, it may ruin the overall experience and make the customer unhappy. In another case, a tourist may receive excellent service from their hotel, tour guide, and other service providers while visiting a cultural marvel like the Taj Mahal, but the experience will be impacted by the Taj's breathtaking grandeur and the feeling of awe and delight it evokes in the visitor.

While providing excellent service is crucial to a positive customer experience, it is only one part of the picture. A comprehensive strategy that considers all facets of the customer's connection with the brand is necessary for a positive experience. Experience includes the entire customer journey, from first being aware of a brand to experiencing it after making a purchase. A great customer experience considers the feelings, impressions, and overall opinion that the customer has of the brand in addition to the goods or services offered. Beyond the quality of the goods and services, some other elements that influence a positive customer experience are as follows:

Convenience and usability: Customers value convenience and usability when interacting with a brand. This can involve elements like user-friendly websites, simple mobile applications, quick and effective delivery, and attentive customer care.

Personalisation: Consumers value individualised interactions that are catered to their unique requirements and interests. This can include tailored goods or service offerings, targeted marketing messaging, and personalised recommendation systems.

Empathy and understanding: Consumers value brands that show they are sensitive to their demands and are cognizant of their difficulties. This can be shown by providing attentive customer service, fixing problems quickly, and being prepared to go above and beyond to satisfy the consumer's needs.

Brand image and values: Consumers often look for brands that share their beliefs and values. A great customer experience



Dr Nimit Chowdhary is a Professor at the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Jamia Millia Islamia. He has more than 29 years of 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 authored 20 books and more than 200 academic papers and chapters. He has travelled extensively to around 40 countries and almost all states within the country.

can be enhanced by a strong brand image and reputation, which also fosters brand loyalty and affinities.

Receiving good services is a necessary but insufficient condition for a great customer experience. A great customer experience goes beyond the quality of goods and services provided. ♦

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



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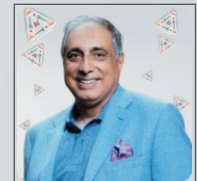
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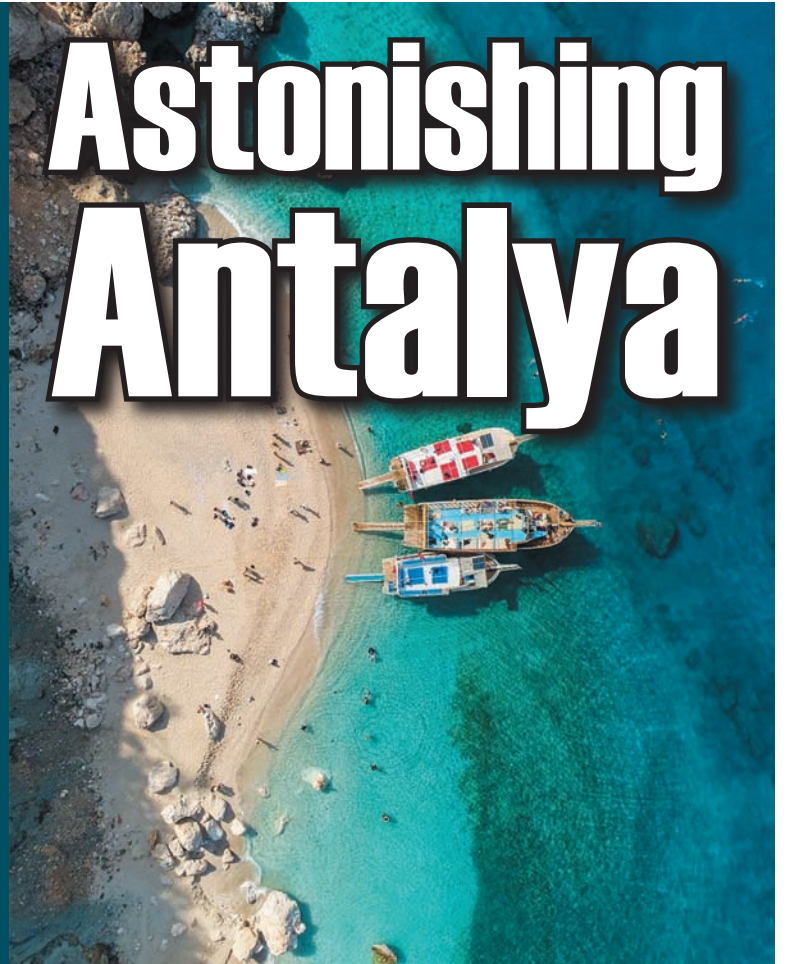
Asmita Mukherjee | Turkiye

Turkiye has always been a popular destination among Indian tourists due to the ease of visa processing, direct connectivity, ancient silk route connection, and similarity between the languages and beverages consumed, be it chai/Turkish tea. The country has reported a surge in the number of Indian tourists for different segments such as Foreign Independent Travel (FIT), leisure and MICE. Turkiye's tourism board said in a recent statement that among the 51.4 million international tourists received by the country in 2022, 2.32 million were Indian tourists.

To deepen the relationship with Indian tourists, especially for the MICE segment, TravelBiz Monitor was recently invited by the Turkiye tourism board for a 6-day familiarisation tour to the country which focused on two cities, Antalya and Istanbul.

Our journey to Antalya started on February 18 on a comfortable business class flight of Turkish Airlines from Mumbai to Istanbul which took 7 hr 10 mins. On reaching Istanbul we rested a bit at the comfortable plush business lounge and got introduced to tons of mouth-watering Turkish delicacies along with Turkish tea. After an hour or so, we resumed our journey to beautiful Antalya. From Istanbul by flight, it took us around 1 hr 20 minutes to reach our destination.

Astonishing Antalya



First Encounter

The breezy sunny evening of Antalya welcomed us with its full grace. Antalya is truly an all-season destination which amalgamates sun, sea, and ancient history with nature. The destination is well connected



via airports and boasts of excellent public transport infrastructure which includes buses, railways, and taxis, increasing the convenience factor for locals as well as for tourists. To its visitors, Antalya offers a 640-kilometre stretch of Mediterranean coastline in the backdrop of the Taurus

Mountains. Our stay was at the Hotel Gloria Golf Resort which is situated in Belek – a resort town on the Turkish Riviera. The way to the hotel was very scenic, with the road revolving around the snow-capped Taurus Mountains, and going past miles of orange orchards. We learnt that Antalya is known for growing its own consumable fruits such as apples, pears, plums, quince, peach, apricot, grapes, tangerine, lemon, and grapefruit.

Hotels

Global markets is an area of focus for Antalya and the destination attracts a lot of foreign investment as well. Most hotels in Antalya have the capacity to cater for medium to very large groups. The 'all-inclusive' system available in Antalya is one of the many Unique Selling Points of the destination, which makes it a budget-friendly destination for MICE organisers as well as for FITs. The city boasts of large-scale conference facilities, with lots of experience in organising sports events and is also known for its luxurious Golf resorts. As Antalya offers unique seafront views in the backdrop of the majestic Taurus Mountain, the destination is surely the right

choice to organise a team conference or an event. During our short stay in Antalya, we visited a few hotels and convention centres to understand their capacity and attractiveness from an Indian business or leisure tourist perspective.

Gloria Hotels and Resorts

Gloria is one of the biggest hotel brands in Antalya located in Belek. The brand has three hotels under its umbrella such as Gloria Golf Resort, which consists of 515 well-appointed rooms; Gloria Serenity Resort – which boasts 369 rooms; and Gloria Verde Resort which has 293 well-appointed rooms. The brand also has a sports arena named Gloria Sports Arena which is a modern sports complex with 100 rooms, 2250 m2 indoor area, outdoor and aquatic sports facilities and is the largest sports arena in Turkey.



NEST Congress and Exhibition Centre

Nest is located in the heart of Belek, 32 km from the airport and 45 km from the city centre. With a seating capacity of 10,000 people in the main hall, NEST offers Turkey's largest capacity in a single hall. It hosts a 5,000 square metre ground floor comprising 24 meeting halls with 5-metre ceiling heights, in addition to the airy Main Hall, featuring 10-metre-high ceilings, which can be divided into five sections.



Regnum Carya Hotel

Regnum Carya is a five-star luxury all-inclusive Golf & Spa Resort having a total of 612 rooms. The hotel added a



feather to its cap when it hosted the G-20 World Summit in November 2015. It boasts of a first-class 7500 square-meter convention centre with a private entrance, a 2100 square-meter column-free ballroom and 13 meeting halls which receive natural light.

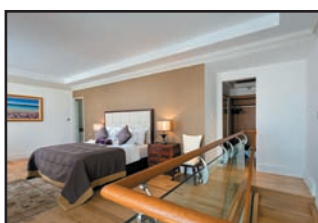
Land of Legends

The Land of Legends is an amalgamation of a huge entertainment/theme park, luxury stay, shopping experience and unmatched dining experience. The Kingdom Hotel located at the Land of Legends has 401 rooms, a fitness room, Turkish Hammam, a swimming pool, Eterna Restaurant, Nyssa Bar, and The Legends Pub.



Titanic Mardan Palace

Titanic Mardan Palace is an all-inclusive hotel located at Kundu in Antalya. It offers 546 rooms and as many as 19 meeting rooms which can accommodate up to 2,720 people. This palatial resort features one of the largest outdoor pools in Europe and 8 à la carte restaurants.



Hotel Ruin Adalia

The Hotel Ruin Adalia is located near Mermerli Beach in the old city known as Kaleiçi. The adult-only hotel is formed by the meeting of five separate Ottoman houses belonging to the 19th century. The hotel has a museum in the underground. Traces of the street and street textures of the city's historical process from the Roman Period to the Ottoman Period, walls of religious and civil architectural structures, architectural blocks, various floor coverings, workshops, water and sewerage systems are revealed in a complex order. Beneath the hotel site is now the largest part of the ancient city that has ever been excavated. The hotel offers 26 well-appointed rooms.



Hadrian's Gate of Antalya

Hadrian's Gate (Three Gates) was built as the main gate of Antalya during the reign of the Roman Emperor Hadrian (117-138 BC). The gate today stands in its old glory and is one of the best-preserved historic structures in Antalya.

Old Town (Kaleiçi)

Kaleiçi, the old city centre of Antalya, combines the aesthetics of old and new. In the heart of Antalya, Kaleiçi is one of the most frequently visited areas of the city with its historic buildings, entertainment facilities, hotels, restaurants and bars.

F&B



Turkish cuisine has a lot of similarities with Indian food from kebab, pilaf to halva. What can be witnessed is that all the restaurants serve very balanced meals. Even if someone orders a lot of non-vegetarian food, the meal will be accompanied by an equal quantity of vegetables to balance it.

During our stay, we had our meals in some of the beautiful restaurants of Antalya which need special mention such as Hotel Harem A'la Carte at the Gloria Golf Resort, Piazzetta Italiana - serving authentic Italian fare located at the Land of Legends, Bosphorus Restaurant - a fusion of Eastern and Western cuisines located at the Titanic Mardan palace, and Ruin Adalia Restaurant for its authentic Turkish cuisine. Our first dinner at Antalya was scheduled at the Hotel Harem A'la Carte at the Gloria Golf Resort. The décor of the restaurant was posh and at the same time, it gave an authentic Turkish-style vibe with the food undoubtedly truly authentic Turkish. The à la carte menu had many options such as Mezze Platter as a starter, Lamb Shank, Sea bass, and Butter Chicken. Along with the authentic Turkish fare, the restaurant also offers some Chinese delicacies such as Crispy Fried Duck, Sweet and Sour Chicken along with Egg Fried Rice. The dinner not only filled our stomach but filled our hearts with the unmatched hospitality of the server.

The next day our lunch was set at the Piazzetta Italiana located at The Land of Legends, which served some of the best authentic Italian fare we ever had. Our servings started with Eggplant Parmesan along with healthy Salads, Pizzas, Grilled Italian Chicken, and Seared Sea bass, and ended with Italian Panna cotta and Mousse.

For dinner that day, we headed to the Bosphorus Restaurant located at the magnificent Titanic Mardan palace. The buffet dinner made it very difficult for us to choose from the numerous mouth-watering options at the counter. However, what surprised us was the presence of our humble Dal and Chawal among the options. For dessert, we chose the traditional Turkish dessert baklava which was heavenly. After the satisfying meal, we ended the meal with Turkish Chai.

The last meal of our Antalya trip was scheduled at the Ruin Adalia Restaurant located among the historic lanes of Kaleiçi. The restaurant was situated in an Ottoman mansion of the 19th and 20th century periods, which made us feel like we were dining in a heritage yet boutique property. The appetising meal started off with freshly baked bread served alongside authentic dips such as Humus, Muhammara, and Acili Ezme. In the main course, we had Turkish Chicken Breast loaded with veggies such as Cauliflower, Broccoli, Petite Potatoes, Aubergine and Red Pepper. We ended the lunch with Semolina Halva which was made just the way we have in India. ♦

asmita.mukherjee@safronsynergies.in

Sightseeing



Aspendos Ancient City

Situated in the town of Serik in Antalya province, Aspendos impresses visitors with its elegant amphitheatre and other ancient remains. The theatre of Aspendos is one of the most magnificent and well-preserved buildings in the world built by the Romans. It also organises a lot of cultural events.



‘Our aim is to automate almost all possible functions for a hotel partner and minimise manual data entry’

Bingoforge, a home-grown technology company which is into hospitality sales automation solutions started its operations in 2017. After achieving its goals of maximising revenue and profitability in the domestic market under the able leadership of **Zubin Bilimoria, the Founder MD & CEO of Bingoforge**, the company is now planning to focus on foreign markets such as the U.A.E, Turkey, South East Asia, Europe and Australia.

Asmita Mukherjee spoke with Bilimoria to know about the future plans of the brand.

Q What was the reason behind launching Bingoforge? How has the journey been?

Bingoforge was established in 2017 with the sole purpose of solving all challenges faced in a sales operation setup. Sales Operation is the most important and critical function in any business. The journey has been one of learning and evolution of the product. This would not have been possible if I did not have the eagerness and open mind to listen to my counterparts in the industry. Every business has its ups and downs but understanding your customer's pain points and customising it to their needs is what builds the relationship.

Q Kindly brief us about your products.

myhotelCRM (MHC) is our flagship solution, a Hotel Sales CRM solution designed for the Hospitality Vertical. MHC



“ Being a cloud-based solution, we really do not restrict ourselves from selling and servicing customers in other parts of the world. However, this year we are consciously focusing on international markets like. U.A.E, Turkey, South East Asia, Europe and Australia. ”

is available in three solution categories, namely LITE, Business and Enterprise. is that our CRM solution is built around our hotel partners' requirements. We understand

Q What are the new products that you are planning to launch keeping the tremendous growth in the hospitality industry in mind?

The Hotel CRM space is an area which has enormous potential and growth in terms of the scalability of the solution. Our new product lines moving forward shall be a Complete Travel Agency CRM Solution and an Airline CRM Solution.

Q How is Bingoforge enabling better business for its Indian clients?

Our most important differentiator

our hotel partners' challenges and enable better business acumen. myhotelCRM is built around hotel operation and sales processes and we offer the flexibility of customisation to our hotel partner's requirements and processes.

Q How can CRM minimise manual work of hotels?

There are many options in the CRM that enable us to first capture customers' buying habits and our new AI is being built to allow a salesperson to push offers and the right product to the right set of customers. The aim is to automate almost all possible functions for a hotel partner and minimize manual data entry.

Q How important is CRM as a tool for marketing?

One of the most important functions of CRM is to maximise marketing opportunities. There are new tools being introduced every day to help our hotel partners innovate and create marketing campaigns. The strongest function of the myhotelCRM solution is that you can make your own custom reports and dashboard modules. There are lots more features to help grow their business and spend more time with customers than on piles of paperwork.

Q Which geographies are you serving right now and planning to expand into? What are your investment plans for 2023?

Being a cloud-based solution, we really do not restrict ourselves from selling and servicing customers in other parts of the world. However, this year we are consciously focusing on international markets like. U.A.E, Turkey, South East Asia, Europe and Australia.

Q What is your customer mix?

We service a mix of customers from Chains to Independent Hotels & Resorts. All our clients are important to us, and we would like to keep them all at the same level of importance. ♦

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IIPT announces winners of 6th 'Celebrating Her' awards at ITB Berlin on Women's Day

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The International Institute for Peace (IIPT) has announced the award winners of its 6th global Celebrating Her awards. The event was held in ITB's hybrid studio which facilitates simultaneous physical and virtual participation, considerably multiplying the audience numbers.

Instituted as a joint venture between IIPT India and ITB Berlin in 2016, the Awards return after a two-year gap on account of the COVID-19 pandemic. **TravelBiz Monitor** has been a long-term Knowledge Partner of IIPT for all their activities. **TravelBiz Monitor** strongly advocates gender equality, role and contribution of women in the travel industry, and supports sustainable tourism. Over 20 outstanding women from across the world have been awarded over the years, and the Celebrating Her awards have become a marquee event at ITB Berlin, the greatest travel and trade show in the world.

Ajay Prakash, Founding President of IIPT India and global President Elect of IIPT, who joined the event remotely from India,

said, "The IIPT Global Awards, Celebrating Her are intended to acknowledge and felicitate exceptional women in the fields of tourism; individuals with a clarity of vision and mission. Individuals who have demonstrated strong personal values and determination to make the difference are worthy of recognition and reward. They need to be felicitated and held up as role models for the younger generation to follow." He extolled the success of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign which he said has transformed the lives of young women even in remote villages, and said that the Celebrating Her awards are aimed at making women agents of change and drivers of growth, not mere beneficiaries of concessions.

The event was conducted on site by Daniela Wagner, Business Development Director of Jacobs Media Group and a Celebrating Her award winner from 2018, and Rika Jean-Francois, CSR Commissioner for ITB Berlin. Daniela explained the background and the rationale of the Awards and invited Rika for her welcome address. Expressing her satisfaction at the physical resumption of the Awards, Rika Jean-Francois said,

WINNERS

Carol Hay – for Tourism Resilience
After heading the Antigua and Barbuda's UK and European Marketing division, followed by 11 years with the Caribbean Tourism Organisation as Director for UK and Europe, since 2020, Carol has headed her own tourism development agency McKenzie Gayle Limited which advises the Caribbean Tourism Organisation Chapter UK and Europe. Carol's passion for the tourism industry has spanned over three decades, she continues to make a solid impact through her consulting, training, coaching and mentoring, whilst raising her voice for her personal mission of diversity, equity and inclusion in the industry.



Rupinder Brar – for Tourism Leadership
As Additional Director General in the Ministry of Tourism, Rupinder Worked in the Ministry of Tourism in the precarious time for tourism and hospitality when COVID completely halted travel and tourism. The need was to devise out-of-box strategies to keep the industry alive. The innovative Dekho Apna Desh campaign which Rupinder headed, played a huge role in keeping the domestic industry afloat. She collaborated with the Ministry of Home in enabling a pan-India framework for increased safety in tourist spaces and was awarded the Director General Police's Commendation disc for developing a plan for the same. She also spearheaded the pan-India employment generation digital training plan for tourist guides



Iaia Pedemonte – for Responsible Tourism
Iaia is a freelance journalist, the founder of the Gender Responsible Tourism Association (GRT), a team of communication, responsible tourism and gender experts promoting women's empowerment in tourism. Iaia has undertaken assignments for international organisations, including the UNDP for a sustainable ecotourism project in Yemen. She has reported worldwide about women's empowerment and tourism development in destinations. As a communications and information group, GRT publishes information about the best travel destinations where women are the protagonists. It is also the antenna of a global network, receiving, transmitting and linking up with initiatives, individual women, enterprises, associations and institutions.





"The IIPT awards are an integral part of ITB Berlin. They stand for inclusivity and are an important step in the realization of the United Nation's SDG 5 – Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. We are happy to continue our partnership with IIPT and to see the awards return in a physical form."

In a written statement, Louis D'Amore, Founding President of IIPT, thanked Rika and ITB Berlin for their continued support, lauded the achievements of IIPT India, led

by Kiran Yadav and Ajay Prakash. and stated that he would be handing over the baton of global Presidency to Prakash before the end of the year.

Noredah Othman, CEO of the Sabah Tourism Board, recounted her journey of 32 years in the tourism industry from her start as a receptionist.

The awards were preceded by a lively discussion on Gender and Tourism for Peace which was moderated by Daniela Wagner. The panel comprised Debbie Flynn, Managing partner at FINN Partners, Helena Egan CSO Adventure Tech SA and former Director of TripAdvisor and Rika Jean-Francois.

In their acceptance speeches the winners thanked IIPT and ITB Berlin for the honour and vowed to continue their efforts to spread awareness of Tourism as a powerful tool for Peace. ♦

How travel companies are paving new pathways to reach customers through embedded protection?

By Barney Pierce SVP Strategic Partnerships, APAC, Cover Genius

When booking their next trip, travellers value security and a 'safety net' for their purchases more than ever before. Travel protection has historically resulted in poor customer experiences, especially when obtained from traditional or third-party sources, like credit cards. In order to pave new pathways to reach customers, protection must be tailored, flexible and delivered conveniently. Embedded solutions offered within the

purchase journey are an innovative way for travel companies to deliver customer-centric experiences and create revenue opportunities.

despite purchasing travel insurance for pandemic protection. By working with an embedded insurtech, travel companies can bridge this gap. For example, some of the worlds largest travel companies and airlines offer customers an extra layer of flexibility with 'Cancel For Any Reason' (CFAR) protection embedded within the booking path. CFAR protection gives customers refunds for cancellations up to a fixed period of time, backed by instant claim payments. Travellers can enjoy peace of mind knowing their trip is protected no matter the circumstance, enhancing the customer experience and giving them more reason to book.

Insurtechs also leverage real-time data to create timely solutions that meet customers' unique needs. With delays and cancellations becoming more commonplace, the right protection can make the difference between a minor inconvenience or a ruined trip for a traveler. Insurtechs can leverage real-time flight data to identify delays and cancellations and enable travel brands to offer customers automatic compensation in any form including cash, lounge passes and flight credits. With customized solutions that actually meet their customers' needs, travel brands boost satisfaction and differentiate themselves from competitors who offer singular products. These solutions can be dynamically bundled and unbundled, so customers add only the protection they need to their itinerary and avoid overpaying unnecessarily. For example, some leading online travel platforms, have enhanced the travel experience for their customers with clearly worded policies and frictionless claims handling that drive retention and loyalty by partnering with an insurtech.

Claims experiences are another customer pain point travel brands can address with embedded solutions. The same embedded insurance travel report found travellers rated their post-claims NPS at -25, with credit card programs delivering the poorest outcomes for their customers (-34). Embedded insurtechs bring a tech-forward approach to claims, with a digital process that provides instant payments for approved claims via a range of payment methods in more than 90 currencies. Cover Genius, for example, holds an industry-leading post-claims NPS of +65#, displaying the massive difference

a tech-forward approach to claims can make in the customer experience.

Creating Revenue Opportunities for Value-Added Services

An embedded insurtech can help travel companies elevate their protection offerings with easy-to-read policies, optimized pricing, data-backed product recommendations, smoother claims processes and instant claim payments. These benefits all make for a smoother and more enjoyable customer experience, leading to an increase in attach rates for travel brands. For example, Turkish Airlines saw attach rates jump 400% when it launched embedded protection which was strengthened by user-friendly features and pricing experiments, and Icelandair saw 3.8x more passengers opt for protection than in the preceding period. This additional ancillary revenue enables travel brands to implement other value-added services that upgrade the customer journey and keep them top-of-mind for future excursions.

These could include ways to enhance existing offerings like airline loyalty programmes, or new integrations to incentivise customers to book through their platforms. In addition to protection, many travel companies are exploring innovative fintech products to improve their payments experience. Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) options as well as price protection features gives customers more flexibility than ever before, and can empower them to book that trip that they've been planning.

Today's customers are demanding holistic and transparent experiences from travel brands. Travel companies that are seizing this opportunity and taking an innovative approach to protection and enhancing their offerings with value-added services are strongly positioned to attract customers and drive brand loyalty in the years ahead.

The score includes any type of claim and claim outcome across our partner network except for those partners with less than 30 claims and those not assessed by Cover Genius. ♦

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



purchase journey are an innovative way for travel companies to deliver customer-centric experiences and create revenue opportunities.

Enhancing Customer Experiences

Whether it's an unexpected illness or an once-in-a-lifetime weather event, there are many circumstances that can interrupt a traveller's long-awaited plans. However, too often, travel companies offer their customers one-size-fits-all policies that don't protect them in their time of need. This became especially apparent during the pandemic. An Embedded Travel Insurance Report commissioned by Cover Genius and conducted by Momentive.ai found, globally, 20% of customers who made a claim for pandemic-related reasons were not covered



Start-Up Forum

Bringing Innovations to the Forefront

Trainman

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: Trainman

Core Team : Vineet Chirania
Karan Kumar

Founding year: 2016

Company Website: www.trainman.in

Description : Trainman is a train booking app, a Gurugram-based startup, which is an authorised IRCTC partner. Established in 2016, Trainman is an all-in-one train ticket booking platform that provides a one-stop solution for booking train tickets online, for checking PNR status, and predicting 94% accuracy of ticket confirmation status before booking on waitlisted tickets.

Trainman has successfully raked in over INR 100 crore in annual ticket sales with over 2.5 crore visits. Trainman is a profitable firm and it expects to see multifold growth in the coming years.

Online train ticket booking startup Trainman, founded by IIT Roorkee graduates Vineet Chirania and Karan Kumar, has announced the closure of its seed round of funding after raising \$1 million (Rs 7.5 crore) in July 2022 from marquee US investors like Goodwater Capital, Hem angels, and others.

The round has also seen the participation of angel investors including Justin Hamilton and Ivy Growth Associates who are betting on Trainman's huge growth potential after it doubled its revenue from pre-Covid times.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qb6yeo9-4y8>



First ever MTF League kicks off in Mumbai

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The recently concluded first edition of Mumbai Travel Fraternity (MTF) League saw industry stakeholders coming together to play as a team, network and exchange ideas in a unique environment. The objective was to display a sense of solidarity in the industry and induce positive after three difficult years of the pandemic.

In total, there were 8 teams by 8 travel companies, and Otila International won the tournament. ♦

Organisers' Speak

Pradeep Saboo, Guideline Travels

We like-minded individuals came together for a common good, and so it makes feel connected to my community of travel friends, and gives me an opportunity to meet network and explore the various facets of my travel friends outside of the workspace. MTF League is for Mumbaikars, By Mumbaikars!

Sameer Karnani, Arunodaya Travels

MTF Premier League was conceptualised keeping in mind the stressful lifestyle we travel professionals lead. It was a fun carnival with only owners and senior management of travel companies, airlines and tourism boards participating to play the fun game. Overall, it a good networking event in a different environment.

Rajat Bagaria, Shrishti Tours & Travels

We wanted MTF to be different, and thanks to the support of the sponsors, team owners and the trade, they made it a reality by supporting and attending in large numbers. I am happy that it all went well, and everyone enjoyed the tournament.

Sanjay Arya, Keshav Travels

Cricket is a religion in India, and a sport that binds people together. We wanted to unite the travel agents in Mumbai, after the pandemic, and give them a platform to bond and have a great time. The participation of women made the tournament all the more inclusive; overall we are creating a legacy with this annual event.



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