

New version of Swadesh Darshan Scheme soon: Tourism Secretary

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

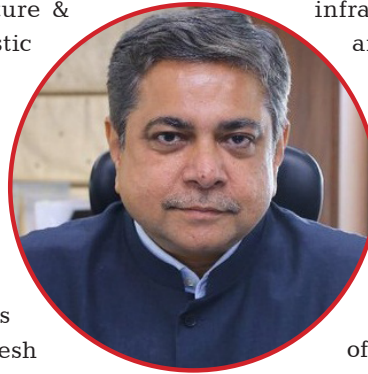
The industry is gradually witnessing revival on the domestic tourism front and hopefully, the calendar year will be much better when compared with 2020, said Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, while speaking at the inaugural session of Travel India 2021 organised by Indian Chamber of Commerce in association with Ministry of Tourism. "Tourism sector is a big foreign exchange earner for India and projected to grow annually 6.9 per cent. The sector is likely to contribute USD 460 billion by 2028 which is 9 per cent of the GDP," said Singh.

Dwelling on initiatives the government has taken during pandemic for the sector, he said, "We have taken several initiatives like Incredible India Tourist Facilitators Programme, Dekho Apna Desh Programme

to create awareness about Culture & Heritage and encourage domestic tourism."

He also said that the Incredible India Tourism website was launched in Arabic, Spanish and Chinese languages. "This was done to attract tourists from these countries as and when international travel opens up," he pointed out. On Swadesh Darshan Scheme, Singh said, "We are in the process of recasting Swadesh Darshan Scheme and may be coming out with a new version soon." He also sought suggestion from stakeholders in this regard.

Valsa Nair Singh, Principal Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra, said that they are working on three aspects-policy intervention,



Arvind Singh
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism,
Government of India

infrastructure, up-gradation and marketing strategy. "We have learnt to adapt new environment and works towards achieving the goal," she said. Since the focus is on domestic tourism, Maharashtra, besides being targeting on famous destinations, also promoting off beat destinations, she said. "We have also cleared Caravan Policy which will boost tourism further in the state," Valsa opined.

Rupinder Brar, ADG, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, appealed to the industry to do things differently. "We have diverse products and have to leverage them through the use of technology," Brar exhorted. ♦

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VisitBritain bets on VFR & leisure segments to resume travel post reopening

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

With a year of travel restrictions, VisitBritain is now preparing for safe opening of borders with adequate health & safety measures in place. Sally Balcombe, Chief Executive, VisitBritain, has said that their key priority remains to welcome back travellers safely. To begin with, Balcombe said, "Our expectation is that VFR traffic will open up first when travel resumes. We would expect leisure traffic, domestic and international to gain momentum, especially with the younger population taking the lead. Meetings and



Sally Balcombe
Chief Executive, VisitBritain

business travel will be slower, and would take time to pick up pace."

Balcombe added, "We have spent a lot of time with the industry working on how to open borders and businesses safely. That's now been given accreditation by the WTTC. Our hopes are backed by our vaccination programme; by July 2021, we are expecting all adults in the country to be vaccinated."

Balcombe spoke about assuring incoming travellers with a vaccinated nationwide population. "The government has been supporting the industry, and it knows that we want to welcome people from across the world," she stated.

She spoke about expanding their travel campaign, 'Escape the Everyday' launched domestically last year, to the Indian market. "People want to escape and do something different we will be building on that internationally."

India is the 16th source market for the Britain in terms of visitor numbers, and 11th in terms of visitor spend. "We are expecting long-term growth from India. From 2019-29, we are expecting a growth of 42%. Secondly, Indians spend 56% more time than an average visitor visit. This is probably driven by the VFR traffic."

Balcombe spoke to **TravelBiz Monitor** on the side-lines of their annual trade marketplace, ExploreGB that went virtual this year. Thirty buyers from India attended ExploreGB 2021 that followed a speed dating set-up. ♦

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Maharashtra offers online IITF Tourism Facilitator Certification Programme

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The Directorate of Tourism (DoT), Government of Maharashtra has adopted an 'Online IITF Tourism Facilitator Certification Programme (Guide Training)' designed by the Union Ministry of Tourism (MoT) to become part of the burgeoning tourism industry to serve as high quality tour guides at the state level. This is a digital initiative that aims of creation of an online learning platform to facilitate tourism learning at the candidate's own time, space, path and pace, eventually paving the way for the creation of Certified Tourist facilitators/Guides of the Maharashtra Tourism.

On the <http://iitf.gov.in> portal, the basic online course is available in Hindi and English with seven modules of various tourism aspects. The overall programmeregistration fee is INR 2,000/- (The SC and ST candidates, the candidates who are domicile residence of the Union Territory of Ladak,

Jammu & Kashmir and the candidates who are the domicile residence of Aspirational Districts as identified by NITI AAYOG are exempted from registration fee), while the examination fee is INR 500/-. In order to encourage more and more candidates

to pursue the course, The Directorate of Tourism (DoT) has decided to refund the programme fee of INR 2,000/- to those who successfully complete the IITF tourism facilitator programme.

Candidates between the age group of 18-40 should pass at least 12thgrade. And, the candidate aged above 40 years should have passed at least 10thgrade.

Candidates will be awarded an Online Course Completion Certificate (OCC) once they successfully complete all the seven



modules of the programme after which, the candidate will be eligible to apply for the exam.

Post the exam, the candidates will have to attend 7-days behaviour skill training conducted by IITTM. Furthermore, the IITF

Basic Certificate would be awarded to the candidates who successfully undertake the mandatory internship of 7 working days with tour operators approved by Ministry of Tourism, GoI in support with India tourism.

According to the procedure, after completion of all the tourism facilitator programme formalities i.e. online module completion with OCC, qualifying the examination, internship, behavior skill training, verification of documents and police verification, the successful candidates

would be awarded IITF Basic certificate. After producing IITF Basic certificate by candidate, one day assessment training will be conducted by the Directorate of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra and following this assessment, the final certification will be awarded stating, "Maharashtra Tourism Certification / licensed Guide by Directorate of Tourism (DoT), Government

of Maharashtra".

The successful candidates will be allowed to give guide services any tourist destinations (except ASI sites) in Maharashtra as a Maharashtra Tourism Certified/licensed guide. ♦

'Regional and international coordination imperative for efficient vaccine distribution'

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The news of vaccine has ignited hopes among people across the world but providing efficient logistic support for the distribution of the vaccine is utmost important feels Dr. Fang Liu, Secretary General, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Speaking to European and North Atlantic Directors General of Civil Aviation (DGCAs) recently, Dr. Liu emphasised that while COVID-19 vaccines are now offering hope of a more imminent pandemic recovery globally, closer collaboration and procedural alignment among air transport stakeholders will be needed to get the billions of doses to their destinations safely, securely and rapidly.

"We must continue to reinforce to decision-

makers that air cargo supply chains are critical to these efforts," Dr. Liu remarked. "ICAO has published safety and security guidelines for



the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, and we've also enacted our Vaccine Action Plan to more efficiently align vaccine efforts with applicable CART guidance and other ICAO provisions related to air cargo."

Vaccine distribution is consistent with the traditional expectation societies have placed

on air freight for the global distribution of many pharmaceuticals, through well-established global procedures. Some COVID vaccines, however, pose exceptional temperature requirements far beyond what aircraft and supply chains were formerly expected to maintain.

"Our latest vaccine planning takes on board economic considerations, as well as the relevant provisions of Annexes 6, 9, 17, 18 and 19 to the Chicago Convention which are relevant to efficient and safe transport of vaccine cargo by air," Dr. Liu stated.

"More will be required, however, including the adaptation of current infrastructure, procedures, and resources. These responses in turn will need to be tailored on the basis of whether a country is a vaccine supplier or recipient, or both in some cases." ♦

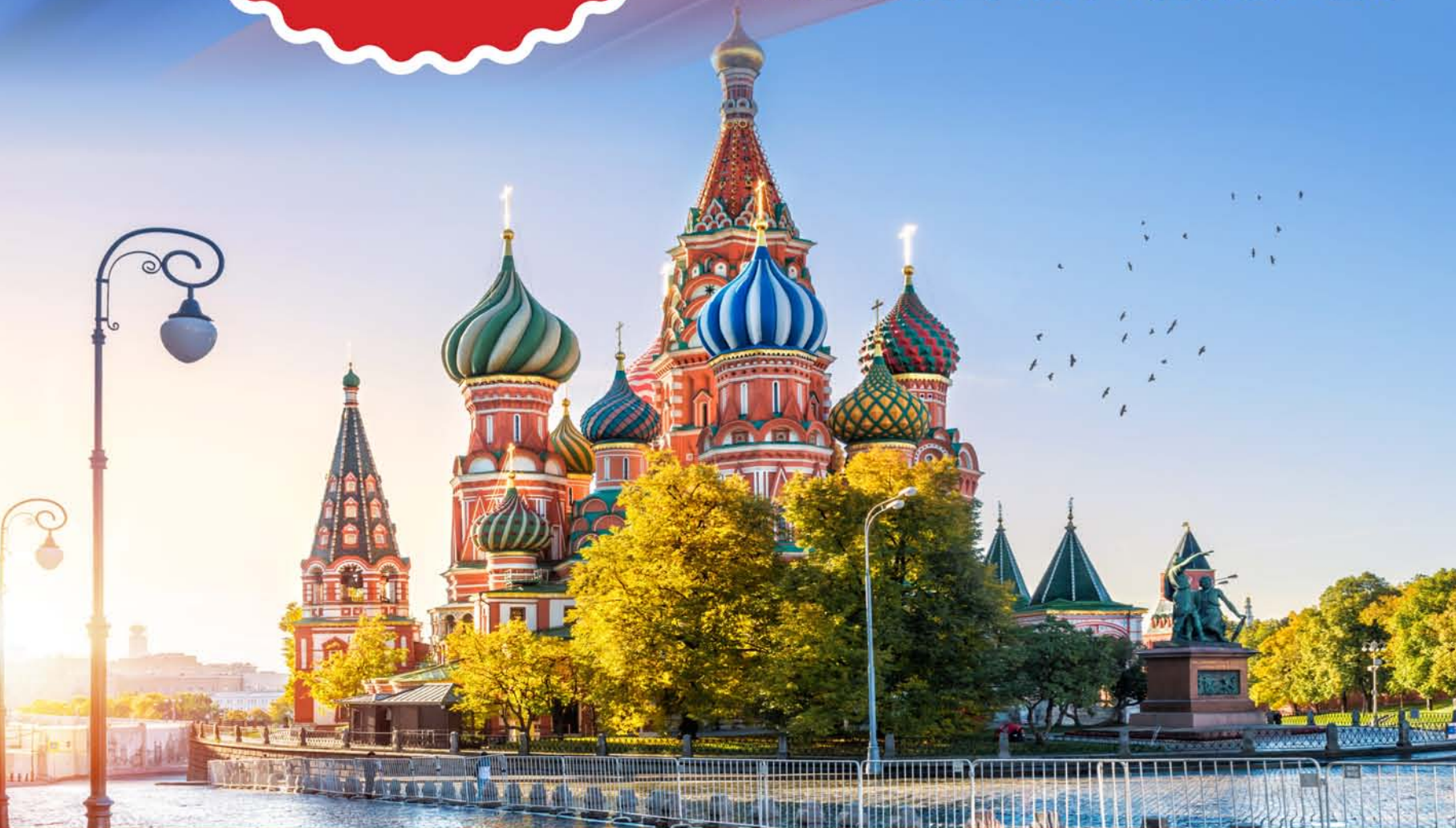


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Experience AIUla webinar generates encouraging response from Indian travel trade

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU) in Association with TravelBiz Monitor had organised maiden interactive webinar to introduce the newest gem of Saudi Arabia, AIUla, to the Indian market. The webinar witnessed a great participation from across the cities in India. The online event discussed key heritage sites of AIUla, hotels, activities, experiences and itineraries. Connectivity and visa access to AIUla were also discussed.

Initiating the web-discussion, Melanie de'Souza, Executive Director, Destination Marketing, RCU, said that India is an important market for them. "AIUla is one of the most significant global heritage sites that will take the whole world by storm." She also added tourism is going to play an important role in Saudi's economy. "Saudi Arabia is synonymous with religious tourism and attracted many Indians on that front. Now, the country is embracing world tourism, hence, the scope is further widen to tap Indian market. Today, the country has diverse offerings for family, honeymooners,

adventure and business travel," she explained.

Tyler Gosnell, Head of International, Destination Management and Marketing



Office, RCU, stated, "AIUla is a welcoming destination. Once you are in the Kingdom you will realise it is an amazingly open and comfortable destination."

Beena Menon, India Representative, RCU, through her presentation highlighted four key pillars of AIUla i.e. Heritage, Adventure, Art & Culture and Nature. Furthermore, she talked about the four heritage sites Hegra

(first UNESCO World Heritage Site in Saudi Arabia) and Hijaz Railway station, Dadan, Jabal Ikamah and the Old Town of AIUla.

Huzan Fraser Motivala, Indian Representative, RCU, through her presentation highlighted accommodation & conferencing facilities in AIUla. Motivala, highlighted the place has all the elements to become a true MICE and Wedding destinations for Indians. "Vegetarian food is available in plenty and Indian restaurants are also coming up in AIUla," she said. Short flying time and easy connections to major cities of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Indian cities is an added advantage. The webinar also highlighted how visa regime has changed in the recent past and much improvement in regulatory climate.

Samir Mehta, Advisor, Destination Management, Zahid Travel Group, said that they are looking forward to resume travel later this year. "The destination has diverse offerings and suits everyone's need," he said. The webinar ended with a Q&A session and live quiz with amazing prizes. ♦

Jumeirah Group appoints Connect Worldwide as GSA in India

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Jumeirah Group has appointed Connect Worldwide (CWW) as its global sales agent (GSA) in India. The partnership will include sales and marketing management for clients from the corporate, MICE and leisure segments, and support services for the luxury hotel Group from the Indian market.

Alexander Lee, Chief Commercial Officer, Jumeirah Group, said, "Indian guests have always been of great importance to Jumeirah as one of our top source markets across the global portfolio. We see Connect Worldwide's appointment as a reflection of the immense efforts invested in this market, and as a further step to ensuring our exemplary offering is aligned with their unique needs, whether that's for leisure, dining or family experiences or the crafting of unique, personalised stays. We see great potential in India – a market that has always appreciated

the luxury hospitality that Jumeirah offers, and our attention to personal touches, especially when it comes to sentimental lifetime special events such as weddings. The decision to appoint Connect Worldwide as our sales partner in India signifies our continued focus on this region, as well as the promising future that lies ahead for the Jumeirah Group in India."

"We welcome Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts as our newest travel partner," said Eric Otto President and CEO of Connect Worldwide. "We are proud to partner with such an iconic hotel group and our experienced team is excited to represent and enhance the brand further within the Indian travel market."

"The CWW India team with its robust sales and distribution support looks forward to re engaging the market with Jumeirah's portfolio



of hotels", said Vasudha Sondhi, MD CWW India.

CWW is a global sales, marketing, and digital services company with a focus on international market expansion and revenue development. Their clients include tourism destinations, independent hotels, hotel brands, and travel-related companies. ♦

Q Saudi Arabia wants to move from an oil dependent economy to tourism driven. What efforts are being made in this direction to become a world-class tourist destination?

We aim to achieve 100 million annual visits to the Kingdom by 2030, made up of both domestic and international travellers.

To achieve this goal, we have developed a comprehensive strategy to drive the number of visits, increase spend and to build a leading tourism brand for Saudi.

We have identified 15 priority leisure source markets spanning the GCC region, Asia, North America and Europe. This is broken down further into three target segments, leisure, MICE and spiritual travel.

Since opening our doors to leisure tourism in September 2019, STA has unveiled many new destinations and experiences for audiences from home and abroad.

The campaigns highlight what Saudi has to offer today – its rich culture, deep heritage, diversity of landscapes and unparalleled hospitality. It is the authentic home of Arabia: a place of exploration, of unique experiences. This is what we want the world to discover about Saudi.

Q In September 2019, the tourist e-visa was introduced. Can you tell us more about the e-visa and any numbers surrounding its launch.

STA: The launch of the e-visa was a significant milestone in the opening up of the Kingdom. From September 2019 to March 2020, we had issued more than 400,000 tourism visas, and we are confident that we will exceed this target once borders re-open.

Visitors from 49 countries are able to apply for the visit visa online, while other nationalities are able to apply for the visa at the Saudi embassy or consulate in their home country.

Q What is the impact of the on-going pandemic on the tourism sector of Saudi Arabia?

STA: We continue to work closely with the Ministry of Health on health and safety standards. The Ministry has put in place comprehensive protocols for establishments to provide visitors and their families with a safe experience, which



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‘Launching E-visa was a significant milestone in the opening up of the Kingdom’

are aligned with the guidelines recommended by the WTTC.

- Free healthcare is provided to anyone in Saudi Arabia (citizens and visitors alike) affected by COVID-19
- Tracking and testing apps have been introduced to help people assess their health and manage any quarantine requirements
- The Saudi tourism e-visa process is 100% digital, ensuring the reduction of touchpoints ahead of travel and upon arrivals

Q In terms of outreach across channel partners and consumers alike, what platforms are being deployed?

We are investing in developing strong relationships with key partners in the travel trade sector in all of our priority source markets.

We are in the process of building a network of international offices, responsible for both trade and consumer marketing activities, to expand the reach and relevance of Saudi's tourism offer. Each market will be tasked with developing a tailored, strategic approach to most effectively engage with their target audiences, whether it be workshops, road shows, training, marketing campaign or FAM trips.

Q What are your expectations from the Indian market?

India really set the standard in destination marketing with its Incredible India brand campaign. And it is amazing to think that campaign will be 20 years old next year. And as the tourism market begins to reopen, India will be one of the most significant source markets in the world.

Q Tell us a bit about the Saudi Roadshow - what can we expect to see?

STA: As it relates to leisure tourism, Saudi is a relatively new destination.

Our focus is two-fold. While it is fundamental to drive awareness about Saudi amongst travellers around the world, we must also engage, educate and inspire our travel trade partners about the diverse products and experiences that Arabia offers.

The Saudi Roadshow is an opportunity for our partners to meet-one-on-one with senior representatives from key destination, experience and hospitality brands. It is a platform for them to ask questions, build relationships and stimulate conversations around the potential commercial partnership opportunities. This is the first time we are engaging trade at this level. The response to date has been extremely positive, and we look forward to increasing activity to further showcase the Saudi offering. ♦

Saudi Arabia, since opening its doors to leisure tourism in September 2019 has introduced many new destinations and experiences for the audience both from home and abroad. Besides this, it has identified 15 priority leisure source markets spanning the GCC region, Asia, North America and Europe, says **Saudi Tourism Authority** in an exclusive interview with **TravelBiz Monitor**.

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Act Responsibly

Just when we thought that India is gaining the upper hand in its fight against Covid-19, the virus is raising its ugly head again in states like Maharashtra, Kerala. This development has resulted in imposing fresh restrictions to contain the spread of new variants of the virus. In Maharashtra, lockdowns were imposed in select areas. Whether it is second wave or not, the damage is done to the tourism industry as people have started cancelling their scheduled visit. A few of my friends and relatives have cancelled their visits to Maharashtra and Goa which were curated carefully over a period. I am sure there are thousands of such examples all over the country. This has inflicted further damage to the sector (domestic), when business had just started gaining momentum.

There was a report which states that the new variant of virus led to a 35 per cent fall in sales in the last few days in Mumbai's Zaveri Bazaar, Asia's largest gold market. The fall in sales is because people are not venturing out. If this is the scenario in the gold segment, we can only imagine the impact on the tourism industry. There is already an apprehension in the industry - Are we going the 2020 way? Last year, exactly during the same time, the shadow of this pandemic was looming large.

Besides Maharashtra and Kerala, new cases have been recorded from Punjab, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh. All these states are significant contributors to domestic tourism. We have to understand that in the current scenario, domestic market is the one and only hope for business. But the rising cases have put a big question mark over the immediate future. India is 17th among the most affected country by active cases. My intention is not to sound pessimistic, but to caution about possible consequences, if we don't behave in a responsible way. Our irresponsible behaviour to a large extent is responsible for the current spike. Can we afford another lockdown? Can't we learn lessons from 2020? What is wrong in applying our brains so that we can live comfortably in the future?

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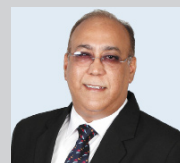
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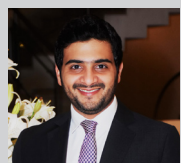
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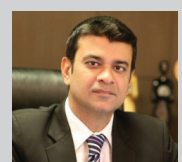
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Q Having just taken over as the Tourism Minister of Zanzibar, what are your key areas of priority at a time the world is adopting to the new normal?

Our key areas to the Tourism of Zanzibar at a time the world is adopting to the new normal are;

- Emphasis on Local Tourism and Tourism for all
- Tourism for Blue Economy
- Museums and local Cultures
- Conference and Sports Tourism

Q Intermsof global positioning of Zanzibar, what is the plan of action?

In terms of Global Positioning of Zanzibar, the plan of actions are;

- To increase the number of days to stay in Zanzibar for tourists from 5 to more than 10 days to be able to explore, leading to high foreign exchange earning.
- To have conference tourism in Zanzibar, national and international conferences, Festivals, making Zanzibar as the main destination for international weddings, international celebrations, international and National Youth Camps, exchange programmes, ecology, sports tourism, wellness and fitness programmes, business and cultural activities and research programmes which will include national and international researchers.
- Creating the Zanzibar Brand through cooperating with tourism stakeholders, Embassies, and with national and international celebrities through their jobs to advertise and brand well our islands.
- Conducting clean-up campaign to different tourism destinations around Zanzibar to attract tourists and making friendly environment for all.

Q Zanzibar is a high-end destination. Any change in that position in the changed circumstances?

Zanzibar is a high-end destination, there are some changes to be made in this changed circumstances as;

- The reconstruction of the buildings mostly to those which are older than the others.

- Establishing newest tourist destinations and excursions like sports tourism as gold tourism, beach soccer, the best areas for conference tourism and cultural festival, the camping sites for national and international delegates.
- Re- make and reform tourism laws, policy and regulations of Zanzibar
- Changes in managements through Ministry for Tourism and in commission for Zanzibar Commission for Tourism
- Establishing tangible projects for day to date tourism going through the digitalised world of globalization

‘Beside leisure, my trade strategy is to tap the MICE segment in India’

Q How will you use culture as a medium to create awareness in the Indian market on the tourism front?

The cultural connections between Zanzibar and Indians date back to decades. Through culture as the medium to create awareness in the Indian market on the tourism front, there are many different ways for it to get the strong bond together including

- The use of traditional music from Zanzibar which is mostly relating to the Indian styles of music, specifically on instruments used and the singing styles
- The use of traditional food from Zanzibar islands which we mostly share spices that historically was brought from Asian countries including India and has been attracting so many people visiting in Zanzibar and made it known as Spice Island for its richness in Spices and herbs.
- Through language styles and having several Indian words in Swahili language, as we know Swahili language comprises different words from different languages like English, Germany, Arab and Hindu.

Q Besides leisure, your trade strategy to tap the MICE

segment in India?

Beside leisure, my trade strategy to tap the MICE segment in India is that, we will be sticking to our plans on making sure we implement the conference tourism in Zanzibar as in 15th July 2019 the First Annual Conference of the International Society for Academic Researchers (ISFAR) was conducted in Zanzibar, Zanzibar International Tourism Forums, the Exhibitions, Incentives and more. Therefore, with India through taping MICE, the first thing is through Conferencing which will involve different tourism stakeholders, cooperating and interconnecting through several festivals and exhibitions within India, conducting exchange meetings between people around the world meeting in India or shifting to Zanzibar and more.

Q Can we expect additional air connections to India to boost tourism in the near future?

Yes, we both need to expect additional air connections to India to boost tourism in the near future so that we can be able to keep our closer connections between India and Zanzibar, keeping the business running and friendship among both states. ♦

Lela Muhamed Mussa, Minister for Tourism and Heritage, The Revolution Government of Zanzibar, Tanzania in an exclusive interview with **Disha Shah Ghosh** shares plans on the priority tourism segments and throws light on deploying culture as a medium to promote tourism in India.

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GMV/GTV Multiple – The Fallacy of E-Commerce Valuation

By **Avijit Banerjee**, CEO & Managing Director, Argon Capital Advisors

G MV/GTV Multiple – The Fallacy of E-Commerce Valuation

The valuation stories of E-Commerce companies, which almost always follows an exponential path, has always baffled me. This has made me wonder if there's an alternative school of thought that may have a contrarian view to this valuation story/theory. If there isn't

any until now, I would want to be the founder of that alternative school.

The flaw in this valuation theory, the way I see it, is by assigning market multiples to the Gross Transaction Value i.e., GTV (also referred as Gross Merchandise Value or GMV) as opposed to the actual revenues booked by the e-commerce companies by way of reseller fees or commission earned. In order to understand it better, let's dissect this step by step so that we get to the root of this fallacy...

...E-Commerce Companies, Unless They Sell Their Own Branded Merchandise, Are Commodities:

My focus here is on e-commerce companies who are aggregators (i.e., companies that operate as a market place) are commodities in the language of asset pricing/valuation, and will have high price elasticity. The reason being, these aggregators are frontline distributors – in the distribution value chain – to a producer's merchandise, and, therefore, when a sale takes place, it's because of the brand retention/loyalty of the producer's merchandise and not of the aggregator. Therefore, if a competing aggregator offers the same merchandise on its platform at a lesser price, the consumer would go with the one that's priced less due to value-for-money. That's where the price elasticity kicks in, which hardly leaves aggregators with any differentiators other than price competitiveness.

Therefore, this distribution system i.e., Market Place Aggregators, without any key differentiators, is a commodity, and, hence, an unusual high valuation for such aggregators would certainly raise an eyebrow.

Differentiating GMV/GTV with Revenues Would be a Step Closer to Understand the Fallacy of E-Commerce Valuation:

GMV or GTV is the aggregate volume of the merchandise sold to the end consumers multiplied by the listed price of the units. While the transaction/POS happens at the aggregator's domain, the gross retention for the aggregator is limited only to the agreed revenue sharing for the merchandise, and the

rest of the transaction value is passed on to the producer of the merchandise. For example, if the revenue sharing between the producer of the merchandise and the aggregator is 70% and 30%, respectively, it means for a transaction of every INR 100, the aggregator would keep INR 30 as its reseller fees/commission income, and the remaining INR 70 would be passed on to the producer of the merchandise.

Therefore, if the valuation multiple, in the above example, is applied to the entire GTV of INR 100, it would be fundamentally incorrect because INR 70 – in this GTV – does not even belong to the aggregator. That's the fallacy I am trying to highlight, since the actual revenue of the aggregator, in this example, is only INR 30. Therefore, assigning multiples to GMV/GTV as opposed to actual revenues would not only be fundamentally incorrect but also create...

...An Asset Bubble Trap:

The practice of GMV/GTV multiples would continue to keep the underlying asset price (i.e., the aggregator company) artificially high, thereby creating bubbles. While the early investors may perhaps get an exit, it's the late entrants – who would usually enter at an astronomically high valuation – who would likely get trapped. An exit at this point would be next to impossible since the business fundamentals won't be able to support the underlying price of the asset.

To Conclude – Always Bet on the Cash Flows:

If I am an investor looking at investing in e-commerce companies, I would bet my money on the ability of the company to generate cash. Let alone GMV/GTV, what's the point of even having an exponential revenue trend if it fails to cover the cost of generating such revenues? Therefore, unless the company has the ability to not only turn cash positive, but also sustains it, valuation based on revenue multiple has no meaning, let alone GMV/GTV multiple. ♦

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



Avijit Banerjee is the CEO & Managing Director of Argon Capital Advisors, a full-service Investment Banking & Advisory Company, and has over two decades of work experience in the investment banking and advisory landscape. His expertise lies in transaction advisory (fund raising and M&A), business valuations (both public and private companies), due diligence, business plan, and formulating growth, expansion, optimisation and restructuring strategies.

Travel trade of India enthusiastically participates in Utah Tourism webinar

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Utah Tourism in association with TravelBiz Monitor had organised an interactive webinar recently. Participants from different cities of India attended the webinar. Rachel Bremer, Global Travel Trade & Destination Development Manager, Utah Office of Tourism and Film, touched upon connectivity and how the airport of capital city Salt Lake City is gearing up for future.

Bremer said that Salt Lake City International Airport is a Delta hub airport, and is easily accessible via flights from the East Coast and West Coast. "International flights to Europe, including the non-stops to Paris and Amsterdam are scheduled to resume soon. These European connections flights are

recommended for long-haul flight to/from India and Salt Lake City International. She also said that the Salt Lake City International Airport has undergone a USD 4.1 billion rebuild allowing for increased flight capacity, larger aircraft access and increased passenger capacity. "The first phase of this rebuild opened in September 2020 with 30 new gates," Bremer said.

Through a presentation, Bremer vividly portrayed unique features and different attractions of 5 national parks-Zion, Bryce, Capitol Reef, Canyon Lands, and Arches. Each of these parks has distinct appeal to travellers. Besides this, she also discussed



Utah's thriving restaurant scene that includes Indian restaurants, museum, cultural attractions, night life etc. Skiing, roadtrips, stargazing, etc. also figured in the

discussion.

The participants also asked several interesting questions which clearly shows they are eager to promote the destination in this market. When a participant asked when is the right time to visit Utah? Bremer replied, Early Fall or in July. But it depends on clients requirement."

The event also witnessed quiz competition and the winners received attractive Utah goody bags. ♦

'Surge in travel & tourism will help Indian carriers to recover later this year'

The last one year has taught us various new ways of doing business, says
Ramesh Marwah, CEO & Director, Dex Group.

Q How is the airline GSA representation business against the backdrop of the pandemic?

GSA representation business has been hit very hard as Indian borders remain closed for international flight operations till March 31, 2021 with the exception of airlines of countries that have signed Air Bubble Agreement with India. In addition, borders of several countries remain closed due to rising number of Covid cases in those nations.

Q What changes Dex Group has brought in its marketing and service strategies, keeping the current situation in mind?

Like rest of the industry, Dex Group has also shifted to digital marketing during this period. We have conducted various webinars to appraise our trade partners with developments related to product and services of airlines and hotel booking portals represented by us. On the other hand, we have been participating in virtual road-shows due restraints in physical participation. Our team has also been updating and maintaining contact with the market through regular mail-shots.

Q Your comment on the changing role of technology, especially with the changed situation in the past one year.

The last one year has taught us various new ways of doing our



business. Technology has for sure helped speedier communications, reach and connectivity, and the need to be tech-savvy has also been felt all around in the industry. However, in this period, the need to know, speak and touch a 'human being' behind the system has also been felt very strongly.

Q What changes we are likely to see in the global aviation industry post-pandemic?

There may be lesser number of airlines in the skies which will battle for their survival and may operate with curtailed frequencies on commercially viable routes. Every airline will

implement and publicise 'Cautions & Preventive Measures' towards Covid to win travellers confidence. We in India, will witness privatisation of Air India, return of Jet Airways to the skies and phenomenal surge in travel & tourism helping recovery of Indian carriers towards the later part of 2021.

Q What is your prediction about 2021 in terms of business?

Q3 & Q4 should see return of 'better times' for our industry as indicated by very optimistic signs like huge reduction in Covid cases, all-around start of vaccination, growing load factors of domestic airlines and availability of IATA Travel Pass by end of March that will enable travel without quarantine. Discerning Indian travellers are sitting on their edge to jump-start revival of travel & tourism. ♦

Inspire, Engage, Educate: Saudi Tourism Authority Launches 'Journeys in Arabia'

TBM Staff | Mumbai

- Bringing Travel Trade Partners together for the first time
- An exclusively curated webinar to explore and discover Saudi's exciting new tourism offering

The global travel industry is undergoing its most profound transformation.

As the landscape evolves, it is more important than ever to continue to inspire, engage and educate travel trade for when the world safely re-opens and travel resumes.

Saudi Arabia is a relatively new destination on the global stage. As the authentic home of Arabia, Saudi offers unique, diverse and unparalleled experiences, a land of natural assets, rich culture and heritage and adventure.

To bring to light the Saudi offering, the Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) has launched 'Journeys in Arabia', an exclusive online event curated especially for Travel Trade Partners around the globe.

The virtual engagement series, taking place across six markets around the world, is a first-of-its-kind initiative for STA, a source of inspiration and excitement, designed to inform partners about the diverse products and experiences that Arabia offers.

The India 'Journeys in Arabia' webinar brought together local travel trade partners, for an opportunity to hear from thought leaders and experts in the tourism industry. The line up of speakers were:

- Welcome address by Fahd Hamidaddin, CEO, Saudi Tourism Authority
- Keynote conversation 'Journeys Make People' between Abdullah Al Dakhil, International Communication Manager, Saudi Tourism Authority and celebrated Indian Journalist Vir Sanghvi.
- Expert panel discussion with:
 - Haitham Mattar, CCO, Saudi Tourism Authority
 - Benazir Nazar, CEO, Akbar Travels
 - Deep Kalra, Founder & Group Executive Chairman, Make My Trip
 - Madhavan Menon, Chairman & Managing Director, Thomas Cook Group
 - Rakshit Desai, Managing Director – India, FCM



- Sheema Vohra, Managing Director, Sartha Global Marketing
The session provided insights into the current state of travel, and the opportunities and challenges in addressing the growing demand and interest in Saudi as a new destination. Some of the key highlights and market insights of the discussion were:

- India has been identified as one of the key source markets, and STA's tourism strategy focuses on promoting experiences related to culture, heritage, nature and adventure in Saudi
 - Indians, especially the online consumers and millennials, are late planners and constantly seek new destinations, within close proximity to India for last-minute holiday planning. Shorter-duration packages, direct flights and ease in visa (preferably e-visas) procurement will be game-changers for a new destination like Saudi
 - Saudi offers exceptional experiences for diving, adventure sports, and sustainable tourism. The country will also host the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix in 2021. These developments reflect the new travel motivations that Indian leisure travellers actively seek today
- Two key considerations among the Corporate/Leisure market are awareness and attractiveness. While the former can be achieved through communication and information dissemination, via visual and video content on Saudi; attractiveness will come from exquisite on-ground experiences that visitors have while at the destination
- The high-end Umrah market from India is a major captive audience, combining pilgrimage with leisure through post-Umrah leisure packages
- Promoting unique destinations like AIUla for wedding tourism will be a huge draw for Saudi
- Lastly, consumer behavior has seen a drastic shift in a post-Covid world with both MICE and Leisure travel experiencing a heightened ecological sensitivity. Travelers are seeking clear information and assurance related to hygiene and safety.

As part of the 'Journeys in Arabia' webinar series, the next webinar takes place for Germany, followed by UK and Russia.

To watch the India webinar in full, please click here:

<https://app.journeysinarabia.com/web/webinar/india>. ♦



Saudi Tourism Authority eyeing Indian market with zeal

TBM Staff | Mumbai

In order to decipher Saudi Arabia's tourism offerings, the Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) organised 'Journeys in Arabia' an exclusive online event, curated especially for travel trade partners around the globe. The India edition of 'Journeys in Arabia' webinar took place on February 17.

Speaking at the launch webinar, Fahd Hamidaddin, CEO, STA, said that the travel industry is rapidly changing, especially against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. "Travellers are thinking how to travel. They are thinking of visiting safe and lesser-known destinations," pointed out Hamidaddin.

Praising India, he said that India has set the standard of destination marketing. "Once travel resumes, India will emerge as one of the top source markets in the world," he said. Hamidaddin stated that the pandemic has taught one to become agile and responsive. He emphasised that digital integration is a crucial requirement to prosper. "Technology companies understand the importance of digital integration. They also understand that effective use of data can make difference to the bottomline of a company. Technology companies use data for

profit and we have to use (data) for progress," exhorted Hamidaddin.

He also said that STA is building a community dedicated to positioning Saudi as a unique tourism destination. "We have to show travellers Saudi is a country of natural

about the opportunities for tourism in Saudi Arabia. Sheema Vohra, MD, Sartha Global Marketing, moderated the session. Initiating the discussion, Haitham Matter, CCO, STA, said that they have identified India as one of the top source markets for Saudi. "Leisure

is the new segment that we are targeting. The E-visa for Indians has been requested directly to the office of His Royal Highness in order to include India within the list of 49 countries. We are waiting for the approval," he said.

Madhavan Menon, CMD, Thomas Cook India, said that Indians, especially the online consumers and millennials, are late planners and constantly seek new destinations within close proximity to India. "Effective promotion will be a game

changer for a new destination like Saudi Arabia," Menon pointed out.

Rakshit Desai, MD-India, FCM, felt that key considerations for corporate and leisure segments are awareness and attractiveness. "While the former can be achieved through communication and information dissemination, and the latter can be achieved through on-ground experience while visiting there," he said.

Deep Kalra, Founder & Group Executive Chairman, MakeMyTrip, expressed his happiness with the fact that Saudi is focusing on adventure and sports tourism. "I am also happy to know that Formula one is coming to Saudi. Adventure and sports segments have huge potential. However, Wine & dine is an area Saudi has to focus on to attract FIT travellers," exhorted Kalra.

Benazir Nazar, CEO, Akbar Travels, sighted an interesting observation. "So far, as long as Saudi is concerned, we were dealing with the pilgrimage sector but of late we are getting enquiries of destination weddings. It's a big shift," she said. She also suggested that the Umrah segment has huge potential. "It is time to develop an itinerary for Umrah segment post-pilgrimage," suggested Nazar.

Vohra, in her concluding remarks, thanked everyone for spending their valuable time to join the web-discussion. "Our industry looks forward to working with STA as it comes to India," she said. ♦



FAHD HAMIDADDIN
CEO, Saudi Tourism Authority



HAITHAM MATTER
CCO, Saudi Tourism Authority

beauty, great diversity, hidden treasures, iconic architecture, etc.," he said.

Hamidaddin strongly believes that with support from everyone they will create a place for the Kingdom in the hearts and minds of travellers.

The web event saw an enchanting discussion between Abdullah Al Dakhil, International Communication Manager, STA and celebrated journalist Vir Sanghvi.

This was followed by a discussion between prominent leaders of the travel industry



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Five Unforgettable Journeys in Arabia

Introduction

Saudi is a country of extraordinary natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. Still largely unexplored by international visitors, the country offers a dizzying array of experiences for the curious traveler. Explore the sights, scents and sounds of authentic souks. Bask in the crystal clear waters of the Red Sea, surrounded by a myriad corals. Walk in the footsteps of ancient civilizations. And, wherever you go, experience the unparalleled hospitality of the

Saudi people.

Whatever your pleasure, this list of Saudi's five must-visit destinations offers you a journey you've never imagined.

Diriyah

On the outskirts of Riyadh is the UNESCO World Heritage site of Diriyah, the ancestral seat of the ruling Al Saud family. Wander through the narrow alleyways between the mud-brick houses and



uncover a way of life that goes back for generations. Explore the museums of Saudi culture and history, including the Salwa Palace, the most massive standing structure in the citadel. Then stroll around the local eateries and coffee shops to sample traditional Najd delicacies, surrounded by lush greenery, ponds, and much more. Escape to a vision of Saudi's storied past.

AlUla

AlUla is a stunning destination embracing 200,000 years of human history, breath-taking natural rock formations, iconic modern architecture and Hegra, one of the most recognizable images of Saudi. Explore more than one hundred, monolithic rock cut tombs carved by the Nabataean civilization. Read the history of the region recorded in ancient inscriptions on the surrounding cliffs. And marvel at the mirror-clad Maraya Concert Hall – one of the world's most Instagrammable buildings. Explore a world like no other.

Al Balad

The ancient center of Jeddah, the Bride of the Red Sea, was built in the 7th century as a gateway for pilgrims making their way to Makkah. The refurbished Makkah Gate today serves as



the entrance to an intriguing and cosmopolitan blend of ancient and modern. Browse through the colorful Souq Al Alawi, Saudi's largest souq, which fills the narrow alleyways, with the scent of exotic spices and a kaleidoscope of colorful wares. Visit the heritage houses, galleries and museums among the intricately designed 500-year-old buildings, built using coral from the Red Sea. And finish your day with a sumptuous meal of fresh seafood as you look





out over the waters of the Red Sea. An experience to delight all the senses.

The City of Roses

Journey to the cool northern mountains to experience Taif, the City of Roses. In the spring, the clear mountain air is infused with the scent from more than 90 rose farms which give the city its name. Taif produces some of the world's most expensive rose oil which is an ingredient in luxurious perfumes from around the world. Local rose water is also an ingredient in Taif's cuisine. The renovated city center houses the Taif Central Market where you can browse traditional goods, such as jewelry, oud and healing herbs. A true breath of fresh air.

The Red Sea

The Saudi Red Sea is a natural treasure house of thriving coral reefs and abundant marine life including dolphins, dugongs and sea turtles. Extending 1,700km from the Gulf of Aqaba in the north to the Farasan Islands in the south, the eastern reaches of the Red Sea are a stunning destination for divers, snorkelers and ocean enthusiasts. Whether you want to enjoy a scintillating sunset by the beach, explore the pristine reefs or dive on one of the coast's enigmatic shipwrecks, the Red Sea is a destination like no other in the world. Immerse yourself in unforgettable natural beauty. ♦



Making Sense of a Place

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



One of the triggers for this column is a recent article by Dr Venu, who was Director-General of National Museum. Captioned Stuck in (hi)story, he quoted it's time we came out of the notion that museums are places where history sleeps. This quotation led me to re-thinking this whole business of story-telling at a place.

Long before tourism in India got a big push in 2002-03, we had enthusiastic volunteers to lead guests around the places. The business got professional with guides being trained and recognised in the mid-80s. Initially, as in many places, tourist guides were often expected to narrate a standardised script so that every guest gets the same information. As in manufacturing, standardisation was the goal. And so, guides and their commentaries were commodities with little differentiation. India was still obscure for many tourists, and information about places and attractions was not readily available. A few creative and ambitious individuals wanted to bring new knowledge and perspective to differentiate their commentaries from others. However, with the advent of the internet in the 1990s, there was a distinct shift in access to information and dissemination of information was no longer the tourist guides' key strength.

On the other hand, an enlightened guest was growing increasingly expectant. They readily had access to information through their handheld devices. They now demanded better logistical support and services. Tour guides quickly evolved as escorts and tour managers focusing on superior services and logistical support to differentiate themselves from the competition. Even tourism services fell prey to the competition. The basic services soon became uniform and were

offered as SOPs.

Guests would ask for more. The whole idea of travelling shifted from seeing and viewing places to experiencing them. Consequently, the role of tour guides and other service providers transformed from bearers of information and providers of services to facilitators of experience. The industry began to experiment with innovative means to offer immersive experiences. All this while the relationship was transactional, as information, services, or experiences were delivered to consumers.

However, in a fast-changing world catalysed by the COVID pandemic, consumers now seek more meaningful interactions. There is a paradigm shift from "what can be offered" to "what does the offer do to me". Customers today are more concerned with what happens to them with every outing. Information or experience does it brings about a change - a change that they seek? There is an ancient Chinese saying- travelling a hundred miles is like reading a good book. This adage meant that travelling brings a world of wisdom that can shape an individual's world view of existence and being. One of the motivations for tourism is that people travel to places that are very different from theirs to see and find answers to questions of existence - how places, over time, have shaped human activity and cultures to result in another way of life which is just alternative way of existence.

It must, therefore, be realised that places are not inert. They are lively organic entities. They are what they are because of their animate and inanimate dimensions. They create a feel, which a visitor would like to internalise and excavate meaning. While visiting a place, guests transform by sampling the place's feel and thereby educating themselves. However, in most cases, the visitors are constrained by the time and need help and support to feel a place comprehensively in a limited time. This demand is precisely where the personal and non-personal interpretation of a place come into play. Interventions like museums and individuals, including tour guides, help visitors understand why

this place is what it is? What is the geo-cultural legacy that shapes the present?

As a living being, every place has a persona. It has its DNA. Each DNA strand comprises nucleotides—units made up of a sugar (deoxyribose), a phosphate group, and a nitrogenous base. The four nitrogenous bases in DNA molecules are- cytosine, guanine, adenine, and thymine (abbreviated as C, G, A, and T). Similarly, a place DNA also has four elements - C for Continuity, G for Geography, A for Authenticity and T for (indigenous) Technology. However, DNA is very sensitive and can quickly degrade in certain conditions. So can the place-DNA. We will need museums and tour guides to continually interpret these cultural strands lest we lose this genetic wealth. And therefore, museums are where history comes alive to connect a place to its identity. Tour guides and others in the business are custodians of the essence of a place that has the ability to transform whosoever passes by.

Can I call it transformative interpretation? ♦

'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 Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Jamia Millia Islamia. He has more than 27 years of academic experience, of which he has been a full professor for 14 years in India, China, and Mexico. A recipient of many academic awards and recognitions, he has authored 13 books and more than 130 academic papers. He has travelled extensively to around 40 countries and almost all states within the country.

Airlines not expected to turn cash positive until 2022: IATA



The International Air Transport Association (IATA) released new analysis showing that the airline industry is expected to remain cash negative throughout 2021. Previous analysis (November 2020) indicated that airlines would turn cash positive in the fourth quarter of 2021. At the industry level, airlines are now not expected to be cash positive until 2022.

Estimates for cash burn in 2021 have ballooned to the USD 75 billion to USD 95 billion range from a previously anticipated USD 48 billion. The following factors play into this estimate:

- **Weak Start for 2021:** It is already clear that the first half of 2021 will be worse than earlier anticipated. This is because governments have tightened travel restrictions in response to new COVID-19 variants. Forward bookings for summer (July-August) are currently 78% below levels in February 2019 (comparisons to 2020 are distorted owing to COVID-19 impacts).
- **Optimistic Scenario:** From this lower starting point for the year, an optimistic scenario would see travel restrictions gradually lifted once the vulnerable populations in developed economies have been vaccinated, but only in time to facilitate tepid demand over the peak summer travel season in the northern hemisphere. In this case 2021 demand would be 38% of 2019 levels. Airlines would burn through USD 75 billion of cash over the year. But cash burn of USD 7 billion in the fourth quarter would be significantly improved from an anticipated USD 33 billion cash burn in the first quarter.
- **Pessimistic Scenario:** This scenario would see airlines burn through USD 95 billion over the year. There would be an improving trend from a USD 33 billion cash burn in the first quarter reducing to USD 16 billion in the fourth quarter. The driver of this scenario would be governments retaining significant travel restrictions through the peak northern summer travel season. In this case, 2021 demand would only be 33% of 2019 levels.

"With governments having tightening border restrictions, 2021 is shaping up to be a much tougher year than previously expected. Our best-case scenario sees airlines burning through USD 75 billion in cash this year. And it could be as bad as USD 95 billion. More emergency relief from governments will be needed. A functioning airline industry can eventually energize the economic recovery from COVID-19. But that won't happen if there are massive failures before the crisis ends. If governments are unable to open their borders, we will need them to open their wallets with financial relief to keep airlines viable," said Alexandre de Juniac, Director General and CEO, IATA.

With airlines now expected to burn cash throughout 2021 it is vital that governments and the industry are fully prepared to restart the moment governments agree that it is safe to re-open borders. That makes three initiatives critical:

- **Planning:** Preparing the industry to safely restart after a year or more of disruption will take careful planning and months of preparation. Governments can ensure that airlines are prepared to reconnect people and economies by working with industry to develop the benchmarks and plans that would

enable an orderly and timely restart.

"The UK has set a good example. Earlier this week it laid out a structure for re-opening based on an improvement in the COVID-19 situation. This gives airlines a framework to plan the restart, even if it needs to be adjusted along the way. Other governments should take note as a best practice for working with industry," said de Juniac.

- **Health Credentials:** It is becoming clear that vaccines and testing will play a role as the pandemic comes under control and economies ramp up, including the travel sector. The IATA Travel Pass will enable travelers to securely control their health data and share it with relevant authorities. A growing list of airlines—including Air New Zealand, Copa Airlines, Etihad Airways, Emirates, Qatar Airways, Malaysia Airlines, RwandAir, and Singapore Airlines—have done or are committed to doing trials with IATA Travel Pass.

"Efficient digital management of health credentials is vital to restart. Manual processes will not be able to cope with volumes once the recovery begins. Digital solutions must be secure, work with existing systems, align with global standards and respect data privacy. In developing the IATA Travel Pass these are fully in focus. The IATA Travel App will help to set the bar very high for managing health credentials, protecting against fraud and enabling a convenient travel process. While there is choice in the market for solutions, there should be no compromise on the fundamentals, or we risk failing systems, disappointed governments and travelers, and a delayed restart," said de Juniac.

- **Global Standards:** As vaccination programs and testing capacity expand, two developments have become critical—global standards to record tests and vaccines; and a plan to retrospectively record those who have already been vaccinated.

"Speed is critical. Fraudulent COVID-19 test results are already proving to be an issue. And as vaccine programs ramp up governments are using paper processes and differing digital standards to record who has been vaccinated. These are not the conditions needed to support a successful restart at scale when governments open borders. The WHO, ICAO, and OECD are working on standards, but each day without them means the challenge gets bigger. We need an early conclusion by competent authorities that the industry can plan around," said de Juniac.

"Even as governments focus on managing the COVID-19 crisis, we must be thinking a step ahead to the plans, tools and standards needed to restart flying and energize the economic recovery from COVID-19. Working in partnership is nothing new for airlines or for governments. It's how we have delivered safe, efficient, and reliable connectivity for decades. For a year it's been lockdowns and restrictions as vaccines were developed and testing capacity expanded. The reason for all the pain that this has caused is to keep people safe and to eventually be able to restore their well-being and that of the economy. With good news on vaccines and growing testing capacity, there is a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. So, it's the time to ask governments for their restart plan and to offer any support from industry that could help," said de Juniac. ♦



Start-Up Forum

Bringing Innovations at the Forefront

tripDarwin.com

By TBM Staff | Mumbai

Anticipating the impact of technology, 13 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 : tripDarwin.com
Core Team : Aditya Darooka & Nikhil Kulkarni
Founding Year : 2016
Company Websites : www.tripdarwin.com



tripDarwin.com is a platform that helps people to create dynamic packages for holidays to any part of the world and book them in real-time at the click of a button! With tripDarwin one can:

1. Create a package including hotels, transfers, local car/transport, sightseeing, meals and even tour guides;
2. Explore Trip suggestions for destinations you not known much about; and
3. Modify existing packages to the preference of the traveller.

The differentiating factor of tripDarwin apart is the depth of content and the range of flexibility along with fulfilment ability. The founders have spent years curating the content and building partnerships that few in the world of travel have under one roof. Darwin is a technology-enabled travel company that is reaching out to travel agents/companies of all sizes to help them address the following major problems:

1. Reduce overhead through automation;
2. Reduce turn-around time for packages;
3. Improve package enquiry-to-conversion ratio;
4. Improve profitability by selling new destinations.

tripDarwin was founded by Aditya Darooka and Nikhil Kulkarni in 2016. Between them, they combine Travel and Technology experience of over 35 years. Aditya started his first travel company in 2008 after working as an ethical hacker with KPMG and is channeling his significant industry knowledge into this platform. Nikhil, who spent more than a decade with KPMG consulting clients on technology, is using his technology background to helm the tech.

With cutting-edge features and combination of data and travel intelligence, tripDarwin is ready to change the way the world of travel works!



‘The new trend is customers prefer more privacy’

India has lot of unexplored destinations waiting to be explored and discovered. It is time to focus and promote such domestic destinations, says **Sunjukta Chakraborty**, CEO, Delaire (a new tourism representation company), in an interview with **Prasenjit Chakraborty**.

Q Your view on the representation business against the backdrop of the pandemic?

Yes, definitely the representation sector did get hit hard, but everything is a learning curve; these testing times do inspire us to work a lot harder. It has also shown us in what different ways we can approach our clients and market them differently.

Q What changes have you implemented in your marketing and service strategies, keeping the current situation in mind?

As we are a fairly new player in the representation business, the digital approach has been a game

changer. It is playing a pivotal role in marketing our group of hotels which we represent and helping us generating new business. All our hotels have embraced ‘the new normal’, and are adhering to the Covid-19 norms so that the clients who visit our properties feel safe and secured to enjoy their stay.

Q Which hotels that Delaire represents in India have witnessed brisk business in the last few months?

Dune Eco Village and Spa – Pondicherry for us has witnessed brisk business in the last few months as the USP of this property is that its spread across 35 acres of

land having 62 uniquely designed bungalows/villas and cottages right on the private beach front and the spacing between two villas are sufficient for the clients to feel safe as per the new norms. The guests feel comfortable to be in the lap of the nature at Dune Eco Village and Spa away from the hustle bustle of the crowded cities. Our kitchen gets stocked up with the fresh produce grown in our own organic farm inside the property.

Q What important trends you observed in terms of customer behaviour?

Now the new trend is that customers prefer more privacy and stay in private pool villas or beach villas.

So this new trend has worked in our favour as we boast of thematic accommodations like - Bamboo houses, Mud houses, Kerala style houses, Baywatch houses, Nawabi houses, Dome houses and high-end suites such as Gramam Suite, Tower suite, Karikudi suite along with pool villas.

Q Are you getting inquiries for properties which are located in lesser-known destinations?

As we are in the B2B business, our customers being travel agents are promoting lesser-known destinations more compared to the commercial ones. We are getting inquiries for our lesser-known property like Dune Elephant Valley which is situated 20kms off Kodaikanal.

Q What lessons has the pandemic taught?

We think that the domestic market is a treasure for us. This being the main lesson we in general learnt is that we used to promote international destinations more compared to domestic. We have heaps to offer as our country is beautiful and diverse in terms of culture, land and nature. So we should focus more on promoting domestic destinations which in turn are pocket-friendly. India has a lot of unexplored places waiting to be explored and cherished by our clients.

As a representation business, we learnt that we need to bring every hidden gem (properties) to the limelight which would work amicably for the clients as well as us the ones having representation business. ♦

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A shot in the Arm- Ray of Hope

By Smeeta Gulvady, Director, AdhVaam knowledge Hub

Happy days are here again..... Thums Up . .The old ad jingle keeps ringing in my ear..... Airports are buzzing, flight loads picking up. These are my observations of my first new normal flight last week. The thought of wearing a PPE throughout flight due the middle row made me queasy. When I checked at the gate, I was told that the aircraft was full!! Due to a no show and courtesy of the airline staff, I was upgraded to the front row. The inflight meal service surprised me, amazed at how we love

45.5.% respondents were impacted due to Covid19 with job losses or salary cuts.

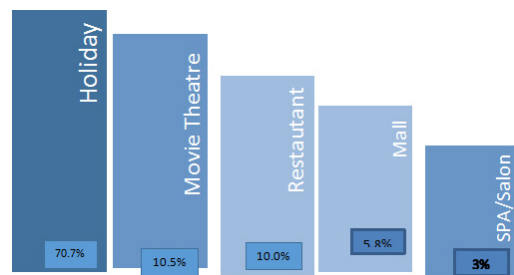
40% of the travel was within the state whilst 45.6% was domestic travel.

Will you take the vaccine?



The fear of the unknown 31.9% and side effects 60.4% being the primary reasons for avoiding vaccine. Most of the world is struggling to secure enough vaccines to inoculate their populations. India has the opposite problem: Plenty of shots, but a shortage of people willing to take them. As India rolls out one of the world's biggest inoculation programmes, there is vaccine hesitancy because of safety concerns over a vaccine that has yet to complete phase III trials.

What is the first thing you will do post the vaccine?



When asked what would motivate them to travel, 80% of respondents said vaccine, while 20% said government regulations (certification people are looking for confidence with regards to safety, hygiene standards and protocols implementation.)

How will you book your travel ?



Haryana Tourism and Maruti Suzuki and the middle class boom have been credited for pioneering 'Highway Tourism' in India. Whilst road trips are popular with improvement in the road infrastructure, implementation of FASTag, highway facilities leave much to be desired. State governments could take up PPP model towards this considering the potential. It is expected that travel demand will rebound, fuelled in part by per capita income growth(at 9% CAGR in GDP growth, per capita income should double to USD 4k/capita between 2020 and 2030 and supply side innovations with budget hotels.

Travel and tourism could see substantial recovery aided by the pent up demand once vaccination and herd immunity pushes the virus away. Indian travel market (\$ mn)
 FY20 Overall 47,088 International 11,364
 FY23 (E) Overall 50,862 International 11804
 FY30(E) Overall 1,49,631 International 44,172
 Estimates share of International outbound could rise from 24% to 30%*

The US Covid toll is the highest reported in the world, accounting for 20 per cent of the nearly 2.5 million coronavirus deaths globally. India is the second hardest hit country after the US. India has become the quickest country to go past 7 million vaccines in its ambitious vaccination drive, with the second dose administration effective February 13 for frontline healthcare workers, police, armed forces and others. In the third phase, 27 crore above 50 years of age and those with comorbidities will get the vaccine. The vaccine protects post first dose while you are waiting for the second dose.

With a fresh spike in COVID cases across the country, the rules for travel are changing again. While vaccine administration is varying region wise, there's light at the end of the tunnel and glimmer of hope Happy days are here againwell almost.

*Source: Company Reports, Citi Research ♦

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

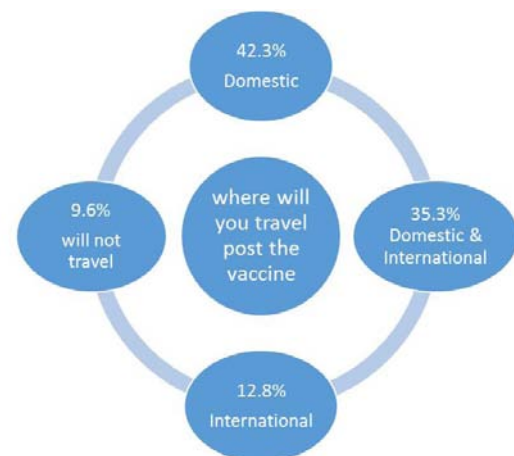
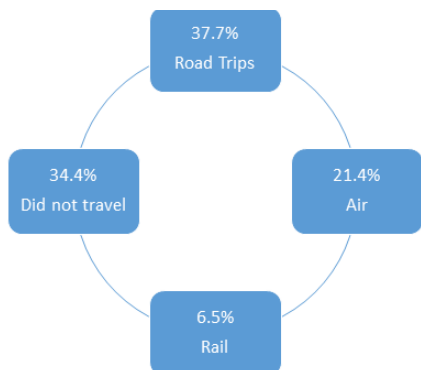


our food and can't stay without even on 1.20min flight!

Hotel occupancy levels also looking better. Currently making do with only the coffee shop, the speciality restaurants in few hotels are scheduled to open this month. The protocols of the new normal will be the future.

The results of survey conducted by me to analyse travel trends during Covid era brought out interesting insights.

Did you travel after lockdown was eased?





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