

Stakeholders seek government attention on slew of measures to save the industry

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

The first and second waves of Covid-19 have virtually devastated all segments of tourism-inbound, outbound, corporate, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions), adventure and leisure. Just when domestic tourism had slowly started picking up, the second wave completely ruined the summer season which contributes significantly of the total business. What makes the situation worse is the magnitude to the second wave which is far more powerful than the first one. There is absolutely no clarity about the business seasons beyond summer. There was a time when the industry players were putting up a brave front and optimistic about revenge travel. This time, it is missing.

With business coming almost to a standstill, the travel and tourism industry players want the government to provide support immediately. The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) urged the Union Finance and Tourism Ministries and RBI to urgently take up measures. FAITH proposed three points - waiver or compensation for Fixed Statutory Liabilities, Direct Benefit Transfer of Basic Pay and credit of SEIS dues for 2019-20. "We want the government to ensure survival of the tourism employees across the country and that is why we asked the government to pay basic payment to them. And to ensure business to survive, we have asked the government to stop fixed charges that is statutory kind. If this is done, business houses will have cash to take care of themselves till the time situation stabilises," said Aashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH.

He also pointed out that it is principally not correct that businesses have to pay statutory charges when there is no revenue. "There should be statutory charges when there is revenue," he pointed out. Talking about SEIS (Service Exports from India Scheme), Gupta said that it's a long overdue payment which

needs to be released immediately. "Tourism entities like hotels, tour operators, etc., made lot of efforts in the international markets to develop sales and marketing outreach for India. It is only correct that the compensation is given to them for their efforts. We hope policy-makers

workforce. Allocation of funds to boost the travel segment, soft loans to finance working capital, payment of overdue SEIS benefits, easing of indirect taxes and waiving of TCS would be mission critical towards aiding recovery," Iyer pointed out.

Echoing a similar sentiment, Vishal Suri, Managing Director SOTC Travel, said, "Indian travel and tourism sector is a significant contributor to the country's GDP. We strongly believe that the government needs to identify outbound tourism as a sector that creates employment, generates taxes via GST collection, TCS collection from customers." He appealed to the government to take crucial steps to revive the tourism industry in this critical situation. "TCS being an unnecessary compliance burden on travel agents and tour operators should be waived off/ rationalised. We hope for proactive reforms, flattening the GST structure, supportive policies and rationalisation of taxes for the tourism sector that will help the business back to normalcy," Suri pointed out.

Smeeta Gulvady, a certified skill trainer with a rich back ground in the travel & tourism industry strongly believes that vaccination-scale and speed are the route to recovery that includes pilots, crew, airport staff, resort staff etc. "Government initiatives and uniform policy decisions are necessary to gain confidence, to ensure safety of the traveller and for tourism to rebound as a

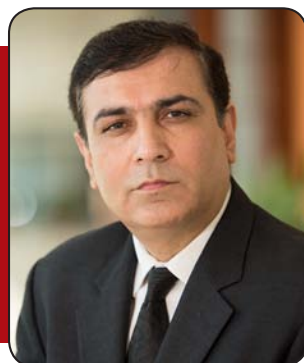
sector. Increase in travel will help in restoration of jobs," Gulvady opined. She also emphasised on developing new products. "Develop new products - Highway tourism dovetails very well in the current situation with small families, FITs travelling to non-urban areas. Highway facilities, infrastructure in smaller towns, Tier II-III including facilities en route need to be drastically improved especially the hygiene and sanitary facilities, catering, parking & service areas at food malls, petrol pumps, which in turn will generate local employment," she said. ♦



AASHISH GUPTA
Consulting CEO
FAITH



MAHESH IYER
Executive Director & CEO
Thomas Cook (India) Ltd



VISHAL SURI
Managing Director
SOTC Travel



SMEETA GULVADY
Director
AdhVaani Knowledge Hub

address all these fast because recovery is still quite a bit away," Gupta said.

When asked what measures the government should take immediately to support tourism & hospitality sector from further damage, Mahesh Iyer, Executive Director & CEO, Thomas Cook (India) Ltd, said that the industry contributes significantly to India's GDP, employment generation and is also a powerful force multiplier, hence it is imperative for the sector to revive and sustain, and more so in the Covid era. "KPMG's report had highlighted the severe impact of the pandemic on employment - at 38 million or 70% of the Tourism & Hospitality

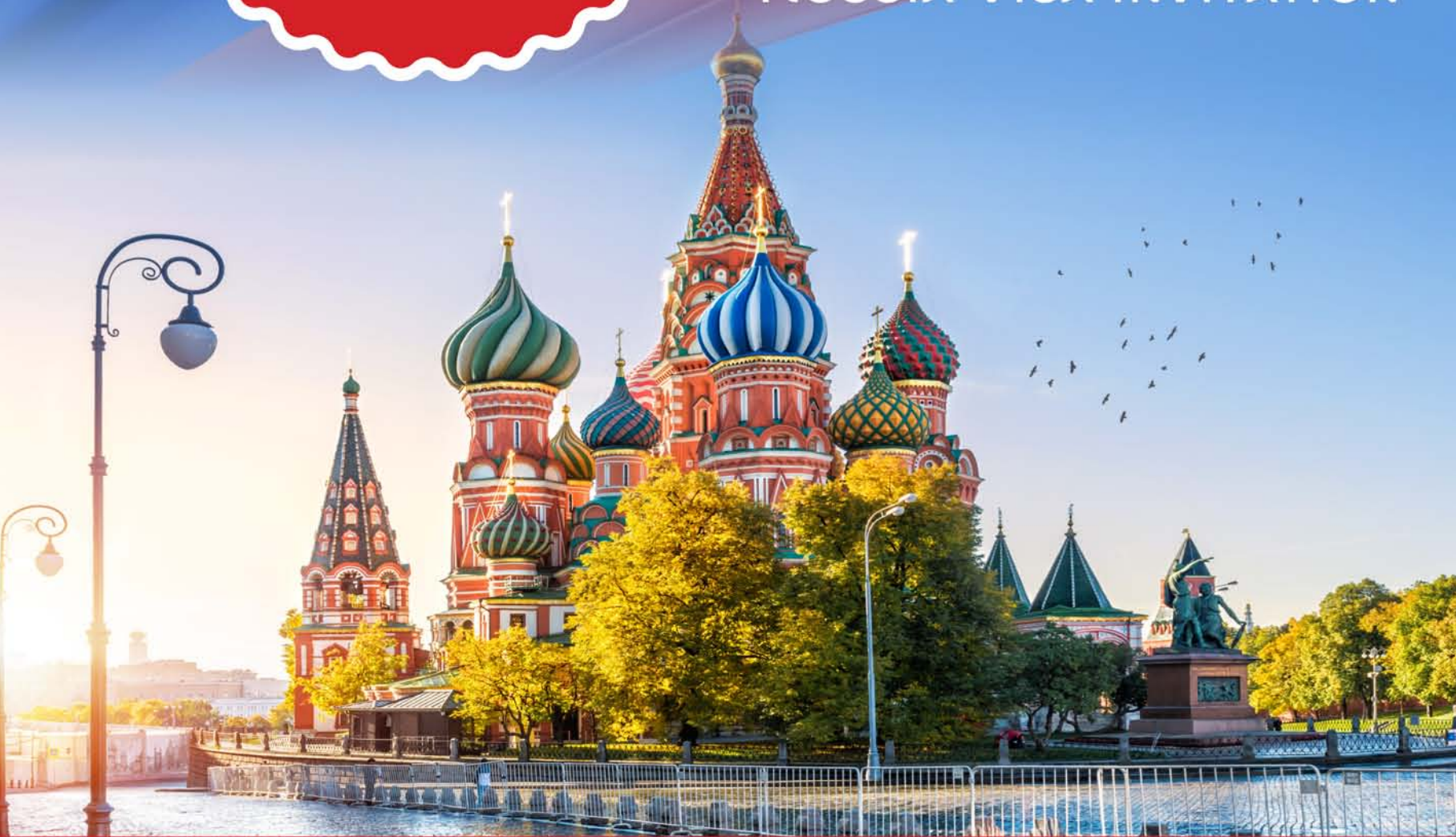


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Qatar National Tourism Council appoints BRANDit as India Representative

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The Qatar National Tourism Council (QNTC) has appointed BRANDit as the integrated sales & marketing agency in India. BRANDit will be responsible for defining and executing Qatar's in-market trade engagement, product development and joint marketing campaign strategy while overseeing initiatives to promote the country's attractions and events, including FIFA World Cup 2022.

They will be communicating QNTC's new tourism strategy as the country works towards realising the Qatar National Vision 2030, positioning Qatar as a world-class tourism destination.

Commenting on the appointment, Philip Dickinson, Vice President International Markets, QNTC, said, "We are excited to have BRANDit as our marketing and sales partner in India to promote Qatar's new value proposition to tour operators,

online travel agencies and consumers at large. The team at BRANDit demonstrated a deep understanding of Qatar's positioning and proposed an integrated approach that

a strong partner to mastermind a strategic approach that will elevate Qatar's destination positioning and increase awareness of its valuable assets like Qatari culture and history, natural assets such as its fantastic beaches, spectacular desert and Inland Sea, world-class arts and entertainment and adventure offerings, while also fortifying the country's international profile and reputation.

Lubaina Sheerazi, CEO & Co-founder, BRANDit, added, "It is truly an honour to be entrusted with the mandate of representing the Qatar National Tourism Council in India. Qatar is a vibrant destination with innovation at the forefront. As travel gradually opens up, our role will be to support and deliver the next evolution of QNTC's tourism strategy to place Qatar as one of the most desirable destinations for Indian travellers. It is an exciting time and with the upcoming FIFA World Cup in 2022, Qatar is truly going to be a destination to discover and look out for." ♦



PHILIP DICKINSON
Vice President International
Markets, QNTC



LUBAINA SHEERAZI
CEO & Co-founder
BRANDit

will inspire Indians to make Qatar their next travel destination. We look forward to working with them to aggressively drive our marketing plans in the India market."

The objective of the appointment was to find

TAAI appeals to IATA to waive off annual fees & extend financial security deadline

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) has appealed to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to reconsider the extension of Financial Security by one more year and also asked for a waiver in Annual Fees considering the global pandemic. These concerns were shared by TAAI President Jyoti Mayal during a webinar organised along with IATA on GoLite Accreditation v/s Standard IATA Travel Agency Accreditation & IATA Easy Pay. Over 250 members attended the session from across India's 20 Regions & Chapters of TAAI.

The Financial Security renewal is scheduled for June 30, 2021 and this year due to the withdrawal of Iffco Tokio General Insurance from providing extension/renewal of securing the airlines against agency defaults, the burden of the member

travel agents has fallen on the Association to include members into its Joint Bank Guarantee Program. Agents can also provide their own Bank Guarantees to IATA but, the banks are asking for over 100% as co-lateral to provide the same.

Over the last two years TAAI has been appealing to MoCA and IATA to rework Financial Security towards protecting the travel agents from Airlines defaults and its suspension of services, which has impacted the travel agents by several hundred crores.

Sales of member agents over the last one year has dropped to less than 5%

of the total sales it conducted in financial year 2019-20. Due to the same TAAI too has rebated its members on its annual membership fees.

At the webinar, IATA-India was represented by Amitabh Khosla, Rodney Dcruz and Ritham Saha who presented the accreditation options available to agencies

under the NewGen ISS.

The presentation featured comparisons on accreditation models to the members. Due to the pandemic lockdown, travel agents across India were undergoing challenging times on IATA's stringent and rigid compliances.

The comparison shared by IATA on GoStandard v/s GoLite, stated that members opting for GoLite would be exempt from providing to IATA, Financial Statements, Annual Financial Review and Financial Security. The GoLite agents would be required to make payment for its sales on cash and carry basis only from the funds available in its EasyPay account, which are held with two empanelled banks with IATA, being Yes Bank and Standard Chartered Bank in India.

Although with no assurance from IATA or any operating airline in India that Ticketing Authority would be made available to all agents. The airline/s reserve their right to allot the same to agents on selective basis. Mayal stated that the same has been placed once again in the forthcoming APJC – India meeting for consideration. ♦



JYOTI MAYAL
President, TAAI

Part One of Chalo USA webinar generates good response

TBM Staff | Mumbai

On April 28, Brand USA in association with TravelBiz Monitor conducted Part One of the Chalo USA webinar series. The webinar educated the audience on offerings of three popular US tourist destinations—the capital city Washington DC, Nashville fondly called the Music City of Tennessee and Beverly Hills in California.

Before the presentations, US travel guidelines during the Covid-19 period were explained.

Besides this, the webinar also threw light on new flights under the Air Bubble agreement between India and the USA. Hyderabad and Bengaluru are the newest cities from India that have direct connectivity with the US.

Destination DC highlighted how it has emerged as a premier global convention, tourism and events destination, with special emphasis on the arts, culture and historical communities. It was also explained that Washington DC has much to offer to visitors and an interesting itinerary ranging from 3-4 days to 10 days can easily be offered for the city and surrounding areas, better known as Capital Region, boasting of great connectivity via its 3 airports. The presentation also spoke about various accommodation options like Hotel ZENA, Eaton DC, Generator Washington DC, W Washington DC, and how all of them are unique in their own way.



To have a sumptuous lunch, the presentation introduced the trade with the five restaurants run by women, Colada Shops, Chaia, Thamee, Puddin and Republic Restorative, all catering to different types of cuisine. Dinner cruising on the river of Potomac is another beautiful way to enjoy the city, and Go Go Music and DC Jazz festivals are the other attractions for visitors. This year's Jazz festival will be held in September in a hybrid mode. The Kennedy Centre for Performing Arts was also highlighted at the webinar.

Similarly, the second presentation was on Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp which highlighted that the Music City continues its emergence as a cultural, artistic and entertainment hub, filled with unique music and event venues. Besides these, the city has a myriad of art galleries, historic homes, botanical gardens & green ways, professional sports, and award-winning dining outlets. The presentation also updated the attendees that Nashville Music City has emerged as one of the 50 Best places to Travel in 2021. On the safety front, Nashville is second to none. Nashville has been named a Safe Travels destination by the World Travel and Tourism Council making it one of only three destinations in the United States to achieve this distinction. It also made spectacular progress on food, and witnessed the opening of 90 new restaurants in 2020.

The third presentation was on Beverly Hills Conference & Visitors Bureau. Beverly Hills is an independent city within the region of Los Angeles and in terms of connectivity (from India) LAX is the nearest airport. Beverly Hills Conference & Visitors Bureau is the city's destination and marketing organisation which acts as the resource bank for visitors, members of media and the travel trade. As per their presentation, the city is closely monitoring the pandemic situation and has taken robust steps in terms of safety and hygiene. Currently, all indoor and outdoor dining facilities are open. One of the greatest USPs of Beverly Hills is its location, being conveniently situated within 10 miles of most popular places like Hollywood, Santa Monica beaches, Universal Studios etc. It also offers activities for the whole family like Classic car shows, summer movies in the park, summer concerts at Greystone Mansion and Beverly Canon Gardens etc. The presentation also highlighted the city's art & culture scene, hotel and lodging facilities, future sports events in Los Angeles, etc.

At the end of the presentation, there was a Q&A session online, where some interesting questions were put forth by attendees, making the whole session quite interactive. The webinar also reinforced the fact that people are very interested to travel once the situation turns normal.

The idea behind conducting the Chalo USA webinars is to ensure the trade fraternity is well equipped with the latest updates straight from US destinations being showcased. ♦

Sublimis Technologies' ERP platform Brahmaand covers entire life cycle of holiday business

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Brahmaand is an end-to-end disruptive travel holiday ERP platform from Sublimis Technologies. "This platform makes various processes, components, services and systems come together through real time seamless integration, giving users the ultimate holiday booking experience," said Karthik Venkataraman, Co-founder & CEO, Sublimis Technologies. The platform focuses on automation of the complete life-cycle of holiday business using AI/ML methods.

According to Venkataraman, the platform covers the entire life cycle of holiday business

right from product set up (supports all travel services), supplier management, distribution across point of sales, order management system, CRM from pre-sales to post sales functions, dynamic packaging and MIS & Business Intelligence.

The user experience is flexible and customisable depending on the client requirement and Point of Sale. It has a powerful CMS to manage both static and dynamic contents. "The platform is global and supports multi-lingual, multi-currency, device agnostic



KARTHIK VENKATARAMAN
Co-founder & CEO
Sublimis Technologies

and can be seamlessly integrated with third-party systems through APIs. The complete platform is responsive and supports mobile apps as well."

Any holiday type can be managed on the platform – be it FIT, Groups, Adventure, Sports, MICE and so on. Any company who is into the business of holidays – be it DMCs, tour operators, travel agents, airlines offering holidays, adventure companies, sports holiday providers, MICE companies and so on," explained Venkataraman. ♦



Start-Up Forum

Bringing Innovations to the Forefront

Augtraveler

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.vgmtechsolutions.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.vgmtechsolutions.com/form.html>

Startup Name: Augtraveler

Core Team: Pankaj Manchanda - Founder & CEO, Manish Upadhyay - Founding Partner & Sumit Gupta - Founding Team/ Tech LEAD

Founding Year: October, 2018

Company Website: www.augtraveler.com

Augtraveler is an award-winning DIPP-approved Start-up in the Heritage and Culture Travel space. The platform uses Augmented Reality (AR), Geo Fencing and Multimedia to enhance the visitor experience at the UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Cultural trails of India.

1. The mandate is to further sensitise the masses of the rich cultural heritage of India, which ironically lacks authentic and accurate interpretation despite its richness and value.
2. The platform builds on self-guided AR and Geo location-based heritage trails, which connects the travelers directly with the 'host communities' in the vicinity of the sites - ensuring tourism dollars reach them and therefore facilitating in evolution of a sustainable livelihood model for the 'host communities'. The communities are also provided an 'online marketplace' where they can push the authentic crafts, cuisines and related services. The essence is to evolve a sustainable livelihood model for them whilst promoting and therefore preserving the intangible cultural heritage of a region.
3. Augtraveler also have a school outreach programme where they have evolved multidisciplinary activities using experiential learning pedagogy, using a World Heritage Site as a premise. The mandate is to help school kids apply their knowledge on concepts picked up in classrooms and evolve these monuments as knowledge dissemination zones.

The project vision is aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goals of 12.b, 10, 11, 8 and 4.





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THAT TITANIC MOMENT

Will the lower cabins' gate be unlocked before first class passengers board the life boats?

The hurt is deep. A number of studies seem to indicate the organised Indian tourism industry has already lost around INR 5 lakh crore. Tour operators and agencies must be bearing the brunt of INR 35,000 crore and hotels have suffered a decline of revenue to the tune of a whopping 80percent.

This was apparently before the second phase of the scourge from Wuhan wreaked havoc across the nation.

Everyone knows life is not the same anymore. That it will further undergo more drastic changes is a foregone conclusion. How will the coming months (and years) change the structure of travel and tourism demand and supply is still unsure. The mist on the repercussions it will have on the economy might lift much later. Yet even before alternative approaches and strategies are considered there is an unknown factor to consider. How will the travelling clientele behave? Pundits on industry boards can prophesise till the cows come home, but the virus and its trajectory will dictate the course for the future. No one else.

The litany so far was the absence of government support to the industry. It is fast turning into what next best by way of options, alternatives and businesses?

What started as policy interventions needed to help maintain workforce has rapidly morphed into urgency for a drastic reinvention, recovery, and total salvage of the Titanic.

The chatterati of the travel business might survive the blow. Pontifications and seminar circuit opinions and advice are all good. However, the astonishing and unfortunate obliteration of a huge percentage of unorganised travel businesses has not even been registered. A cursory tabulation of the distress of those in the 'organised' list will suffice to warn of the extent of the disaster.

It is a war and it's all hands on the deck. There is no space for the moaners or the I-told-you-so's. In the usual sophistry of words, what shouldn't be lost is the dire need to reach out to the one clambering on the rung below the ladder.

Oxygen cylinders stacked in houses of the healthy need to be released for those who need it. In other words, the time is to put the money where the mouth is.

Oddly, none of the august bodies have embarked on any such attempt. Or did we miss something?

Anurag Yadav
Industry Expert

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

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Q Many surveys have pointed out that Indian consumers are looking for new experiential products. How does AIUla fit in the bill in terms of catering to varied tourist profile?

AIUla is a place of extraordinary human and natural heritage. AIUla is home to a series of fascinating historical and archaeological sites. It is a perfect destination for family, adventure-seekers, honeymooners and MICE. AIUla is a year-round luxury destination rich in heritage, art and culture. The world's masterpiece, AIUla, is a living museum that holds 200,000 years of largely unexplored human history. The four key pillars of AIUla are Heritage, Adventure, Art & Culture and Nature.

For the discerning Indian travellers, AIUla has a wide range of accommodations from luxury accommodations with villas to Recreational Vehicles catering to various categories of travellers. One can plan a 2-3 days itinerary to experience AIUla covering heritage sites, adventure and outdoor activities and other tourism products. One can also spend a week in AIUla and include a road trip experience with sun and sea. AIUla's vast open spaces provide the perfect backdrop for safe, fun, exploration with more experiences opening up over the coming months. AIUla's new zipline experience has caused quite a stir among adventure-seeking travellers.

One of the longest in the world, visitors will race along to a speed of over 100km/h while enjoying the incredible scenery of the Hijaz Mountain range – this one is not for the faint-hearted. Other adventure experiences include a range of hiking trails, cycling trails, a bike park, and horse treks. Far away from city lights in the vast open space of AIUla's remote Gharameel desert lands, a magical evening of stargazing is a must-do experience for nature lovers. Led by a star expert, visitors will learn about the constellations and their relation

to the ancient land's culture and history as they marvel at the brilliance of the dark sky sprinkled with infinite stars.

Q In terms of trade and media outreach in India, enumerate on your action plan.

We are working on creating partnerships with airlines, media and trade engagement to introduce AIUla as a premier destination in the minds of Indian travellers. Once the world reaches the recovery stage, our on ground teams would organise in-person events, roadshows and sales meets. The key part of this exercise would be to bring AIUla suppliers for media and trade engagement,

and our sales mission. On the digital marketing front, we will focus on travel trade tactical campaigns. We will also see our flag carrier, Saudia playing a key role in all our engagement activities.

Q Do you have plan to attract film production companies to AIUla?

Yes, there is an organisation within the destination marketing team, which focuses on bringing and coordinating for film shoots, and they work closely with our CEO on establishing production capabilities, educational videos, and content launch through commercials and partnerships. We certainly want to focus on Bollywood films because they are impactful, and it will be exciting to see AIUla in a Bollywood film.

Q In terms of arrivals, what is your target for the coming five years from India?

We don't have a specific target for the next five years as it is difficult to access the market during Covid. We see that the short-term opportunity of those willing to travel to AIUla will



'We are going to remain invested in India for the long-haul'

be 1.6 million Indian visitors. That's a range looking at the total population, considering the affluent segment size that is more of our target, which in our assessment is 13.8 million. It certainly is a fraction of the Indian population, but reaching the right people with the right profile to discover AIUla is a special opportunity for that segment.

Q What kind of investment can we expect from you in the Indian market?

We are committed and invested in the Indian market with an on-ground team of Beautiful Planet, and also investing in partnerships with the likes of Thomas Cook, SOTC, and Saudia Airlines. We are continuing to invest in India as we see it as a major opportunity. We understand India is a big religious market, and that is another area for us to work with trade partners. We are going to remain invested in India for the long-haul. India definitely ranks pretty highly on our 11 global source markets list. ♦

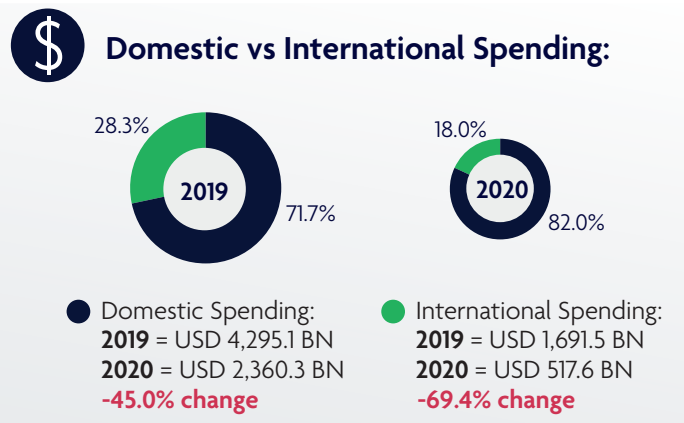
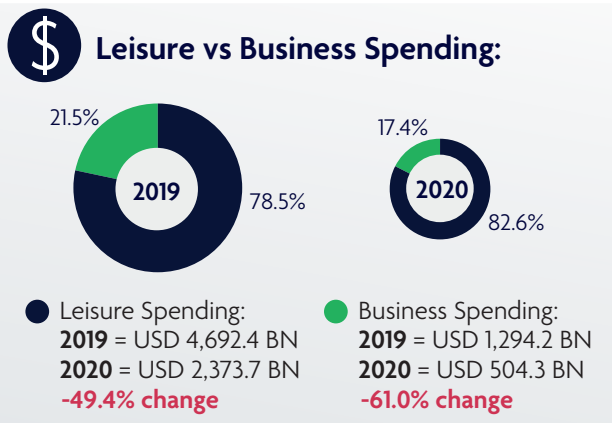
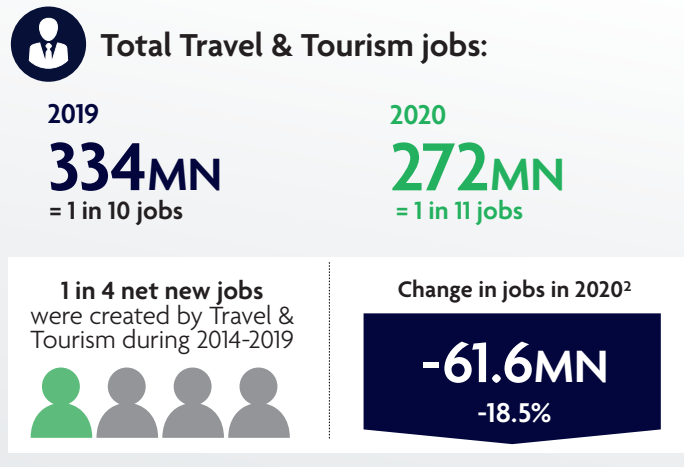
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Saudi Arabia's hidden gem of AIUla has forayed in the Indian market with its four pillars of Heritage, Adventure, Art & Culture and Nature. **Tyler Gosnell**, Head of International Destination Management and Marketing Office, The Royal Commission of AIUla in an interaction with **Disha Shah Ghosh** spoke about their outreach programme, investment and target segment.

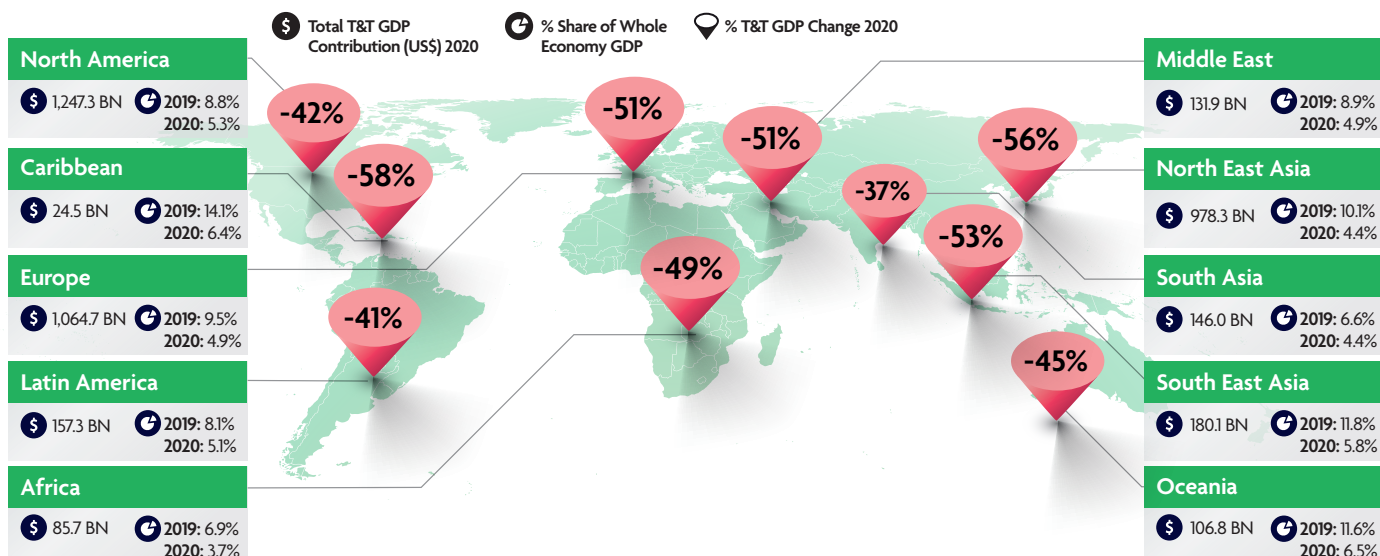
Globally travel & tourism sector suffered loss of almost USD 4.5 trillion in 2020: WTTC

WTTC's 2021 Economic Impact Report identified a dramatic fall in GDP. It also revealed that the global Travel & Tourism sector suffered a loss of almost USD 4.5 trillion in 2020 due to the impact of Covid-19, with nearly 62 million jobs lost, representing a drop of 18.5 per cent leaving just 272 million employed across the industry, globally. **TravelBiz Monitor** presents some key highlights of the same...

GLOBAL DATA



TRAVEL & TOURISM REGIONAL PERFORMANCE



A CLOSER LOOK

G20 Countries: Select Travel & Tourism Indicators

	T&T contribution to GDP (US\$ BN)		T&T % of GDP		T&T GDP change (%)	Share of Total T&T Spending 2020		T&T Spending Change 2020 (%)	
	2020	(2019)	2020	(2019)		2020	Domestic	International	Domestic
1 United States	1,103.7	1869.7	5.3	8.6	-41.0	93.9	6.1	-37.1	-76.7
2 China	667.2	1665.6	4.5	11.6	-59.9	88.0	12.0	-60.8	-66.3
3 Japan	234.9	373.0	4.7	7.1	-37.0	94.6	5.4	-30.3	-82.9
4 Germany	208.8	393.1	5.5	9.8	-46.9	88.4	11.6	-47.3	-57.9
5 Italy	132.2	269.8	7.0	13.1	-51.0	80.6	19.4	-49.6	-62.0
6 France	123.2	240.5	4.7	8.5	-48.8	67.1	32.9	-49.8	-52.9
7 India	121.9	191.3	4.7	6.9	-36.3	89.0	11.0	-30.7	-61.0
8 United Kingdom	115.0	305.0	4.2	10.1	-62.3	85.4	14.6	-63.2	-71.6
9 Mexico	91.2	175.6	8.5	15.0	-48.1	85.0	15.0	-48.0	-49.3
10 Australia	81.4	149.1	6.0	10.7	-45.4	91.0	9.0	-41.0	-77.2
11 Brazil	78.0	115.7	5.5	7.7	-32.6	94.4	5.6	-35.6	-39.1
12 Spain*	75.4	202.1	5.9	14.1	-62.7	63.2	36.8	-50.7	-78.2
13 Canada	52.4	111.6	3.2	6.4	-53.0	81.2	18.8	-51.0	-71.1
14 Saudi Arabia	48.5	79.2	7.1	9.8	-38.8	66.2	33.8	-30.9	-80.4
15 Russia	40.1	75.5	2.7	4.9	-47.0	82.5	17.5	-43.9	-69.6
16 South Korea	39.9	73.2	2.4	4.4	-45.5	67.9	32.1	-34.0	-68.0
17 Turkey	35.5	77.6	5.0	11.0	-54.2	47.2	52.8	-41.8	-65.2
18 Indonesia	34.5	64.7	3.2	5.9	-46.6	78.4	21.6	-35.2	-78.4
19 Argentina	24.3	38.9	6.5	9.4	-37.5	91.7	8.3	-35.1	-66.7
20 South Africa	11.1	22.1	3.7	6.9	-49.8	66.7	33.3	-42.8	-66.0

* Spain is included here as it is invited to G20 events as a permanent guest.

LARGEST T&T ECONOMIES - 2019 VS. 2020 RANKINGS

Total contribution to GDP 2019:
(US\$, real 2020 prices and exchange rates, billions)

1 United States	1,869.7
2 China	1,665.6
3 Germany	393.1
4 Japan	373.0
5 United Kingdom	305.0
6 Italy	269.8
7 France	240.5
8 Spain	202.1
9 India	191.3
10 Mexico	175.6
11 Australia	149.1
12 Brazil	115.7
13 Canada	111.6
14 Thailand	106.5
15 Netherlands	101.6
16 Philippines	90.0
17 Saudi Arabia	79.2
18 Turkey	77.6
19 Russia	75.5
20 South Korea	73.2

Total contribution to GDP 2020:
(US\$, real 2020 prices and exchange rates, billions)

1 United States	1,103.7
2 China	667.2
3 Japan	234.9
4 Germany	208.8
5 Italy	132.2
6 France	123.2
7 India	121.9
8 United Kingdom	115.0
9 Mexico	91.2
10 Australia	81.4
11 Brazil	78.0
12 Spain	75.4
13 Netherlands	64.6
14 Philippines	52.8
15 Canada	52.4
16 Saudi Arabia	48.5
17 Thailand	41.7
18 Russia	40.1
19 South Korea	39.9
20 Switzerland	36.8

1 This data includes the direct, indirect, and induced impact of Travel & Tourism. Source: WTTC and Oxford Economics. All values are in constant 2020 prices & exchange rates. As reported in March 2021
2 Where countries or regions have implemented job support schemes and supported jobs are still recorded as employment by national statistical authorities, job losses exclude those supported jobs (where known).



The Future of Tourism Jobs

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

Being part of the tourism fraternity, I share the pain of the colleagues in the industry. Having said that, as an academic, I also need to highlight the pressing priorities. I have been saying that a large country and economy like India has to recourse to structural adjustments to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, as different from a suggested sectoral approach. The coronavirus pandemic adversely affected the economy of both developing and developed countries. Many sectors of the economy, particularly the tourism and hospitality sector,

observed unemployment, job insecurity, and uncertainty.

The tourism industry, like other industries, rightly looks forward to the government for support though only in the interim. However, it is time to look beyond. On the one hand, it is also understood that a pandemic of this magnitude and nature is once a century of an occurrence. It is almost certain that the world will look at 'touch and contact' aspects of their job roles differently. Contact intensive jobs will be looked upon with suspicion, and most business would like to avoid them as far as possible. This situation drives us to look at jobs from three critical dimensions - one, how many contacts with customers and others is required in the role; two, can this business be avoided; and finally, can this be delivered virtually?

McKinsey, in a recent report, analysed the work scenarios from physical proximity angle. Physical proximity, according to this report, has two dimensions - human interaction and work environment. Human interaction, in turn, depends on physical closeness, frequency of interactions, and exposure to strangers. Human interaction plays a significant role in tourism and hospitality jobs. The very nature of tourism jobs demands physical closeness, frequent interaction, and exposure to strangers. On the other hand, work environment refers to whether the work and interaction are carried out indoors and if the work is site-dependent. Both the context-indoor and field are a vital part of tourism jobs

Though there are a variety of jobs, yet most real-time experience requires contact. Unfortunately, in case of a similar calamity, tourism will always be among the first to be restricted, considering it as non-essential. We have seen this in the case of earlier health catastrophes. The pertinent question is that can tourism and hospitality experiences be delivered using technology substituting human touch in such scenarios?

Though there are many service industries, let us compare tourism and hospitality with other services, particularly healthcare, banking, and personal care, each of which is presently contact-intensive. Healthcare and banking are highly organised compared to tourism and leisure and the personal care industry (including salons, gyms, etc.). The tourism and leisure, and personal care sectors are highly fragmented, with many micro and smaller players supporting fewer low-end vulnerable jobs.

While medical jobs may require more physical closeness, yet they are considered essential. A lot of medical interactions are experimenting with online consulting. However, a more significant part of the experience would have to be delivered in real-time and is non-substitutable. Personal care jobs might require more physical closeness than tourism jobs and are likely to meet the same fate. In a similar scenario, they would be suspended. However, many wellness products, especially consultancy and advice, have quickly moved online.

Similarly, healthcare, banking, personal care, and education require more frequent interactions than tourism and leisure jobs. While healthcare is essential, banking and educations have the propensity to go online, personal care and tourism jobs, in many cases, cannot do so. Though hospitality is likely to use technology and self-service protocols as a substitute to contact, tourism jobs will find the substitution difficult. Tourism and hospitality jobs also run the maximum risk of exposure to strangers. The respite being that tourism jobs are not confined indoors and are not much facility dependent. Attractions and desired destinations will change with more visitors preferring outdoors, wilderness, and natural settings.

Tourism would continue to be attractive, as it will be an essential contributor to the economy. During the present pandemic, we also learnt that tourism is also essential for the smooth functioning of the social system and even individuals. It is more resilient and will bounce back faster than many sectors. It will contribute through equitable distribution of tourism receipts and jobs created. The concern, however, is that tourism jobs will continue to be vulnerable. Tourism being a lifestyle product, a significant part of the sector will be a gig economy characterised by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work instead of permanent jobs. On the other hand, there is a trend of job-experience hopping noticeable among millennials. On their part, they may not like to stick to roles in the tourism sector for a long time.

The tourism industry and the professionals in the sector need to relook at the job profiles - they may not keep all the eggs in one basket. Cross-skilling and multiple engagements in a gig economy may be on the anvil. ♦

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



Dr Nimit Chowdhary is Professor of Tourism with the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Jamia Millia Islamia. He has more than 27 years of the 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 125 academic papers. He has travelled extensively to around 40 countries and almost all states within the country.



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‘Sri Lanka is seen as an exemplary destination for safe travel’

When in-person or physical events will return, it doesn't mean virtual events will cease, they will also remain because so many people have now been exposed to them and many have invested in the infrastructure to make the virtual events work, says **Puneet Dutta**, GM, Amari Galle Sri Lanka, in an interaction with **Prasenjit Chakraborty**.

Q What is the USP of Amari Galle?

Galle is one of the most important cities on the South coasts of Sri Lanka and the Amari brand is the centrepiece of ONYX Hospitality Group's portfolio of brands, reflecting warmth and vibrant energy of modern Asia. Amari Galle is an award-winning, all-inclusive resort located in an area rich in historical and cultural significance and only a seven-minute drive from Galle Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. All 172 rooms and suites are beautifully furnished and come fully equipped with every modern amenity, own balcony or private terrace, and the best part, every single room and suite is guaranteed an ocean view. We are popular among those looking for beachfront/destination weddings, and have seen couples from all over the world.

Q According to you, will the recent air travel bubble between India and Sri Lanka lead to a surge in Indian tourists visiting Amari Galle? How are you planning to manage the increased number of visitors?

Absolutely, we are all very excited about India opening up and we see a lot of demand with safety being the primary focus. Sri Lanka is a leading travel destination having received the Safe Travel stamp by

the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). International travellers can choose to stay at any of the Tier 1 certified 'Safe and Secure' hotels. They can move within Tier-I hotels in the country, can visit approved tourist attractions and explore the destination freely provided that guests are fully vaccinated prior to their arrival and the mandatory PCR tests are done and upon ensuring that all guidelines and procedures are followed correctly.

Q Tell us about your current capacity and how are you ensuring the safety of your staff and guests during these turbulent times?

Amari Galle is a certified 'Safe

& Secure' hotel and has started welcoming international guests. Our primary focus is to ensure the safety of travellers, our team and the community. Although there have been changes to the standard operational procedures, the one thing that remains unchanged is to ensure that we meet guest expectations and thus far we have received a lot of positive feedback. We also encourage visitors to check that the hotel they choose to visit is committed to offering a safe and healthy environment through enhanced hygiene and safety measures like ONYX Clean offered by all Amari hotels.

Q Can you enlighten us about the various guidelines that an Indian tourist needs to keep in mind while visiting Sri Lanka and Amari Galle?

Having the world's highest success rate in combatting Covid-19, Sri Lanka is seen as an exemplary destination for safe travel. They are also monitoring varied procedures to enhance safe and secure travel, from visa processes to medical insurance, immigration and check-in policies to traveling within the country, and have also established guidelines for attractions and sightseeing locations. Apart from that, there have been several successful FAM tours, virtual roadshows, and strategic

collaborations done for promoting the country. If you choose to travel to Sri Lanka and visit Amari Galle, this is what you'll need to know <https://www.amari.com/galle-srilanka/important-booking-information>.

Q Which customer segment is currently forming the biggest chunk of your bookings?

Currently we are seeing a lot of Free Independent Travellers (FIT) on long stays patronising the hotels. The economic scales have shifted, and hygiene and safety are a key priority. Guests are willingly spending more on comfort, luxury and experiences. Amari Galle is an award-winning, all-inclusive resort that presents the ideal getaway for any and all segments.

Q With business events getting cancelled all around due to the coronavirus pandemic, how are you compensating the decline in MICE segment revenue?

During the pandemic, virtual events and conferences became a staple for companies trying to replace in-person experiences. While in-person events will return, virtual events will also remain because so many people have now been exposed to them and many have invested in the infrastructure to make virtual events work. We have also adapted the new hybrid model, where a conference will take place in person, but there will also be an online version of the event for virtual attendees.

Q Are you witnessing any changes in guest behaviour in the new normal?

Travel is becoming a priority and as travellers return to their vacation and business travel schedules, guest expectations have also evolved post pandemic and they are willing to spend more on services. For example, business travellers are happy to pay for their own extras, upgrades on items such as airline seats, hotel and/or hotel rooms and millennials at their age group are happy to spend their own money on enhancing their on-the-job travel experience. Improved hygiene is another deciding factor as guests will demand higher hygiene standards. ♦

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Atlas Shrunk

By **Renuka Natu**, Founder – Director, Renuka Natu Travel Relations

The conventional vacation season is upon us.

& the entire world is headed towards – CONUNDRUM! Sadly, that's not even a place.

Conundrum exists for sure, only in a State called 'Mind'.

Mind, which is abuzz with a million thoughts, some original, some borrowed and many forced or influenced by external factors.

What we see, what we hear & what we

the destinations.

To pick that strawberry & to lick that gelato, you must be there!

Let's understand what the 'Second Wave' in India means for us the Tourism Industry?

Causes of the Second Wave?

- Huge religious gatherings.
- Re-opening of most public places
- Crowded election rallies

A false sense of normalcy had slithered in which caught everybody including the incautious authorities off-guard.

Cases are alarming!

- 18th June 2020 - India recorded 11,000 cases and in the next 60 days, it added 35,000 new cases on average every day.
- 10th February 2021 at the beginning of the second wave, India confirmed 11,000 cases - and in the next 50 days, the daily average was around 22,000 cases. But in the week that followed, cases rose hard with the daily average reaching 89,800.

How is it affecting the Tourism & Hospitality Industry?

Aviation-

- The domestic aviation sector is in a state of jeopardy, as they are not able to predict the load factors thus spinning their yield management out of control.
- On domestic segments, the daily passenger demand has dropped by around 12-13% (246,600 pax) towards the last week of March'21, versus the last week of Feb'21
- April'21 has seen a further nosedive of around 5%
- Most airlines have stopped operations to India for the moment & those that are operating are charging exorbitant fares, since demand on Inbound & Outbound sectors are disproportionate.

Hospitality-

- Since September '20, the Hotel Industry in India was witnessing month-on-month growth in occupancies.
- In December, occupancies surpassed 40%, main segment was leisure travel.
- Till Feb'21, hoteliers were expecting recovery to continue in FY22.
- Most large hotel chains are expected to

close FY21 with net losses.

- 70% of costs of the hotel industry are fixed costs.
- Cash reserves have drained.

Testing & Vaccinations-

- Almost 1/3rd of total states in India have imposed strict lockdown restrictions/ curfews & mandatory RTPCR testing, leading to a faded desire for travel in general.
- People are struggling to get vaccinated at the first available opportunity after which they presume, they will be free to travel. However, this is not the case, even after getting vaccinated one is still required to take the mandatory RTPCR test to enter most Indian States as well as all International Countries.

Conclusion

- In India, the Tourism Sector must gain 'Industry Status' with active participation in policy making, since it is a matter of national pride as well as a huge generator of employment.
- Developing a disaster management framework to handle current and future pandemic like threats has become imperative.
- The effects of such catastrophes are felt globally since vendors & business partners are linked in the global economic chain.
- Uncertainties will keep the travellers away, making survival for the industry a huge challenge, especially with no support / subsidies from the Government.

The comforting prospects going forward-

- Gimmicks won't sell, flexibility & honesty will.
- Those who possess product & process knowledge will excel
- In around 18 months, considering all other factors remain constant & considering that 3/4th of the world would have been vaccinated, we will be as busy as we have been in our most productive year thus far.
- The demand for travel will be huge both domestic & international.

Till then let's shield our dreams under our wings & tread softly but steadily, one step & one flight at a time.

Sources -

<https://www.businesstoday.in/sectors/aviation>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56811315>

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/travel/> ♦

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



then spread through our own words is what is leading us to this non-existent roadblock called Conundrum.

It's that time of the year, when we should be riding a few waves at some of the gorgeous beaches on our beautiful planet, instead we are forced to ride the ominous 'Second Wave'.

There definitely is truth & horror in the situation, as we grieve the demise of loved ones near & far every other day.

It's a World War like situation, except this time the entire human race is on one side fighting the lethal virus.

Almost 90% of work is happening on online platforms, then why is it that our Tourism Industry seems to be one of the most adversely affected?

The reason is simple, though ours is an experiential, intangible space, it cannot become palpable unless one physically visits



‘Ropeways facilitate tourism opportunities in inaccessible destinations’

There are many beautiful destinations in India located in remote areas that remain inaccessible to most of the population due to lack of proper transportation facilities. Ropeways can help in making such places accessible and increasing tourism opportunities, says **Aditya Chamaria**, Managing Director, DRIL, in an interaction with **Prasenjit Chakraborty**.

Q What is the contribution of Damodar Ropeways and Infra Ltd (DRIL) in promoting or facilitating tourism in inaccessible areas of India?

DRIL has over four decades of experience with numerous projects in India and abroad. We have our ropeway projects at many tourist spots that help passengers travel to and from various inaccessible destinations while enjoying the scenic views. Many ropeways lead to temples that are otherwise inaccessible or dangerous via roads. DRIL's ropeways act as a connecting bridge between places, attracting tourists and locals and aids in facilitating tourism. Most of our sites are prime tourist spots such as Auli, Pushkar, Naina Devi, Vaishno Devi, Maihar, Dewas, etc.

Q Tell us more about your project in Namchi, Sikkim. What are the important changes it brought in the tourism sector in that area?

Namchi is a tourist town in the beautiful state of Sikkim and is the capital state of south Sikkim. The 2.7-km-long cable car project built by DRIL is divided into two sections. The first section is from PWD Rest House to Rock Garden and the second section is from Rock Garden to near Samdruptse Monastery. The ropeway was built

on a difficult terrain to provide an eco-friendly transportation system and the development of tourism. It has become a popular part of people's itinerary here.

Q Do you think there is huge scope in India to develop tourism through ropeways? If yes, elaborate.

The majority of the ropeways in India are built at spots that connect tourist destinations and are a major attraction amongst the people flocking from various parts of the world. We still have many remote and beautiful destinations inaccessible by most of the population because of the lack of proper transportation. Ropeways can help in making these places

accessible and increasing tourism opportunities.

We have observed through our experience that from the time ropeways start getting developed, there is an improvement in the local business and trade situation in and around that area. A number of local shops, guest houses, restaurants etc. start to experience an increase in tourist flow, boosting the local economy as well.

Q How do you ensure safety to tourists?

It is vital to use the best technology solution to make the ropeway experience safer and more enjoyable. The ropeway's location and the area's topography determine the technology to be adopted from among the many available options.

Developing a product that meets all of the requirements and is technologically innovative, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable requires several years of research and development. Using the appropriate technology ensures protection, dependability, and long-term viability while lowering maintenance costs due to normal wear and tear.

The government's recent decision to place ropeways under the purview of the Highways Ministry

has only proven to be good news; this ensures that the ropeways are of high quality and that the highest level of protection is maintained.

Since most tourist destinations in the country's northern and north-eastern regions are located at high altitudes, it's nearly impossible to avoid relying on technology. To ensure a secure ropeway project, companies like DRIL design and build programmes to train technicians and workers for ropeway installation and commissioning. Quality control is a major source of concern for experienced ropeway builders. Since its establishment in 1974, DRIL has had no accidents due to a responsible maintenance and service team present at all locations, with quality monitoring taking place at regular intervals.

Q What are the trends in technology as far as ropeways and cable cars are concerned?

Incorporating technology into otherwise routine infrastructure is a difficult task that necessitates numerous changes in the development process. There is still a lack of foresight in integrating technology and infrastructure, but small measures are being taken. Acceptance and adoption are the two main elements required to make it as open as possible to ensure safety in all infrastructure projects, especially in high-altitude areas. We, at DRIL use world-class systems and have even innovated and got the best of safety and testing standards and implemented it in our ropeways over the years.

Q Where India stands both in ropeways and cable cars vis-à-vis the developed world?

India is not far behind developed countries in terms of ropeways and cable cars. In fact, it has many internationally-acclaimed ropeways like Gulmarg Gondola, Auli Cable Car, Gangtok Ropeway, to name a few. Today, India has the latest technology and materials that are used in the construction of these ropeways. There are plenty of sites that are built and are operating on the most difficult terrains in India. India is at par with the developed world, from having the highest ropeway to the longest ropeway in Asia. ♦

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