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## Draft National Strategy

# Stakeholders upset with proposal to include National MICE Bureau as a division of ITDC

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

By releasing three draft strategies with roadmaps to promote India as a rural and medical tourism destination and to position it as a place for conferences, meetings and exhibitions, the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) has made its intent very clear. But a lot depends on adoption of a pragmatic approach to make these segments truly vibrant. Also, there is need for the government to address the perennial problems and listen carefully to suggestions from the industry players and implement them.

By and large the industry stakeholders have hailed the move. However, the proposal to set up the National MICE Bureau as a division of the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) has not gone down well with the industry stakeholders. Their contention is with allowing an organisation that competes with private sector becoming an impartial industrial body.

"The MICE policy proposes a MICE Board, and that is indeed a very good idea. But the way the policy wants to structure will, for sure, create just another toothless body with little skills or qualified input," pointed out Rajeev Kohli, Joint Managing Director, Creative Travel. He suggested that the industry needs something professionally-operated, filled with people with real life skills and experience (in the industry) and not bound by archaic Ministry rules. Kohli is disappointed as the policy seems to diminish the presence and efforts of ICPB (India Convention and Promotion Bureau).

"A body that was perhaps one of the first public-private sector partnerships in our industry, ICPB may be flawed, and there is certainly room for improvement, but whatever it has done over the years is on the merit of the private sector alone without any financial support from the government. It is of concern to see that the Ministry proposes to hand over the MICE Board to ITDC," he said. "You cannot have an organisation that competes with us (private sector players) in business as an operator of what is supposed to be an impartial industry body. That is not fair play," Kohli adds.

Another industry veteran on the condition of anonymity said that it's a move to destroy the ICPB system. "ICPB is working very closely with the MoT under the chairmanship of Joint Secretary Tourism from the past 32 years as an independent body to promote MICE in India. It has been helping and offering its members - hotels, venues, DMCs, PCOs, PEOs and other

service providers an unbiased platform since ages. On the other hand, ITDC is a PSU with commercial interest and having direct competition with hotels, venues and PCOs through their arms - Ashoka Events and Ashoka Tours and Travels. Globally, MICE Bureaus are non-profit organisations and work with government support.

The National Advisory Council of MICE and India MICE Board must have a Vice-Chairman of ICPB as part of this decision-making body, which is also ignored," he lamented.

Terming the policy document as comprehensive, Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI (Travel Agents Association of India), said that the MoT has targeted three important avenues of tourism-MICE, Medical and Rural. "All the three streams of tourism are very important aspects especially, post-Covid. India has a lot to offer and should en-cash on its strength. The document is comprehensive and has been created with inputs from the associations," she said.

Mayal feels that it is imperative to have a roadmap with proper implementation of the policies and should be offered with incentives and milestone driven. Encouragement and support to tourism organisers and travel agents to promote the three streams are also important. "If this does not happen then all the work and documentation has no relevance," Mayal stated.

She also emphasised that to make it a success story the stakeholders must closely work with the government. "To convert the policies into a success story, stakeholders certainly need to be in partnership with MoT to develop these streams. The government should concentrate on the infrastructure and leave the rest to travel providers to make it revenue-driven and offer new opportunities to the struggling industry and in turn revive the economy of the country," Mayal suggested.

Commenting on this, Aashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH (Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality), said that implementation is very critical, but the intent has been captured very well. "India is a land of many tourism sectors. It would be great if we could develop some of them as focus segments. FAITH will come forward and share their own thought process with the government to make it a truly public-private partnership to ensure that the uniqueness of India is highlighted and developed through the policy documents," said Gupta. ♦



**Rajeev Kohli**  
Joint Managing Director  
Creative Travel



**Jyoti Mayal**  
President, TAAI



**Aashish Gupta**  
Consulting CEO, FAITH

# FM's announcement enough to assuage pain of travel & tourism sector?

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The government after a long wait finally acknowledged the damage the ongoing pandemic has unleashed on the travel and tourism industry by announcing a credit scheme. However, the loan guarantee scheme and visa fee waiver failed to cheer up many

India, the giving of loans to tourist guides and small tour operators is meaningless. "How will they repay when there is no business?," asked Goyal. Instead of this, the government could have offer grants to the tourist guides, small and medium tour operators, tourist bus/taxi owners & drivers, etc." This would help them survive till the borders are opened and

the government should also consider giving one-time financial grant to all recognised tour operators which could be 50% of the wages paid by the tour operators in 2019-20 and INR 2.5 lakh to each tourist guide recognised by the MoT as one time grant. He is hopeful e-Tourist Visa will open soon and has appealed to the Prime Minister that all visas for duration of 30 days should be free for all those who apply for visa till March 31, 2023.

Welcoming the announcement, Madhavan Menon, Managing Director, Thomas Cook India Group, said that this is a much needed step towards the revival of tourism - a sector that is a significant contributor to the GDP, foreign exchange receipts and employment generation - with a cascading force multiplier effect on allied sectors. "The stimulus announcements are a reflection of the government's focus on the travel and tourism sector and augurs well for the industry, while simultaneously building consumer confidence in travel."

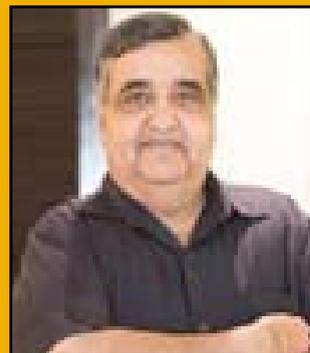
Agreeing with Menon, Rikant Pitti, Co-Founder, EaseMyTrip.com, said, "We are glad that the impact on the travel and tourism industry has been recognised and we welcome the relief measures introduced by the government. Tourist guides and other



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President, Confederation of  
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**JAY BHATIA**  
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President  
IATO

stakeholders as they feel a large number of players will continue to suffer despite the measure announced by the government. In fact, the TAAI (Travel Agents Association of India) which is the largest and oldest association of the tourism industry in a statement said that less than 10% of the actual stakeholders shall benefit from the FMs package. Is it too little too late? Reactions from industry experts are a mixed bag on the announcements by the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as some view it as a progressive step while majority others believe benefits are limited and direct on ground support is necessary to pull out the players from the pandemic-induced distress.

The Finance Minister has announced working loans covering 10,700 regional-level tourist guides recognised by Ministry of Tourism and State Tourism Boards, and about 1,000 recognised travel and tourism stakeholders (TTS). TTS's will be eligible to get a loan up to INR 10 lakh each while tourist guides can avail loan up to INR 1 lakh each.

Alongside, she announced that 5 lakh tourist visas will be issued visa free of charge once issuance resumes. The facility will be applicable till March 31, 2022 or till 5 lakh visas are issued, whichever is earlier. The total financial implications of the scheme to the government will be INR 100 crore.

According to Subhash Goyal, President, Confederation of Tourism Professionals of

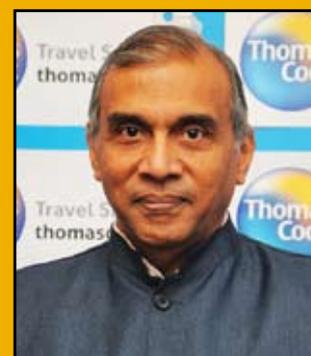
tourists start coming to India," Goyal pointed out.

He added that the visa waiver will only benefit overland tourists from Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan. "The money could have been saved by not giving free tourist visas, hence, could be utilised for giving grants to tourist guides and tourism workforce," Goyal suggested.

Reacting to the measure taken by the government, Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI, said that the impact of this relief shall not be overall. Less than 10% of the actual stakeholders only shall benefit as per the FMs package. To widen the scope of this relief, the FM must include those registered

under MSME. We urge the government, that all TTS registered under GST and who have already been contributing to the exchequer over the years, should be recipients of this relief package, Bhatia added. However, he appreciates the government for finally having recognised the tourism trade activities.

Rajiv Mehra, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), thanked the government for considering loan to the tour operators and the guides but requested that



**MADHAVAN MENON**  
Managing Director  
Thomas Cook India Group



**RIKANT PITTI**  
Co-Founder  
EaseMyTrip.com

travel stakeholders are the backbone of the industry and we believe that the special outlay of funds will enable them to rise from the challenges that they have faced over the past year and a half. With the increased pace of vaccination in the country, we also believe that the proposal to provide free tourist visas to the first 5 lakh tourists is well timed and is a strong step in boosting the country's inbound tourism as well as the economic activities and sectors that are dependent on it." ♦

# Merlin Entertainments to open GCC's first Madame Tussauds wax museum in Dubai this year

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Merlin Entertainments Ltd (Merlin), the second largest attraction operator in the world, will open the world-famous wax attraction, Madame Tussauds in Dubai later this year, located within the popular island destination Bluewaters. It has been one of the most talked about and highly anticipated attractions to come to the UAE.

The iconic attraction will provide an interactive fame experience like no other, where visitors can get up close and take pictures with 60 global stars, including 16 brand new wax figures from the Middle East region. Madame Tussauds Dubai will be located next to Ain Dubai, the world's largest observation wheel, and will enhance the vibrant destination's position as one of Dubai's most attractive tourism destinations. Madame Tussauds first opened its doors in 1835 in London, and has nearly 200 years of heritage.

With seven themed rooms, guests can step into a Bollywood movie and take a picture with the Badshah of Bollywood, Shahrukh Khan, or make the impossible possible by taking a selfie with the beauty queen herself, Kylie Jenner. And that's not all, guests can feel

like a supermodel and have a once in lifetime experience posing next to Cara Delevingne and can even show off their football skills next to the legend, Cristiano Ronaldo.

Meike Lippert, Senior Divisional Director



Midway Europe and Global New Openings, Merlin Entertainments, the operator of Madame Tussauds, said, "As one of the world leaders in location-based entertainment, we are delighted to be launching the first ever Madame Tussauds in the GCC, Dubai, later this year. In addition to well-known global figures, the new Madame Tussauds will also be home to figures celebrated in the Middle East including Nancy Ajram and Maya Diab, alongside other figures which we announce very soon. The new attraction will provide

an immersive and exhilarating experience for visitors to enjoy the famous world of renowned celebrities and personalities."

Sanaz Kollrud, General Manager of Madame Tussauds Dubai, added, "It is a thrilling experience to bring the iconic Madame Tussauds to the UAE. This will be the 25th edition of our wax attraction and will be a first in the GCC. We intend to bring a whole new entertainment experience to the exciting portfolio of attractions in Dubai and cement Bluewaters' position as a global tourist destination."

Each figure at Madame Tussauds is created using the expertise of sculptors who use the same techniques as the famous Marie Tussaud. To create a single life like figure it takes an artist 12 weeks in total, and during that time they document 500 precise body measurements, insert real hair strand by strand, apply countless layers of paints to build up the skin tones, and more. This entire process helps to achieve the incredible likeness that has made Madame Tussauds world renowned for over two centuries. The time and craftsmanship is also reflected in the value of the figure, which can cost up to a whopping AED 700,000 (GBP 150,000) depending on the detail required. ♦

# FICCI seeks government support on slew of measures to support industry players

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The effect of the pandemic continues to wreak havoc on lives and livelihood for the second consecutive year. While some sectors are slowly opening up again, for the travel, tourism and hospitality industry, the struggle continues to make ends meet. Therefore, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) has once again appealed to the government for moratorium on all working capital, principal, interest payments, loans and overdrafts which ended in August 2020 to be extended by another one year i.e. August 2021.

The industry had contributed USD 194 billion to the Indian economy in 2019 and created about 40 million jobs i.e. 8 per cent of its total employment. The industry came to a

halt due to the pandemic and this has created a ripple effect through the industry resulting in many hotels and businesses closing down and job losses for many of those who depended on this industry for their livelihood.

Health experts have predicted that a third wave of COVID19 is inevitable. The government needs to act now and provide immediate relief measures to resolve the urgent liquidity crisis faced by the industry, FICCI said.

The RBI's resolution framework, which was prepared during the first wave of the pandemic, needs to be reviewed. With the continued impact of the second wave, it will take a minimum of 4-5 years for the hotel industry to see a return to some semblance of normalcy in its operations. FICCI stated that in this situation, the period of restructuring and the ratios needs to be reviewed. It is imperative

that the period of restructuring for this sector be extended till March 2024 – 2025.

FICCI has also requested the government to increase the repayment tenure of the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) to 8 years (4 years moratorium plus 4 years repayment). The tour operators, who are among the worst affected in this sector, are in dire need of the Service Exports from India Scheme (SEIS) scrips for the financial year 2018-2019 which is still due to be paid to them. This will help them to somewhat stay afloat through the crisis.

The deferment of GST and advance tax payments at the Central Government level and removal of fees for any upcoming licenses, permits/ renewal and bail out packages to fund and support salaries of the employees will also provide some relief. The government needs announce the relief measures now for the industry to have any hope of surviving the crisis. ♦



# Brand USA successfully organised Part Three of their Chalo USA webinar series themed on City Escapes

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Brand USA in association with TravelBiz Monitor conducted Part Three of the Chalo USA webinar series on June 15, 2021. The theme of the webinar was City Escapes with a focus on shopping, local attractions and family activities. The webinar shared insights into latest tourism offerings and destination reopenings in various parts of the USA, including Atlanta, Houston, San Diego, and Country of Philadelphia. The objective of the online event was to help the trade fraternity in curating new itineraries for their clients. The destinations covered were:

**Atlanta:** Atlanta, home to the world's busiest airport and the birthplace of Coca-Cola. From world-class restaurants and a myriad of cultural attractions to a hip nightlife and sporting events galore, the city is cosmopolitan in every sense of the word. The Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport is not just a mere airport rather it's a destination. The airport offers services to 150 non-stop domestic destinations and 78 international destinations. The concession programme features 300 dining and retail options, to meet passengers shopping, dining and service needs.

**World of Coca-Cola:** By visiting the place one can experience the fascinating story of the world's most famous beverage brand. Not only that, but it also offers a visitor to taste 100 different types of beverages at beverage lounge, that too with an admission ticket only.

**Georgia Aquarium:** This is the USA's largest and most magical aquarium. The aquarium offers shows with interactions, animal encounters, and behind the scene tours. Recently, it opened a new exhibition called Shark...

Besides the above, on the Atlanta city front, the webinar also threw light on the Illuminarium Experience, Stone Mountain Park, The Atlanta Botanical Garden, Ponce City Market etc.



**Houston:** Houston has become a global city, with strengths in culture, medicine, and research. The city is known as the home of the largest medical centre in the world. Besides this, it is one of the energy capitals of the world, making the city an important destination, from an international point of view. The city is growing fast pace and probably will overtake Chicago within five years, in terms of population. One of its attractions is the Space Centre Houston, which is just 45 minutes away from downtown Houston. The Space Centre offers a great opportunity for families to explore mission control and other team building activities. It also offers visitors an opportunity to interact with potential astronauts on the 9th floor of the building. Another interesting facet of the city is green, and 50,000 acres of its land is green space. No wonder, Houston has 165 golf courses. The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is another important event that takes place in the first three weeks of March every year. The city also ranks among the top 10 culinary and gastronomy destination in the US.

**San Diego:** The region is well known for

being California's Beach-City with 70 miles of coastline just minutes away from the thriving, urban downtown of California's 2nd largest city. The important places to visit here are San Diego Zoo, San Diego Zoo Safari Park, and Sea World San Diego. The region has over 150 breweries & microbreweries located in San Diego County. Every year in November San Diego celebrates its Beer Week. With nearly 100 distinct neighbourhoods, a thriving craft beer scene and distinct regional cuisine (Cali-Baja), visitors to San Diego can choose between relaxing on the beach or enjoying the nightlife of the Gaslamp Quarter – or do both! In October, San Diego Tourism will be offering free tickets to kids to visit over 100 attractions and museums.

**The Countryside of Philadelphia:** Located roughly 40 minutes from the centre city of Philadelphia, it is a great driving destination. There is also a train line which connects the Countryside of Philadelphia to Centre City. As far as, accommodation is concerned, the region has 120 hotels ranging from 4 stars to budget categories. Besides this, unique lodges like bed & breakfast lodging, country inns options etc. are also available. The Countryside of Philadelphia is also popularly called America's Garden Capital and has 30 gardens in the destination. For adventure lovers, the region offers a plethora of options to choose from. Another important feature is tax-free shopping (Clothes and Shoes) and to avail of the tax-free shopping, visitors do not have to show a their passports or fill any form.

At the webinar Brand USA India also invited attendees to participate in The Great American Collage Contest, leading up to the All-American Party virtual event celebrating America's Independence Day. The competition runs from 16-30 June. ♦

## Qatar Tourism appoints Deveekaa Nijhawan to lead its International PR & Communications

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The Qatar National Tourism Council (QNTC) has appointed Deveekaa Nijhawan to lead the International PR and Communications team, to assist in marketing the destination in key markets as part of the country's strategy to become a world-leading tourism destination.

Nijhawan's remit covers key markets including India, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia and United Arab Emirates with a focus on engaging and penetrating travel trade and consumer media.

She is a senior professional with over 10 years' experience in PR & Communications in the hospitality sector. Commenting

on this appointment, she said, "I am very excited to join QNTC and embrace this new challenge. I am looking forward to developing and implementing a holistic integrated PR and Communications strategy to position Qatar as a popular tourist destination, while promoting the country's rich cultural heritage and diverse offerings." ♦



DEVEEKAA NIJHAWAN



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## A HIGHWAY HARANGUE

**The joys of launching amazing highways in India will be still-born unless the users are made to live up to it.**

India leads the world in traffic-related deaths. In fact the high rate of accidents and bad state of roads drags back the GDP by at least 3 points.

In the light of the above sorry facts, it is heartening to note the rather blitzkrieg pace of road construction and highway development over the last six years. However, it will be well-served to not uncork the bubbly just yet.

Even diehard critics of the government aver that if it really continues at this speed, in the next three years, the network of good road connectivity between many major cities and even some Tier-II towns would be almost comparable to much advanced countries.

Unfortunately, this is where the comparison might end. The reason is not difficult to fathom. Good roads themselves will not bring any change unless it comes with good traffic sense.

It is not the brief of this forum to castigate, bemoan or come up with I-knew-it noises. Rather, as an industry, solely built upon and surviving on happy experiences, we should underline and push for positive movements in the worst of circumstances.

Travel is about positive feelings and good roads are an integral part of that experience. It is music to the ears that with 36.4 km of roads built per day, national highway construction in India hit an all-time high in the 2020-21 fiscal despite the pandemic. In fact, the Ministry overseeing highways development built 13,298 km in 2020-21, which is up from 10,237 km in 2019-20.

Good roads and better traffic sense are the two legs on which development will stand. This is what the industry should be demanding (besides the usual support asked for in kneejerk reactions in extenuating circumstances).

The clamour for stricter traffic laws and their implementation should rise from our side. The least that can be asked for is no tolerance to traffic rule impingements on the new highways which are regularly inaugurated with much fanfare. Traffic and public behaviour on new highways can be monitored effectively as they are built with suitable technological support towards that end.

The best road networks will fail to remedy the situation unless stiff penalties ensure adherence to the law. The time is ripe for further fine-honing of the Motor Vehicle Amendment Act 2019 and Motor Vehicle rules.

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** KTO jointly embarked on a project in India with TravelBiz Monitor called Korea Premium Travel Consultant (KPTC). Could you tell us the details of this project?

KPTC is the ongoing initiative by KTO since 2019; it connects us with the travel agent partners on a pan India level and provides advanced level destination knowledge, so that the partners can cater to all types of travel queries of their customers.

This programme aims to grow a network of Korea specialised travel advisors, who are highly skilled with diversified information about South Korea destination knowledge. KTO has collaborated with TravelBiz Monitor as a Knowledge Partner to execute this all-India exercise.

**Q** What message do you want to send to the travel trade fraternity in India through this initiative?

The travel industry has been most affected by the current prevailing pandemic. The travel partners need to have a new perspective to sell the destinations. We need to move

for Indian travellers. Hopefully by the end of the year we will be able to welcome Indian travellers to South Korea.

**Q** Which destinations or products will be highlighted through this programme?

Our aim is to train the trade fraternity about every tourism destination and product of South Korea, but the theme we will be focusing through this programme would be regional locations, luxury travel and special interest tours like industry visits.

**Q** In the changed circumstances how important is creating an innovative itinerary to infuse

## ‘We need to move ahead with a positive mindset & be future ready’

confidence among travellers? What is KTO's plan in this direction?

The way of travelling will definitely change in the future. From a destination selling perspective, we

safety and memorable experiences when they travel to Korea. We will ensure that a robust and tourist-friendly infrastructure is available for the travellers on ground.

**Q** Using the pandemic time, have you added any new product/products?

The pandemic has definitely made all of us think beyond what we currently have. KTO has handpicked some new experiences and destinations to promote among Indian travellers, which will entice them to travel to the destination.

Once South Korea opens, for leisure and FIT travel we would be focusing on more regional and offbeat experiences which take people away from the busy destinations. Apart from that we would be focusing on luxury travel where the most premium offerings in South Korea will be offered.

**Q** Keeping India's vastness in mind, which zones or territories will be your focus as of now?

Our KPTC project is virtual in nature; we are inviting participation from travel agents from all over India, so it is not region specific. This is a unique opportunity for any interested travel agency to get specialised and focused training on destination South Korea. ♦

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The ongoing pandemic has made everyone think differently and look beyond what is available currently. Taking due cognizance, Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) has carefully selected some new experiences and destinations to entice Indian travellers. With rapid vaccination drives across India and the Indian travellers' sheer penchant for travelling, I am hopeful that the coming year will bring in new opportunities for all of us, says **Y G Choi**, Director, KTO, New Delhi Office, in an interaction with **Prasenjit Chakraborty**.

“Korea has already opened its gates to travellers from select countries this month onwards. Any traveller, who is fully vaccinated with a WHO-approved vaccine is exempted from quarantine. A similar plan is being considered for Indian travellers. Hopefully by the end of the year we will be able to welcome Indian travellers to South Korea.”

ahead with a positive mindset and be future ready to make up for the lost time and meet the new set of demands from the customers.

With rapid vaccination drives in India and Indian travellers awaiting their long due holidays, I am positive that the coming year will bring new opportunities for all of us.

Korea has already opened its gates to travellers from select countries this month onwards. Any traveller, who is fully vaccinated with a WHO-approved vaccine, is exempted from quarantine. A similar plan is being considered

need to be innovative and be ready to satisfy the customer with their new and essential requirements especially in terms of new experiences, safety, hygiene and contact less travel. It is essential for the travel advisors to be thorough with the destination's offering such as unique experiences, unique accommodations and offbeat destinations which are less crowded and safer to travel in the new normal times.

South Korea has been applauded worldwide for its speedy containment of the COVID-19. Our approach will focus on travellers'

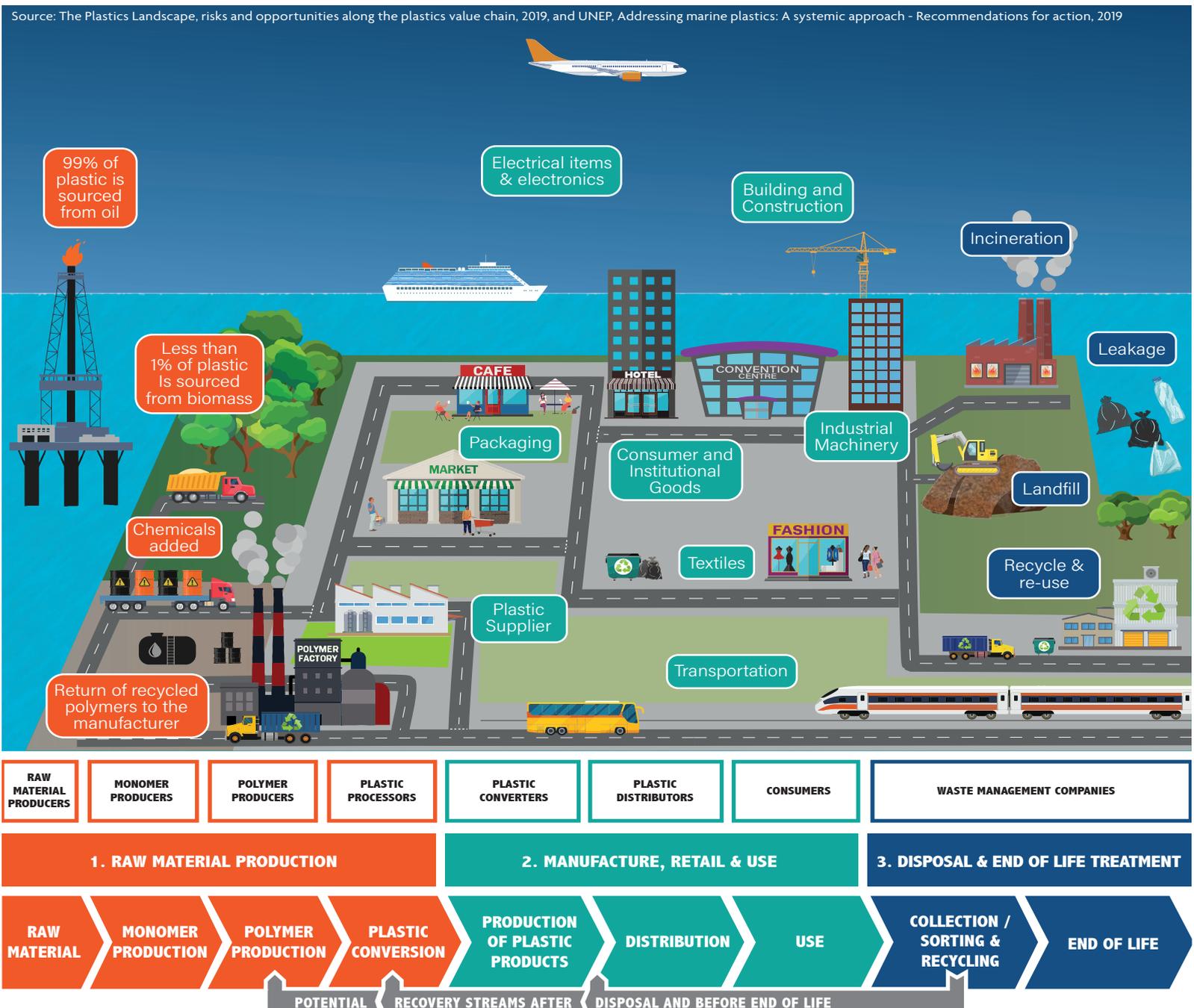
# Rethinking Single-Use Plastic Products in Travel & Tourism

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) came out with a report on single use of plastic products as the travel & tourism sector has started showing signs of recovery from the Covid -19 pandemic. The report recognises that global solutions are required to address corporate concerns about the use of single-use plastic products. **TravelBiz Monitor** presents some key highlights of the report.

**R**ethinking Single-Use Plastic Products in Travel & Tourism' addresses complex issue of single-use plastic as countries around the world begins to reopen, and the Travel & Tourism sector starts to show signs of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic which has been devastating. The report is a first step to mapping single-use plastic products

across the Travel & Tourism value chain, identifying hotspots for environmental leakages, and providing practical and strategic recommendations for businesses and policy makers.

It is intended to help stakeholders take collective steps towards coordinated actions and policies that drive a shift towards reduce and reuse models, in line with circularity principles, as well as current



**Figure 1:** Linkages of plastics within the Travel & Tourism value chains, adapted from Principles for Responsible Investment (2019) and UNEP (2019).

Sub-sector	Global guest numbers per year <sup>4</sup>	Risk of leakage <sup>5</sup>
Accommodation	4,000 million guest nights (UNWTO 2019)	Medium
Aviation	4,500 million travellers (World Bank 2019)	Low
Cruises	210 million traveller days (Cruise Lines International Association [CLIA] 2018)	High/Medium
MICE	1,650 million attendee days (Allied Market Research 2019; American Express 2019)	Medium

Potential contribution to pollution as a function of industry size and the risk of leakage

and future waste infrastructures.

The report's recommendations include redefining unnecessary single-use plastic products in the context of one's own business; giving contractual preference to suppliers of reusable products; proactively planning procedures that avoid a return to single-use plastic products in the event of disease outbreaks; supporting research and innovation in product design and service models that decrease the use of plastic items, and revising policies and quality standards with waste reduction, and circularity in mind.

Virginia Messina, Senior Vice President and Acting CEO, WTTC said, "WTTC is proud to release this important high-level report for the sector, focusing on sustainability and reducing waste from single-use plastic products in Travel & Tourism.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the sustainability agenda with businesses and policy makers now putting an even stronger focus on it. As a growing priority, businesses are expected to continue to reduce single-use plastic products waste for the future and drive circularity to protect not only our people, but importantly, our planet.

"It is also becoming clear that consumers are making more conscious choices, and increasingly supporting businesses with sustainability front of mind."

Single-use plastic products can be a threat to the environment and human health and without deliberate effort across the sector, Travel & Tourism can and will contribute significantly to the issue.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had both negative and positive impacts on single-use plastics pollution.

The demand for single-use plastics items has increased with safety being a high concern among tourists and take-away services being on the rise. According to the Thailand Environment Institute, plastic waste has increased from 1,500 tons to a staggering 6,300 tons per day, owing to soaring home deliveries of food.

However, the pandemic has also catalysed consumer demand for green tourism experiences around the world, with a 2019 global study\* finding 82% of respondents are aware of plastic waste and are already taking practical actions to tackle pollution.

The report recognises that global solutions are required to address corporate concerns about the use of single-use plastic products. It aims to support informed decision making based on the potential impacts of trade-offs and of unintended burden shifting when considering the transition to sustainable alternatives.

Sheila Aggarwal-Khan, Director of the Economy Division, UNEP said, "Travel & Tourism has a key role to play in addressing the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, as well as making circularity in the use of plastics a reality.

"The advent of COVID-19 and consequent proliferation of single-use plastic products has added urgency to the crises. With this report, we hope to encourage stakeholders in this industry to come together to address this multifaceted challenge. Only by doing so, can we ensure meaningful and durable change."

With around 90 percent of ocean plastic derived from land-based sources and the annual damage of plastics to marine ecosystems amounting to US\$13 billion per year, pro-actively addressing the challenge of plastics within the Travel & Tourism sector is key. ♦

#	SUPPs	Risk of littering	Awareness among tourism businesses	Additional evidence
1	Water bottles and other drinks bottles, including caps	High	High	One of the most common items found on the beaches (WWF 2019; Ocean Conservancy 2019), and amongst common items (cigarette butts, wrappers), also one of the heaviest.
2	Disposable toiletries	Low	High	High volume used in hotels.
3	Plastic bags and bin liners	Medium/Low	Medium	Sixth most common item found on the beaches in Europe.
4	Food packaging	High	Low	Consistently one of the most common items found on the beaches (WWF 2019; Ocean Conservancy 2019); 30-40% of all plastic supply is used to produce food packaging.
5	Cups	High/Medium	High	Eighth most common item found on the beaches in Europe.

SUPP Hotspots for Travel & Tourism sector



## ‘We have developed processes to minimalise cost & improve turnaround time’

SriLankan Airlines is on track to expand its MRO capabilities to Boeing operators.

**Shevantha Weerasekera**, Head of Engineering SriLankan Airlines in an interaction with **Disha Shah Ghosh** spoke about expansion of their MRO network to the larger Middle East region while exploring opportunities in South Asia.

**Q SriLankan Airlines has established itself at the Colombo Airport for its engineering services. Tell us about some of your latest MRO innovations?**

SriLankan Airlines has been a long-established player at the Colombo Airport (CMB) for line maintenance, base maintenance, component repair/overhaul, and engineering services. In addition, we have line maintenance stations in Malé – Maldives, Chennai – India, and Mattala – Sri Lanka. We support over 40 major airlines; some have been with us for over 15 years. In the recent past, we have further developed our base maintenance and component maintenance offering. We have developed processes to minimalise cost and improve turnaround time. We have also developed competencies for major cabin modifications and the conversion of passenger aircraft to cargo freighters.

**Q Which countries and airlines are your key clients in South Asia for providing MRO services in the region?**

We have customer airlines from the EU, Middle East, Asia, and the Far East. We have just entered into an MoU with Boeing to develop B737 maintenance capability. Thus, we are now

looking to extend our reach to Boeing operators in the region as well.

**Q How does SriLankan Airlines Engineering complement the flag carrier in terms of offering leading cutting-edge technology?**

By offering maintenance services to customer airlines, we bring in ancillary revenue to the airline, which facilitates the bottom line. In the recent past, we have converted and approved an A330 aircraft to carry cargo on the upper deck. In addition, we have also executed a trim and finish upgrade for our cabin successfully. The engineering and

maintenance task was managed in-house, resulting in significant cost benefits to the airline.

We are also working on multiple projects to enhance our maintenance programme, right-

have a mature line maintenance team with approvals to certify all Airbus and Boeing aircraft types, including the A350 and B787. Expanding to Asia and the Middle East is the next logical step. We are cautious – but will act fast and establish stations when travel resumes.

**Q In terms of third-party maintenance, which markets are on your radar?**

For the narrow body market (A320 / A320 / B737) we will focus on India for sure. We are confident about attracting customers from other Asian countries and the Middle East as well due to our cost structure and reputation for quality. In terms of the wide-body market like A330 aircraft and possibly tapping into the A350/B777/B787 market shortly, we have opportunities spanning across Europe to the Far East. We have an EASA part 145 approval and multiple approvals from national authorities to facilitate maintenance activities. Thus, we can confidently tap into a wide market.

“ We are working with industry leaders on data analytics and additive manufacturing. Moreover, we are working with local and foreign universities to develop new products and processes. All these initiatives will have significant benefits to the airline. ”

size our inventory and digitize key processes. We are working with industry leaders on data analytics and additive manufacturing. Moreover, we are working with local and foreign universities to develop new products and processes. All these initiatives will have significant benefits to the airline.

**Q Enumerate on your global expansion plans, especially in terms of opening line maintenance stations overseas.**

The line maintenance side of the business has always delivered strong financial results – even during reduced operations due to the coronavirus pandemic. We

**Q Any plans for MoUs or partnerships for expanding your MRO operations?**

Definitely! This is the way forward. Like I said before, we just signed an MoU with Boeing for airframe and component maintenance and Avensis Aviation for EASA STC (supplemental type certificate) approved cargo conversions. While seeing significant opportunities with both these parties, we have a few other discussions at a very mature stage which will be announced shortly. However, we are open to discuss and explore opportunities with other airlines, OEMs, or any interested party. ♦

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# Effectuate!

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

These are challenging times. The world, including tourism, has almost come to a standstill hurting tourism jobs and people dependent on the sector indirectly. An overwhelming majority of service providers and servers have been idle and waiting for tourism to resume; their misery increased with every passing day. While some decided to continue at a very minimal scale of operations, others contemplated getting into

other business. Most people only contemplated but did not muster the courage to chase it.

Conventionally, managers are trained to figure out the best means to achieve a set goal. This approach is called causation. They set a target and try to figure out what actions will lead to it, will cause it. That then is their course of action. Their underlying belief is that "If I can predict the future, I can control it." However, the future got uncertain, and their predictability parameters obfuscated. People felt strangled, as they had specific skills which were of little use in the present scenario.

However, many people and organisations did not give up and ended doing quite well during the pandemic induced curbs. The people who could wade through these difficult times thought differently. Their approach was to have new products and services given the resources at their disposal. They used creative and transformative tactics to focus on evolving means to achieve new and different goals. This approach is called Effectuation, a concept suggested

by Prof Saras Sarasvathy (University of Virginia). Let us try to understand this.

Put simply, these individuals begin with assessing their strengths and weaknesses and the resources at their disposal. They explore their contacts who are their early customers and suppliers, and begin there. These stakeholders help them expand the market during the early days of the enterprise. The idea is to limit risks by understanding what one can afford to lose, creating their market opportunity, and trusting people.

The future is unpredictable. The changes caused by the unpredictability were not included in our calculations or have not even heard of. Nobody predicted COVID. Tomorrow there might be other similar events. Effectuation helps in dealing with an unstable business environment. A world changing at a breath-taking pace requires the utmost strategic flexibility and action. In this complex dynamic world, businesses must

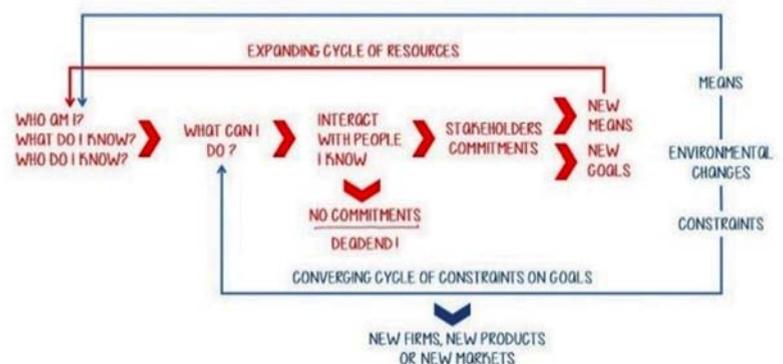
find new ways of coping with the challenges and remain successful. Effectuation has five fundamental principles.

1. The **bird in hand principle**. We have many examples of successful entrepreneurs who started small- in their garages. This principle suggests that one should create value (future ventures) with what is available to them and, however, limited their resources are. They may not chase a predetermined goal.

2. The **affordable loss principle** suggests that one should offset risk by staking what one can afford to lose. Entrepreneurs must choose goals and actions where there is an upside even if something goes wrong. Focusing on downside risk, one must keep the fixed costs low, have lower burnout rates, and offer Minimum Viable Product (MVP).

3. The **crazy quilt principle** suggests putting together various types of partners who are willing to commit to co-creating the future, thereby reducing uncertainty. It is futile to search for possible partners who might not be interested or who do not respond. These initial partners are the first customers who offer constructive criticism, spread a positive word of mouth, offer referrals, and sometimes even provide resources.

## EFFECTUATION



4. The **lemonade principle**. There is a saying - when life gives you lemons, make lemonade. This principle acknowledges that there will be mistakes. However, "bad" news and surprises must be treated as potential clues to create new markets. Unlike the causal thinker who is trained to put efforts on aspired goals, the creative individuals use these 'surprises' that come their way.

5. The **pilot in the plane principle** suggests that one should be in the driver's seat and control the situation. Writing is clear - the future is what you create, not what you predict. Effectual thinkers know their actions will lead to desired outcomes, and they focus on activities within their control.

So instead of waiting for things to turn favourable, it is time to act with those in your control! ♦

*'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.*



## Start-Up Forum

# Bringing Innovations to the Forefront

## Sciative Solutions

By TBM Staff | Mumbai

**A**nticipating the impact of technology, 14 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:** Sciative Solutions

**Core Team:** Dr. Anshu Jalora, Founder & MD, Sciative and Vijeta Soni, Co-Founder & CEO, Sciative

**Founding year:** 2018

**Company Website:** <https://www.sciative.com>

**Description:** Sciative Solution enables companies to offer right pricing everytime. With its award-winning artificial intelligence powered tech solutions, Sciative is transforming the pricing decision processes at organisations by bringing in speed, accuracy, automation, and scalability. Its pricing bots continuously monitor customer, competition, and market behaviour, and provide real time optimal price corrections in response to any changes in the behaviours. This not only keeps the business on the growth and profitability track, but also builds customer loyalty by avoiding unfavorable pricing.

Viaje. AI is Sciative's fully automated dynamic pricing solution for the travel industry. Its unique artificial intelligence powered demand forecasting algorithm accurately predicts a bus/flight trip level demand and customer willingness-to-pay many months in advance. Further every 15 mins, based on changes in market demand and supply, it updates the forecasts to keep itself up-to-date. Its prescriptive engine computes the seat level optimal price for each leg or via-route in the trip, with the objective of achieving a minimum level of occupancy and maximizing the trip revenues. Across seasons, markets, pandemic vs. non-pandemic scenarios, and service types, Viaje.AI is consistently helping operators make 15% to 30% incremental top-line revenues.



**Q** At a time when the world is gradually opening up with over a year of travel and border restrictions induced by the pandemic, how significant is hosting IPW as an in-person event for the U.S Travel Association?

We have heard from US exhibitors and international delegates alike that it is imperative to host a live, in-person event. We need to set the precedent that travel is back and meetings-mean-business. With so much disruption the past 15 months, rebuilding relationships and our industry is paramount.

**Q** In the changed global scenario, how different will IPW 2021 be in comparison to its previous editions?

We have implemented a number of changes, both due to the pandemic and evolutionary, to the event. We know that everyone has different needs for their businesses to recover in a post-pandemic world so we have created a new show format that will allow delegates to build their own experience. Appointments are still the heart and soul of IPW, but with appointments reduced from 20 minutes to 15, we have

**Q** Since IPW 2021 is seen as reuniting the world and restarting physical trade shows safely, what are some of the key tourism products or areas one can expect to be highlighted?

Our states, cities, attractions, and more will be at IPW in force to show they are open for business and to shine a spotlight on the many new products available nationwide. Buyers and media can also expect a continued focus on connecting America's gateway cities with more rural and outdoor experiences. Brand USA, our premier sponsor at IPW, will be sharing their recovery campaign and be there to assist buyers and media to

## 'IPW is ready to welcome delegates from India, even if restrictions are lifted last minute'

sell the USA in a post-pandemic world.

**Q** In terms of preparations for the event, enlighten us on the kind of safety measures being put in place to host global delegations.

Large scale conventions returned



**Q** In terms of source markets in focus, help us understand participation of the Indian delegation being planned at IPW 2021.

India was of growing importance to many of our US exhibitors leading up to the pandemic and it remains an important market. Our suppliers want to meet with the Indian buyers and media and get travel moving again. While travel restrictions continue to be fluid, IPW is ready to welcome our delegates from India, even if restrictions are lifted last minute. If travel remains a challenge for our Indian buyers, we will provide virtual appointments to keep the Indian market connected.

**Q** Will we see focus on Vaccine Tourism being highlighted at IPW?

We are working with a national pharmacy to provide a COVID Vaccine Clinic on-site at IPW. In addition, many states and cities in the USA are starting vaccine tourism programs both at their airports and at major tourist sites. It will remain a state and local initiative, so it is even more important than ever for international buyers to stay connected with USA destinations and travel suppliers. ♦

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International trade marketplace IPW is set to return to an in-person event from September 18 to 22 in Las Vegas. **Malcolm Smith**, Senior Vice President, Business Development General Manager, IPW speaks to **Disha Shah Ghosh** about IPW returning to the physical format, restarting conventions in the USA, and importance of the Indian market.

“ Appointments are still the heart and soul of IPW, but with appointments reduced from 20 minutes to 15, we have created 8 hours of networking time to meet with top clients, make additional appointments, attend IPW Focus educational seminars or peruse the Marketing and Technology Pavilion over coffee and tea. ”

created 8 hours of networking time to meet with top clients, make additional appointments, attend IPW Focus educational seminars or peruse the Marketing and Technology Pavilion over coffee and tea. Health and safety guidelines continue to evolve; we are monitoring the situation each week and will continue to create a safe and comfortable environment for our delegates.

**Q** How are you positioning IPW 2021?

Rebuild, Reconnect and Reunite.

to the United States in June 2021 with World of Concrete in Las Vegas. The second half of 2021 has most convention centers in the USA running full; shows are no longer postponing or cancelling. While we continue to follow local and national guidelines, we have to be respectful of our international guests from around the world who may be coming from various levels of recovery. We will continue to monitor CDC, WHO and local guidance and update our protocols as we get closer to the event.

# THE BIG FIX

HARD HITTING  
QUESTIONS ON THE MOST  
**PRESSING ISSUES**  
OF THE TRAVEL AND  
TOURISM INDUSTRY

ONLY ON **THE BIG FIX**  
WITH  
**SHELDON SANTWAN**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**TravelBiz**Monitor

IN COLLABORATION WITH

THE  
DOPE

# Instant Jobs & Instant Changes – Insurance Holds the Key

By Hector Dsouza, President, L'orient Travels

The word 'jobs' has now become 'passe' or so normal when people say they've been 'jabbed', few shut the eyelids! The target is to 'jab' the whole world in perhaps the next one year. This is the good news; however, those in the travel industry will need to rein in their horses for maybe couple of more months, especially those in the Indian sub-continent. This is one part of the story.

Naturally with all that's transpired in the past



*Hector Dsouza is the founder of L'orient Travels & India Rep for the State Tourist Board of Southwest Germany. A prolific travel writer with over 1.2 million words to his credit, he began by publishing a Travel Magazine, Travel-n-Tell in the early nineties. He switched over to online mode in 1997, continuing to this day. Featured in a number of national as well as couple of international publications including - Times of India, Economic Times, ET Travel World, Mid-Day, Afternoon, Dreamscapes, & E Turbo, his forte is describing travel destinations, tourism analysis, & opiated reporting. Well read & well travelled, he used the lockdown to increase his academic knowledge, attending several online series on Archeology, Art & Architecture of Ancient India, Rock Cut Monuments, Protohistory, Charting Mumbai & Many Architectures of Mumbai. He also presented a paper on tourism - Subjective or Objective during the lockdown.*

14 months, the world is still on tenterhooks; especially tourism. Country borders and destination attractions are starting, sputtering and shutting, sometimes at moment's notice. There is no denying safety of life and good health are the priorities of nations panning across the globe. Health experts are not unanimous in their choice of solutions; quite often the left hand is not quite in sync with the right. This is the other side of the story. Uncertainty!! Every traveller in the world hates to deal with this unpleasant word.

Yes, we all need to be optimists and humanity thrives on hope. Our sector needs solutions as well. In all likelihood, insurance against (uncertainty) cancellation, commonly referred to as 'trip cancellation insurance' will be the product that will bring the confidence back to the travelling public. How does it work?

In normal times 'trip cancellation insurance' is purchased by the traveller before commencing her/his travel journey to an international destination. If for any medical reason or an unexpected civilian disturbance at the destination, the traveller cancels the trip, he or she will be fully reimbursed for the unused services of the trip. For example, if travel is cancelled before departure, complete amount paid to travel agent or tour operator will be reimbursed back to the traveller by the insurance company.

This is a practice followed in many Western countries and has been in existence for few decades now. It is quite successful though premium is not necessarily cheap. This type of insurance premium will definitely not be in the range of INR 1,000/-! It's much higher, depending on the number of clauses added to it. Clauses could range from weather disturbances, to acts of God, terrorist attacks – all factors that could disrupt travel.

How will 'trip cancellation insurance' work in today's Covid-19 times, considering travel bans can arise at the last minute, passengers tested negative before departure are tested positive on arrival, the host country from where the traveller departs is suddenly turned into a 'red zone', thereby effectively preventing a departure as the destination country will not accept the visitor?

In the first instance it's a regular trip cancellation that includes – Covid-19 and all other factors related to it. This will be purchased by the traveller/s from the insurance company directly with the condition being there is 'no

ban to travel' order emanating from the host and destination countries, at time of purchase. With updated information technology this will not pose a challenge. If there is a ban, the policy will not be issued. Second requirement would for travellers to have completed taking both the jabs, before issuance of the policy.

This being the case the policy could be issued. Other parameters need to be considered as well. What is the provision if the vaccinated traveller falls ill before departure on arriving at the destination? Logically all medical as well as hospitalisation expenses will be involved in this policy, like a normal overseas medical insurance policy. The cost of the trip will need to be reimbursed for any unused services after due diligence reports are submitted by the tour operator or OTA to the insurance company directly.

The insurance companies should also verify that the tour companies or OTAs providing the services have received payment in full and there is no such – 'stop payment' – notice issued by the insured person to service providers. The scope for ambiguity should be reduced to bare minimum, assurance should be also be provided by the credit card merchants or banks through whom services are paid for by the insurer of complete transparency in transactions.

If the trip is cancelled midway due to circumstances beyond the control of the service provider for a number of reasons covered in clauses issued by the insurance company, then the service provider will need to provide an adjusted bill after deducting all services utilised by the traveller, to the insurance company. Granted, trade secrets need not be shared, however, in these days of total unpredictability where a sneeze can completely jeopardize a traveller's plans, it's time all verticals join hands together to bring the confidence back to tourism.

'Jabs' notwithstanding!! Reassuring concrete plans are needed and insurance companies are well equipped to deliver. When travellers know they will be compensated or paid back fully for services they do not avail of, all forms of travel especially international will show a double- or triple-digit growth. In its absence, we will only prod along in this blurry world of 'uncertainty.' ♦

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



## ‘We shall have some exciting packages specifically for the Indian market once travel resumes’

Experience Hub has implemented a variety of precautionary measures to ensure that guests and employees feel safe at all Yas Theme Parks, attractions and hotels, and in the process become the first destination in Abu Dhabi to receive the coveted WTTC ‘Safe Travels’ stamp in recognition of its advanced safety efforts, says **Marijana Mihajlovic**, Director of Business Development, Experience Hub, in an interaction with **Prasenjit Chakraborty**.

**Q The pandemic has significantly changed the market dynamic. In this backdrop which are key source markets for Yas Island in 2021?**

Throughout the pandemic period, Experience Hub, the trade and promotion arm of Yas Island Abu Dhabi, has been virtually engaging with travel trade in key source markets including UK, Russia, China, India and GCC, and training them online to assure continuous product knowledge in preparation for gradual market re-openings.

**Q Can you tell us what one can expect from their visit to Yas Island in terms of a wholesome family experience?**

From award-winning theme parks to numerous leisure activities, Yas Island has a lot to offer to the tourists. The Island has a mix of award-winning leisure and entertainment experiences, from one-of-a-kind theme parks, world-class shopping and superb dining, to the globally-renowned links golf course, exciting water and motorsports, and spectacular musical, entertainment and family events... all within the 25 sq km Island.

The travellers can immerse themselves in an experience like no other at the award-winning theme parks Ferrari World Abu

Dhabi, Yas Waterworld, Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi, the record-breaking CLYMB Abu Dhabi, Yas Marina Circuit (home to the FORMULA 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix), the glamorous Yas Marina, the award-winning Yas Links golf course, as well as Abu Dhabi’s largest mall, Yas Mall.

The Island is home to eight hotels, including W Abu Dhabi - Yas Island, Hilton Abu Dhabi Yas Island, Park Inn Radisson, Abu Dhabi, Centro Yas Island, Crowne Plaza Abu Dhabi Yas Island, Radisson Blu Abu Dhabi Yas Island and Staybridge Suites Abu Dhabi Yas Island, including more than 165 dining

experiences. The destination also features indoor and outdoor concert venues, including MAD and Etihad Arena - all of which are complemented by a range of visitor services that connect all attractions to one another.

**Q What events are being lined up for the coming winter?**

Yas Island is offering families a magical escape to a fairy tale land this winter, when ‘Disney On Ice: Find Your Hero’ takes to the stage at Etihad Arena from September 2 to 11, 2021. With a long-awaited return to events, Disney legends Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy will take audiences on an action-packed adventure filled with tales of heroism from its most-loved characters, including Moana, Anna and Elsa, and Ariel.

**Q Looking at the current scenario, what steps have you undertaken to ensure a safe experience for tourists?**

Given that the health and safety of guests is Yas Island’s top priority, we have implemented a variety of precautionary measures to ensure that guests and employees feel safe at all Yas Theme Parks, attractions and the hotels.

We have become the first destination in Abu Dhabi to receive the coveted WTTC ‘Safe Travels’ stamp in recognition of our advanced safety efforts.

Maintaining the highest standards of public health and safety, Yas Island introduced numerous safety measures including the ‘#TogetherAtYas’ online platform which offers guests a guide to the public health and safety protocols on Yas Island, and the widely commended ‘Yas Wellness Program’, which grants guests direct access to a dedicated team of Yas Wellness ambassadors.

The Wellness Ambassadors are a team of specially trained individuals who are able to answer guests’ queries on the health and safety measures in place. In order to continually bridge guests to Yas Island, the Wellness Ambassadors are contactable via phone, social media, WhatsApp and email from 8 am to 5pm UAE time, daily.

**Q Could you tell us more about the cutting-edge technology Facepass that you are going to implement soon? How will it help visitors in terms of safety?**

Yas Island is on track to become a fully contactless destination through the adoption of FacePass. Rolled out in phases across the island, it will streamline guest experiences using facial recognition.

This kind of contactless technology is the future for all consumer-facing businesses. Not only does it save time and provide unrivalled convenience, it largely enhances guest safety and wellbeing through touchless interaction, ensuring world-class safety measures and ease of social distancing.

**Q What are your plans for the India market post-pandemic?**

We are very keen to invite our Indian travellers back to Yas Island when the time is right. Once Indian travel resumes, we shall certainly have some exciting packages specifically for the Indian market. ♦

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## Welcome to Korea Premium Travel Consultant Program!



Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) in association with Travel Biz Monitor as a knowledge & platform partner welcomes interested travel agents from all over India to register themselves for the Korea Premium Travel Consultant project.

A 'Korea Premium Travel Consultant' is a specialized travel advisor who is highly skilled with South Korea destination knowledge and is able to handle the diversified request of their customers.

**Register now to stand a chance to become the Korea Premium Travel Consultant!**

KPTC link: <https://www.travelbizmonitor.com/korea-premium-travel-consultant/>

### Advantages of becoming a 'Korea Premium Travel Consultant (KPTC)

- Regular destination updates and trainings
- Direct assistance from KTO for any customer query
- Opportunity to participate at various South Korea FAM trips organized by KTO
- Joint marketing support for South Korea tour packages
- Korea package sales related incentives and prizes

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

- All registered participants will be invited to a online discussion and training session in July 2021 where they will receive basic South Korea destination knowledge and more information on the KPTC project.
- After completing the necessary tasks the most interested and travel agents will be selected for personalized destination training and discussions with KTO.
- All selected travel agents will also receive a KPTC Goodies Bag with South Korea destination resource materials and gifts!

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