

T3

TRAVEL TRENDS TODAY

THE MAGAZINE ON THE BUSINESS OF TRAVEL, TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

40TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

VOLUME 11 NO.08 • SEPTEMBER 2023 • TOTAL PAGES 20

INDIA TOURISM

SECTION 1


INDIA INBOUND, DOMESTIC
AND INFRASTRUCTURE


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Tourism Today

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH



The G20 Tourism and SDG Dashboard is a testament to our nation's digital strides and serves as a beacon of knowledge for all the public and private stakeholders globally. It offers a wealth of knowledge and showcases best practices, all aimed at steering the tourism industry towards greater sustainability, resilience, and inclusivity.

Union Minister of Tourism, G. Kishan Reddy
while launching the
G20 Tourism & SDG Dashboard

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Analyzing G20 for tourism

From India's travel and tourism point of view, the year 2023 was unlike any before. It is specially so for the country's inbound tourism sector that was earning US \$ 30 billion in tourism receipts for the country. And given the vast tourism potential that the country enjoys in the inbound space, experts and stakeholders strongly believe that we are still scratching the surface. And if approached in the manner that the sector requires, India's inbound number and foreign exchange earning from tourism could potentially double or treble in no time.

Now what made year 2023 significant and unlike any before, especially for the country's inbound tourism sector, was India's Presidency of G20 that was so much in the limelight and the lesser known and overshadowed by India's G20 Presidency was India's concurrent Presidency of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The two Presidencies was a huge opportunity to build upon India's destination profile world.

And therefore, as the Presidency enters its fag end of the tenure, it is time to assess India's Presidency of G20 in respect to the destination profile boost that India stands to gain and how much of growth that should result in in terms of increased tourist arrivals in the months and years to follow.

As we go to press the top global leaders from across the world, from America's Joe Biden, French President Emanuel Macron, the UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, to Turkiye President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and many more are in India for the G20 Summit in Delhi. And needless to say, India is in global media spotlight.

The tourism industry stakeholders are near unanimous that G20 Presidency has indeed garnered India greater destination visibility that was prioritized by the Union Ministry of Tourism highlighting the unique tourism offerings of every state by leveraging country's richness in culture, heritage, spirituality, natural beauty and focusing on promoting diverse categories of tourism like sustainable tourism, rural tourism, medical tourism, MICE, and others.

At the same time, the industry stakeholders are also of the opinion that in order to build on the momentum the country has gained because of G20 Presidency, India Tourism needs to reach out to the G20 countries and other key tourism source markets with marketing ideas and promotional campaign to lure foreign visitors.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

T3 covers the most relevant and ongoing trending travel topics which makes it an enjoyable read.

Alefiya Singh, Director, Iris Reps

T3 provides engaging content that keeps you in the loop with the latest happenings in the travel industry.

Hussain Patel, Director, Tripjack

MoT, GoI-UNWTO unveil G20 Tourism and SDG Dashboard

It showcases best practices, case studies, and insights from G20 countries, all modeled for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in collaboration with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), has unveiled the G20 Tourism and SDG Dashboard that was launched by Minister of Tourism, Culture and DONER, G. Kishan Reddy.

Developed under the leadership of India's G20 Presidency and with the expert knowledge partnership of UNWTO, the dashboard is a testament to India's commitment to sustainable tourism. It showcases best practices, case studies, and insights from G20 countries, all modeled for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This dashboard is a lasting legacy of India's G20 Presidency, reflecting its dedication to global collaboration and sustainable growth in the global tourism industry.

The G20 Tourism and SDG Dashboard serves as a comprehensive online public platform, amalgamating the collective knowledge of the G20 Tourism Working Group. It consolidates the GOA Roadmap, survey results, case studies, and best practices from G20 countries. The dashboard offers insights into sustainable tourism practices and also provides a platform for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and growth.

An address from UNWTO stated that "G20 countries represent over 70% of tourism worldwide. Their leadership in the transformation of the sector is decisive. The G20 Tourism and SDGs Dashboard is a concrete



outcome of the G20 Tourism Working Group and a reference tool for all. UNWTO is very happy to have joined hands with the Ministry of Tourism of India to make this possible."

Reddy highlighted that "the G20 Tourism and SDG Dashboard is a testament to our nation's digital strides and serves as a beacon of knowledge for all the public and private stakeholders globally. It offers a wealth of knowledge and showcases best practices, all aimed at steering the tourism industry towards greater sustainability, resilience, and inclusivity.

Minister of State for Tourism and Ports, Shipping, and Waterways of India, Shripad Yesso Naik, during his address, stated that the G20 Tourism and SDG Dashboard is a pivotal

step in the journey, that aligns perfectly with our commitment to harnessing the benefits of digitalization for the betterment of the tourism sector and achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

In today's rapidly evolving tourism landscape, the G20 Tourism and SDG Dashboard will act as a collaborative knowledge-sharing platform, guiding the global community towards more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive tourism. Its launch marks a significant milestone in the journey towards achieving the SDGs and reflects the collective commitment of the global community under India's G20 Presidency.

Team T3

Ajay Prakash re-elected President



Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) has announced the new Managing Committee for the 2023-25 term. The new national team has been elected unopposed at its recent 29th Annual General Meeting (AGM), held on 2nd September 2023 at Peninsula Grand Hotel, Mumbai. Incumbent Ajay Prakash has been re-elected and will continue as the association's President. Anil Kalsi has been appointed the Vice President. He was earlier Joint Secretary in the previous 2021-23 term.

It has also elected four co-opted members as per the bye laws of TAFI at the first Managing Committee held on the same day. Pradip Lulla will continue as the Immediate Past President.

Post	Name
President	Ajay Prakash
Vice President	Anil Kalsi
National General Secretary	Abbas Moiz
Treasurer	Hitank Shah
Committee Member	Seeraj Sabharwal
Committee Member	Sampat Damani
Committee Member	Rai Achal Krishna
Committee Member	Jitul Mehta
Committee Member	Anandaveloo M
Co-Opted Member	S. Somaskandan
Co-Opted Member	Sunil Uttam
Co-Opted Member	Anil Punjabi
Co-Opted Member	Paulose Mathew

Team T3

Punjab draws huge response for its inaugural travel mart

"We have received overwhelming support from trade partners and tourism bodies during our four-city roadshow for the inaugural Punjab Tourism Summit and Travel Mart. – Anmol Gagan Mann

Punjab Tourism has conducted its maiden edition of 'Punjab Tourism Summit and Travel Mart.' The event was scheduled on September 11-13 at Mohali with an aim to position Punjab as a sought after tourism destination and create greater awareness and investment opportunity for its myriad tourism offerings, ranging from culture, heritage, custom & tradition, art forms, to adventure, sports, water tourism, and niche segments like wellness and medical tourism, agri/eco-tourism, rural home stays and farm stays, among others, as well draw

In order to spread words on the Travel Mart and state's tourism offerings, Punjab Tourism also conducted four-city road show in Jaipur (August 23), Mumbai (August 24),

Hyderabad (August 25) and culminating in the national capital Delhi (August 26) where it interacted with stakeholders of travel and tourism industry in order to showcase its tourism offerings and diversity as well as to invite them to attend the inaugural edition of the Travel Mart.

Bringing down the curtains on the successful road show, Anmol Gagan Mann, Punjab's Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, said, "We have received overwhelming support from trade partners and tourism bodies during our four-city roadshow for the inaugural Punjab Tourism Summit and Travel Mart. We are sure that the event in September would be a runaway success. Under the leadership of our Hon. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, the Punjab Government is dedicated to enhancing tourism, creating opportunities for both inbound and domestic visitors. Our initiatives aim to elevate the state's reputation with business-friendly policies and captivating tourist attractions."

Mann said that the Punjab Travel Mart will serve as a platform to attract forward-thinking tourism professionals from across the nation and beyond. Foreign and domestic tour operators, DMCs, DMOs, travel trade media, travel influencers, hotel operators, B&B and farm stay owners, tourism boards, and more are expected to participate.

Team T3



HAI presents 'Vision 2047' to Union Tourism Secretary

Collaboration between the government and private stakeholders will be the key to the successful realization of the vision of creating jobs and contributing to the national growth story – Puneet Chhatwal

Hotel Association of India (HAI) has come out with a vision and a roadmap for the future of the sector. HAI met the hon'ble secretary (tourism), V.Vidyavathi, presenting her a copy of the report 'Vision 2047-Indian Hotel Industry-Challenges & The Road Ahead'.

The Report charts out various possible scenarios for the future and what the industry can reasonably achieve by the year India celebrates 100 years of independence. The report focuses on how the pandemic has altered the way of doing business and analyses the megatrends like technology, sustainability concerns, changing consumer behavior, digitization, AI, etc.

Appreciating HAI's initiative of coming out with a vision 2047 report, Shrimati V.Vidyavathi, emphasised the importance of strong partnership and constructive dialogue with the industry. She also outlined the government's vision for integrated destination development and the role HAI can play in it.

HAI President and Managing Director & CEO, IHCL, Puneet Chhatwal said, "The tourism industry is going through a significant transformation and technology has helped us enhance customer engagements. Convergence of efforts at different levels and collaboration



between the government and private stakeholders will be the key to the successful realization of the vision of creating jobs and contributing to the national growth story.

M.P. Bezbaruah, Secretary General, Hotel Association of India, said, "Hospitality Vision 2047 envisions the role of the industry to supplement the government's new approach to Mission Mode Tourism Development and create a dynamic, vibrant hospitality industry that gives shape to the nation's development goals."

"India Vision 2047 is for a USD3 trillion tourism economy and a million international tourist arrivals. The hospitality sector will play a pivotal role. This report takes a look at the road ahead and the challenges, highlighting the policy interventions required to support the rapid growth of hotels to meet the targets of tourist inflows-both domestic and foreign", said KB Kachru, Vice President, HAI, and Chairman Emeritus and Principal Advisor (South Asia), Radisson Hotel Group.

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TAAI President lauds initiatives by MEA, draws attention to 'quality' 'credibility' of service provider

There is a strong emphasis on the four pillars of Quality Services, Sustainable and Viable Price, Data Protection & Security, and Ethical Practices & Integrity – Jyoti Mayal

The Indian Missions of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) are the first touch points for any international traveller coming into India - the Indian Citizen or Person of Indian Origin (PIO) and Foreigners (traveling to India) residing overseas. In its move to mitigate predatory pricing, MEA tightens rules for selection of partners for visas and consular services to the Indian diaspora and foreign visitors.

According to Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, "Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has embarked on a transformational program to reform and strengthen its tendering and evaluation process in a holistic manner to select the right outsourced service providers. While the focus lies on L1 pricing, there is a strong emphasis on the four pillars of Quality Services, Sustainable and Viable Price, Data Protection & Security, and Ethical Practices & Integrity."

Commenting on the endeavour she also added, "It is important that the first impression of any individual travelling to India or having to work with any Indian Mission anywhere in the world needs to be impeccable, as the government is determined to work towards delivering the

promise of New India. Therefore, the MEA and its Missions as true representatives of the Indian government to the world must focus on offering superior, efficient, and cost-effective services as perhaps the first step in that direction."

The president concluded by stating that, "India is positioning itself as a global leader in several sectors such as trade, cross border services, citizen services etc. As India marches towards a high momentum growth period, it will be critical to plan for factors that can impede progress and mitigate reputational and image risks for the Indian Government. Hence it became imperative for the government to focus on quality, reliability, and credibility of the service providers it engages with, to ensure services are delivered effectively, efficiently, and in line with established standards, else failure in service levels can erode confidence and trust in the government's capabilities, leading to public dissatisfaction. The focus on quality also indicates that public resources are utilised wisely and that citizens receive the best possible value for money."

Team T3



Jyoti Mayal

Address Agra's infra woes to attract foreigners in large numbers: expert

visitors are reluctant to venture beyond the Taj Mahal, resulting in limited overnight stays and tourism activities - Rajiv Saxena, President, Tourism Guild of Agra

Agra has witnessed a surge in domestic tourism in recent times. However, the city's success in domestic tourism is marred by a decline in foreign tourist arrivals. Experts attribute this decline to inadequate infrastructure in the city. "The city's existing infrastructure is struggling to meet the demands of the growing number of tourists. The city's main attraction Taj Mahal is facing a crisis with its golf-cart ferrying system. These golf carts ferry tourists from the parking area to the monument, but their availability often falls short, especially when larger groups arrive," said Rajiv Saxena, President of the Tourism Guild of Agra, who is also the founder of Agra-based Sanskriti Vacations India.

According to Saxena, while Indian tourists usually find a way to access these carts, foreign tourists face major difficulty. Despite paying higher entry fees as compared to Indian tourists, foreign visitors have a tough time visiting the monument. Their negative experiences result in unfavourable word-of-mouth publicity for the destination, dissuading potential foreign travellers from visiting the city of Taj.

Besides the Taj Mahal, Agra has other famous monuments such as the Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri, both UNESCO World

Heritage sites but all these monuments are not properly connected with each other. Unlike other

renowned tourist destinations that offer some sort of regular shuttle services, Agra lacks such transport service. According to Saxena, this absence of seamless transportation options forces tourists to hire various vehicles such as auto-rickshaws, taxis, and ride-sharing services like Ola and Uber, if they want to explore other attractions. Consequently, visitors are reluctant to venture beyond the Taj Mahal, resulting in limited overnight stays and tourism activities.

There is a huge disparity between the number of tourist footfalls at the Taj Mahal and that of the other two monuments. This lack of a proper transport system prevents Agra from capitalizing on its full tourism potential. Saxena says that the state government should address this challenge to make Agra a welcoming destination and attract foreign visitors in large numbers.

Prem Kumar



Rajiv Saxena

TCS will not only affect outbound but also inbound, TAFI President

On one hand, we talk about the G20 presidency and its potential to uplift tourism and the economy, but on the other side it is getting difficult for the practitioners of the industry to survive – Ajay Prakash



Ajay Prakash

Ajay Prakash, President, Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) mentioned during an interaction with T3, that the biggest hurdle is the application of TCS. This places the Indian travel agents, tour operators, or MICE organizers at a huge disadvantage. "On one hand, we talk about the G20 presidency and its potential to uplift tourism and the economy, but on the other side it is getting difficult for the practitioners of the industry to survive. The online booking platforms like the KAYAK, Booking.com, Expedia, and more are at a much better advantage, as compared to an Indian tour operator", mentioned Prakash.

He further added, "All we want is an enabling environment. We, as travel agents, are 'Aatma Nirbhar', but we need an environment where our businesses can flourish." Adding more, Prakash mentioned that tourism operates both ways, if outbound travel gets expensive due to the application of TCS, it is also going to affect inbound. Airlines need traffic in both directions. "We believe that they will rethink this move."

Prakash also rues the fact that there is little protection for agency when airlines like Kingfisher, JetAirways, and more recently

GoAir went bankrupt. "GoAir, till the morning when they got into insolvency, they were accepting bookings and payments. But we are unsecured creditors", said Prakash. "We propose to the Civil Aviation Minister to look into the uncertainty of the business scenario and the risks that the airline business is fighting with. The government must mandate insurance against airline failure on every ticket that is issued in the country. It's not just about protecting the money of the agent, but also the consumer, as ultimately the money is being paid by the passenger."

TAFI President also drew attention towards overseas marketing to attract foreign tourists. He said, "If we want to encourage inbound tourism, we also need a sustained marketing effort, which is not happening. When other neighboring countries were promoting travel, we were not doing much on that front of overseas travel. The government has also shut down its tourist offices overseas, and now we are dependent on embassies and Consulates to do tourism promotion. We need to have a certain path and direction which is missing", reiterated Prakash.

Kuhelika Roy Choudhury

Andhra likely to organise its maiden travel mart in November this year

We are planning to invite around 600 agents from within India and about 200 from overseas - K Vijay Mohan, President, TTAA



K Vijay Mohan

In the making for a long time now, the first edition of much-awaited Andhra Pradesh Travel Mart is likely to be held in November this year in Visakhapatnam. This was informed by K Vijay Mohan, President, Tours and Travels Association of Andhra Pradesh (TTAA), a leading stakeholder for Andhra Pradesh Tourism. "We are awaiting the approval from the state government, which is expected to come very soon," added Mohan.

According to Mohan, the proposed mart is likely to have 800 hosted buyers. "We are planning to invite around 600 agents from within India and about 200 agents from overseas. These numbers can further be increased with the permission of the state government," said Mohan.

Mohan said that Andhra Pradesh Mart will be organised on the pattern of Kerala Travel Mart. It will be a public-private partnership initiative with travel trade body like TTAA one of its stakeholders. The mart is intended to be an annual event.

The planned travel mart is aimed at showcasing the state's varied tourism products to prospective buyers. "The state has huge potential in religious tourism. We have Shakti Peethas. The Mart will be an occasion to showcase our pilgrimage



centres including Shakti Peethas, which are not far away from each other. No single state in India has three Shakti Peethas," said Mohan.

Besides Shakti Peethas, the mart will also focus on promoting hill stations located in the state. The state's tribal circuit and Buddhist circuits will be other highlights at the mart.

Prem Kumar

INDIA OUTBOUND

SECTION 2

TRAVEL, AIRLINES, OVERSEAS DESTINATIONS AND PRODUCTS

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Mauritius eyeing 1.3 Mn tourists in 2023

Conducts three-city roadshow to achieve its aim

The Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority is keen to tap into the vast potential of the Indian market to promote and showcase the stunning beauty and unique experiences that Mauritius has to offer. With this intent, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority hosts a three-city series of roadshows in Mumbai, Chennai, and Ahmedabad to connect back and exchange trade with the travel trade fraternity.

This series of roadshows is the first networking initiative taken after the authority joined hands with AllKnown Marketers. The roadshows were hosted by the Director of Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA), Arvind Bundhun; Sunil Mathapati, Country Manager, MTPA, along with a delegation comprising 24 operators from Mauritius.

"Over the last calendar year, Mauritius has welcomed almost 1 Mn tourists and this year the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority looks to achieve the pre-pandemic numbers, which is around 1.3 Mn tourists. Before pandemic, in 2019, Mauritius witnessed the best numbers from India so far with a figure of eighty thousand visitors. At that time Mauritius was connected with four cities from India – Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Chennai" – says Bundhun. India is one of the key markets for Mauritius, 70% of the traffic comes from Europeans, but Mauritius hopes big to leverage the enormous potential that India has.

Bundhun adds, "We are putting lots of impetus on the Indian market, our topmost priority. Our future objectives will require 'permanent bonds' between both partners, and we will ensure Mauritius as a high-end destination."

Highlighting the enhanced connectivity from India, Bundhun added that two additional flights have been added from Delhi, and a frequency of 5 times a week is happening from Mumbai. MTPA also is delighted to welcome Vistara which is contributing to the enhanced operations. With increased connectivity, MTPA looks to position Mauritius as the most preferred destination for India.

Bundhun mentions that the targeted segment that Mauritius is looking for, is versatile. The destination is more focused on creating more immersive experiences for tourists from all segments. MTPA looks to position Mauritius as an all-round and diverse destination, rather than just be known as a beach destination.

According to Bundhun, India as a market is critical with a very particular line of travelers having selective thoughts in terms of places to visit, eating preferences, language, etc. But Mauritius has it all as 60% of the population comes from India itself. Therefore, MTPA wishes to leverage on its advantage of knowing the preferences of the Indian traveler well.

- Kuhelika Roy Choudhury



Finland Makes Strong Destination Pitch

Indians, the largest group of visa applicants

Visit Finland successfully concluded its annual workshop in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and New Delhi. The workshop aimed to promote outbound tourism from India to Finland. With the participation of 17 suppliers from Finland, which is the biggest delegation ever in India from tourism sector of Finland, the event showcased a range of offerings from the country. The workshop was also very well attended by a large but exclusive group of representatives of the vibrant Indian travel industry. The workshops enabled fostering of relationships, boosting tourism, and facilitating collaborations in the field of tourism.



Dr. Tito Gronow, Minister, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Finland, New Delhi shared that Finland is looking forward to having Indians with open arms. He also shared that political and commercial relations between India and Finland are very good and very stable. Indians have grown this year to become the largest group of visa applicants followed by Russia and China.

Paivi Hobbs, Area Manager, Asia for Visit Finland shared that Finland is a land of pristine landscapes, northern lights, lakes, archipelago and a rich cultural heritage that offers an unparalleled experience for travellers seeking something truly unique. Imagine your travellers walking through the snow-covered landscapes, taking in the beauty of Lapland, and witnessing the mesmerizing dance of the northern lights across the night sky.

Sara Sodhi Juneja, Country Head- India and Gulf for Visit Finland shared that Finland offers a unique blend of modernity and tradition. As travel agents, your role goes beyond just booking flights and accommodations. You are the architects of dreams, the facilitators of memories, and the gateway to new horizons.

Team T3

NYC Tourism Targetting 11 Mn Visitors in 2023

India is expected to have a share of 306,000 travelers

New York City Tourism + Conventions sets its sight on India, following a versatile strategy and product mix, with an expectation to welcome 306,000 travelers from India and 11 million international visitors in 2023. Makiko Matsuda Healy, Senior Vice President of Tourism Development, New York City Tourism + Conventions talks to T3 on similar lines.



Makiko Matsuda Healy

1. How is the performance in terms of arrivals from India and overall, & your expectations from 2023?

The City remains on track to welcome more than 63 million visitors in 2023. The pace of tourism's rebound helps fuel New York City's economic recovery, having supported approximately 340,000 jobs in the full leisure and hospitality sector, more than \$40 billion in direct visitor spending, and approximately \$60 billion in total economic impact for 2022. This year, the City expects to welcome 11 million international visitors.

India continues to be a core market for New York City, with growth over the last decade and further increases in visitation expected. We project that 306,000 travelers will visit NYC from India in 2023.

2. What new tourism attractions/products are you planning to launch for the winter season?

NYC celebrates winters with style beginning from Thanksgiving to the New Year's Eve Ball Drop in Times Square. Annual celebrations include the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade (November 23), the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree Lighting, and festivities ranging from the Radio City Christmas Spectacular featuring the Rockettes, to the Holiday Train Show at the New York Botanical Garden.

NYC will also launch its annual NYC Winter Outing, a value-driven program spanning hotels, dining, Broadway shows and attractions, museums, tours and performing arts. The 2024 iteration will take place from January 16 through February.

3. How important are B2B agents for you in India & your plans to connect more closely?

NYC will continue to invest in training our trade partners and work closely to create profitable partnerships that can only benefit the consumer in the long run. The B2B segment allows us to build a strong marketplace through their vast network of Tier 2 and Tier 3 Indian cities – we look forward to visiting Ahmedabad as part of our annual sales mission in early 2024, alongside New Delhi and Mumbai.

New York City Tourism + Conventions is also offering the trade a wide variety of travel planning tools, including the relaunched Travel Trade Academy to educate and empower those to best sell and promote NYC.

4. What is your take on easing visa processes and air connectivity from India?

We understand that the US Consular Service is setting a target of over 1 million new visas to be issued in India by year's end, which will, in part, be aided by the positive news that the US Consulate plans to establish a presence in Bengaluru and Ahmedabad.

Air India launched three flights each from Bengaluru and Mumbai, and in February launched seven flights from Mumbai to JFK International Airport. We also have United Airlines and American Airlines offering one-stop connections. We believe that there will be a big push soon for more flights to India from these homegrown US carriers.

6. What promotional and marketing activities have you planned for the Indian market?

The Indian subcontinent is significant, ranking second in international arrivals to the USA in May. New York City Tourism + Conventions, the City's official destination marketing organization and convention and visitor's bureau (formerly NYC & Company), returned to India earlier this year for a sales and media mission engaging the leading travel trade and media in Mumbai and New Delhi for the first time since the pandemic, alongside a delegation of five New York City tourism partners. With recent initiatives including an event in Hyderabad with the US Commercial Service and United Airlines. We are also engaging with national and international airline partners for strategic promotional initiatives and familiarization trips for the media, influencers, and travel trade, in addition to programs targeting students. We also recently collaborated with Travel Boutique Online (TBO), servicing agents with their many verticals including TBO Air, TBO Academy, TBO DMC, TBO Holidays, etc.

- Kuhelika Roy Choudhury

QUOTE OF THE MONTH



To ensure the growth and competitiveness of the sector, significant investments must be made in education and talent by upskilling the professional workforce and implementing vocational and technical programmes. Only in this way can we equip young people with the knowledge and capabilities they need to thrive in the sector.

Zurab Pololikashvili, UNWTO Secretary-General while commenting on growing investment in tourism sector

Regional Tourism

Why are European destinations there right at the top? Europe indeed is a continent with many developed and upper- and middle-income countries but the ease of travel within the continent has been the biggest catalyst of growth in travel and tourism on the continent. Whereas in our own backyard crossing state borders are sometimes a challenge. Both, Indian and international tour operators have repeatedly complained of long queues and jams at state border toll points and consequently delay in crossing state boundaries. Many of them are of opinion that crossing state borders in India is more time taking than crossing international borders in Europe. Whereas, as an EU national, one enjoys the right of free movement.

Take example of France. The country is ranked number one globally in terms of visitation. Of the nearly 90 million tourists that visited France in pre-Covid 2018, the top seven source markets were all neighbouring countries surrounding France, namely, the UK (13 million), Germany (12.3 million), Belgium-Luxemburg (11.6 million), Italy (7 million), Switzerland (6.8 million), Spain (6.7 million) and Netherlands (4.7 million). These seven countries alone contributed a staggering over 70 per cent of tourist arrivals into France!

Tourist arrivals in the world's second most visited destination, Spain, also tells a similar story. Spain's top ten source markets (Nordic countries combined as single region) are all neighbouring European countries with the exception of United States in 2022. Of the nearly 72 million tourists that Spain received last year, over 15 million came from the UK, 10 million from France, 9.7 million from Germany, 4.3 million from Nordic countries, 4 million from Italy, 3.9 million from Netherlands and so on. Spain also tells a very similar story to that of France's in terms of share of tourists from neighbouring countries. In case of Spain also, it's top seven European tourism source markets (At 2.8 million, United States was Spain's 7th largest tourism source market in 2022) contributed over 70 per cent of inbound tourism share.

United States was the third most visited country in the pre-Covid 2019 with over 79 million international visitors. Sandwiched between Canada and Mexico, United States received nearly 50 per cent of its inbound share from these two countries alone, with Canadian arrivals recorded at over 20 million and Mexico contributing nearly 19 million visitors.

Few things are very clear here. Strong numbers or top ranked tourism destination in terms of visitor arrivals will require strong neighbouring source markets. And in order to develop strong neighbouring tourism source markets, destinations will have to facilitate ease of travel by addressing Visa related issues.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

2023

ITB Asia	Singapore	Oct. 25 - 27	https://www.itb-asia.com/
WTM	London	Nov. 6-8	https://www.wtm.com/london/en-gb.html
2024			
Fitur	Madrid	Jan 24- 28	https://www.ifema.es/en/fitur
SATTE	Greater Noida/Delhi NCR	Feb 22-24	https://satte.in/

T3 TRAVEL TRENDS TODAY

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TRAVEL SIMPLIFIED

Greater people-to-people and tourism exchange key to boosting Taiwanese investment in India

We need to have a lot of people-to-people engagement. If people from Taiwan do not come to India in large numbers, they will not see this country, they will not do trade, they will not make investment - Ambassador Baushuan Ger

In 2019, the pre-Covid peak of International travel, about 27 million Indians travelled overseas. Some 50,000 of these visitors travelled to Taiwan, a paltry share. Taiwan, a country of about 23 million, produced about 21 million outbound travellers in 2019. India's share was a mere 50,000! Ambassador Baushuan Ger, Representative, Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India, is keen to change that. The impact he says is far reaching as greater tourism exchange and people-to-people familiarity between the countries would also have telling effect on attracting Taiwanese trade and investment to India, especially in the MSME sector.

For Taiwan, the Ambassador said that the country still needs to recover from the impact of the pandemic. He said, "Our target this year is 6 million. Pre-Covid our highest number was 12 million foreign tourists. I think we will be able to reach that goal. Because right now, Taiwan is very popular among Eastern countries like Japan and Korea. Two million visitors came to Taiwan from these two countries. A lot of people are coming from Southeast Asian countries, Vietnam, Thailand and Singapore."

And while Taiwan looks set on course to achieve its international arrival target, Ambassador Ger is keen that there is improved destination visibility and awareness of Taiwan and India in each other countries along with more visitations, better air connectivity, which in turn, he insists, will also pave way for greater trade and investment from Taiwanese firms, especially the MSME sector, in

India. The Ambassador delved at length on a host of topic ranging from tourism and how it is linked to boosting Taiwanese investment, connectivity, destination promotion plan and more.

Investment through Tourism

Taiwanese are unlike the western investors and require familiarity with people and destination they want to do business at. And that's where tourism can play the role of the catalyst. Ambassador Ger says that they are interested in India, especially the MSME sector and there are Taiwanese MSMEs already in India but lot more would come if there were enabling environment which he says can be facilitated by enhanced tourism exchange between the two countries.

"We say to the government of India that we need to encourage the small and medium enterprises from Taiwan to come to India, because when they come here, they will be here forever. They will not leave. A number of small and medium enterprises have been here for years. In this context, tourism becomes very important. So that is why we were going to promote tourism for the next few years between the two sides."

Furthermore, the Ambassador said that of course this is his job to move outbound to Taiwan but it is up to the Government of India if they want to invite people from Taiwan to visit here for tourism. "We started the New Southbound Policy in 2016. This policy actually focuses on people-to-people engagements. We need to have a lot of people-to-people engagement. If people from

Taiwan do not come to India in large numbers, they will not see this country, they will not do trade, they will not make investment. Another thing is that, under this policy, we hope we can encourage a lot of young people from this country to study in Taiwan."

Promotional Plans

The Ambassador also delved in detail on plans to boost Taiwan's share of Indian outbound. He said, "We have two major carriers in our country, China Airlines and EVA Airways. We are pushing the China Airlines to come back and resume their flights. And we are also talking to EVA Airways to resume their flights to India. EVA Airways also used to fly between India and Taiwan. I also wrote to Air India to start flying between India and Taiwan. At present only our airlines fly between the two countries. I think it will be in the interest of India if airlines from India's side also fly so that we can provide more direct flight options to people travelling between the two countries."

When we have direct flights, we can do other promotional things like we can invite our cultural groups to come to India to promote tourism. Last year, we did a film festival here in Delhi. We are hoping to do more, not only in Delhi, but also in other cities to promote beautiful sceneries of Taiwan to Indian customers. We also want to invite some celebrities to Taiwan, something we are working on. We hope that after the flights are ready to resume, we will do that.

The Ambassador also batted for a tourism office in India. He said, "In the past we had

office here but that moved to Singapore. Our tourism bureau should see the potential in India that this is a growing market, and this is a country of 1.4 billion people and a lot of people have moved to the middle class, a lot of people are wealthy enough to afford to travel overseas."

E-Visa & Incentives

Taiwan has also taken a slew of measures to boost visitation. Indian travellers can avail of e-Visa facility. Indians with valid visa from the US, the UK, European Union, Schengen, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Korea can avail of e-Visa for 14 days stay. In case of the UK, US, Schengen countries, Japan or Korea's visa holders, they are eligible for Taiwan's e-visa if they have a valid visa or even an expired visa that expired within the last 10 years. However, in case, one holds Australia's or New Zealand's visa, he or she can apply for Taiwan's e-visa only if they have valid visa from any of the two countries. This e-visa makes visit to Taiwan hassle free for Indians."

To solo travellers, Taiwan is offering upon arrival at the airport an easy card worth of 5000 Taiwanese dollars, about INR 15,000. And if lucky, Indian visitors can also stay one night in Taiwan's National Presidential Palace for which they have to apply online.



Baushuan Ger

Shayan Mallick

Czech Republic Strengthens its Connect With Travel-Trade in India

#VisitCzechia organizes a Networking Evening in New Delhi on July 31st, 2023. The event was attended by representatives from the #VisitCzechia Team, the Ambassador from the Czech Republic Embassy in India, respected travel agents, media, and airline partners.

The proceedings began with a warm welcome speech by Her Excellency Ambassador, Eliška Žigová, who expressed her happiness at the resumption of promotional and marketing activities for the Czech Republic in India. She highlighted the strong ties between the two nations and anticipated a significant increase in the number of Indian visitors to the Czech Republic.

Additionally, welcome notes were also shared by Jaroslav Filip, the Aviation Business Director of Prague Airport, and Marek Kroutil, the International Markets Manager of CzechTourism. The evening concluded on a positive note, with everyone having the chance to network and contribute to the overall success of the event.

Following in very soon, #VisitCzechia, also participated in the MILT Congress, which was held on the 2nd and 3rd of August in Goa, India. #VisitCzechia presented its versatile attractions to MICE groups, Corporates, Event Planners, and more. #VisitCzechia cordially welcomed all the MILT attendees, extending an open invitation to embark on a delightful journey of discovering the destination.

Team T3



Thapanee Kiatphaiboon is New TAT Governor

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) announces Thapanee Kiatphaiboon as the new Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). With Thapanee joining the new role, TAT aims to enhance its tourism promotion and uplift tourism products at the forefront.

Thapanee Kiatphaiboon begins her role as the new Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) starting 1st September 2023. Having been with the TAT in 1999, Thapanee has held various positions within the organization, including Deputy Governor for Tourism Products and Business, and most recently Deputy Governor for Domestic Marketing.

In her previous roles, Thapanee has played a key role in utilizing technology and social media in the promotion and development of Thailand's tourism, where some of her activities include the Google Street View project in cooperation with Google Thailand, and the 'Amazing Thailand' social media platforms.

Team T3



STB appoints Kean Bon as Area Director, India, South Asia, and Africa

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has appointed Lim Kean Bon as Area Director, India, South Asia, and Africa. He will succeed Raymond Lim as the India market lead. He will be based in New Delhi, leading STB's promotion, and travel trade engagement activities in Northern and Eastern India to sustain and grow affinity for Singapore from leisure travelers. In addition, Kean Bon will be responsible for business development efforts to secure visitor-ship from across India to Singapore in the Cruise and Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) segments. He will also lead his team in engaging consumers in other regional markets like Bangladesh and South Africa.

Speaking on this appointment for Singapore Tourism Board (STB), GB Srithar, Regional Director, India, Middle East, South Asia & Africa (IMESA), said, "Kean Bon's leadership in driving experience development for a leisure precinct and his past tenure in the Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau (SECB) places him in good stead to take on this role in STB New Delhi, particularly in this pivotal moment of anchoring Singapore as the premier lifestyle and business destination for Indian travellers."

Prior to taking on the STB New Delhi leadership role, Kean Bon led STB's Lifestyle Precinct Development team from 2020 to 2023, where he set direction for various projects to sustain the appeal of Orchard Road, Singapore's leading lifestyle precinct. Kean Bon said, "Together with my team in New Delhi, we will continue our efforts to promote Singapore and inspire the Indian audience with the sheer breadth of vibrant experiences the city has to offer for leisure and business travellers."

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Borderless BIMSTEC

Unleashing a market of 1.8 billion people and US\$ 5 trillion economy

Shayan Mallick

The recently concluded 67th Annual Convention of TAAI themed “Transcending Borders, Transforming Lives,” batted for countries in the neighbourhood to be in greater tourism spotlight. The event, of course also garnered Sri Lanka much greater visibility as a tourism destination in the Indian market. The convention attracted some 500 TAAI delegates to get the first-hand opportunity to discover this beautiful country on India’s Southern fringe. And TAAI is confident that the ensuing years will see Indian arrivals to Sri Lanka grow many folds.

Taking a cue from the Convention theme, the Chief Guest at the TAAI Convention’s opening ceremony in Colombo, Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe said that the seven-member BIMSTEC (The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) grouping of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand, should be declared as a ‘Borderless Tourism Region’ in order to tap the huge potential that the countries in the grouping provide each other.

The Sri Lankan President said, “That’s what you want by the theme ‘Transcending Border, Transforming Lives. Make BIMSTEC a ‘Borderless Tourism Region.’”

The intergovernmental body represents nearly a quarter of world population, almost 1.8 billion people and a combined economy of US\$ 5 trillion. All the seven countries are developing nations and require robust growth oriented economic activity that can create new jobs and employment, attract investment, give fillip to infrastructure development. ‘Tourism’ can potentially be the answer. India is already the number one tourism source market of four of the remaining six BIMSTEC countries, namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. But these number barely do any justice.

Sri Lanka is attracting around 400,000 Indian visitors a year, whereas India gets about 350,000 Sri Lankan visitors. Given that the grouping has four Buddhist majority countries, namely Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Bhutan, and India is home to almost all the holy sites related to Buddha, including ‘The Mahabodhi Temple,’ site of Lord Buddha’s enlightenment and widely viewed as the Mecca of Buddhism; there is tremendous scope to boost visitor arrivals and tourism revenue from these countries. Bangladesh is also home to some prominent Buddhist sites and can hugely tap into these markets.

Furthermore, India’s top tourism source market is Bangladesh with annual arrivals in the region of 2.5 million which could potentially be doubled or trebled by merely bringing in facilitative tourism-oriented processes, be it bringing in Visa free travel or creating seamless and easy travel between the two countries. At the same time Bangladesh can also benefit from huge VFR and tourist traffic from the burgeoning Indian outbound tourism market. There is tremendous potential for these paltry numbers to grow for these seven countries, and grow many folds given there is enabling environment.

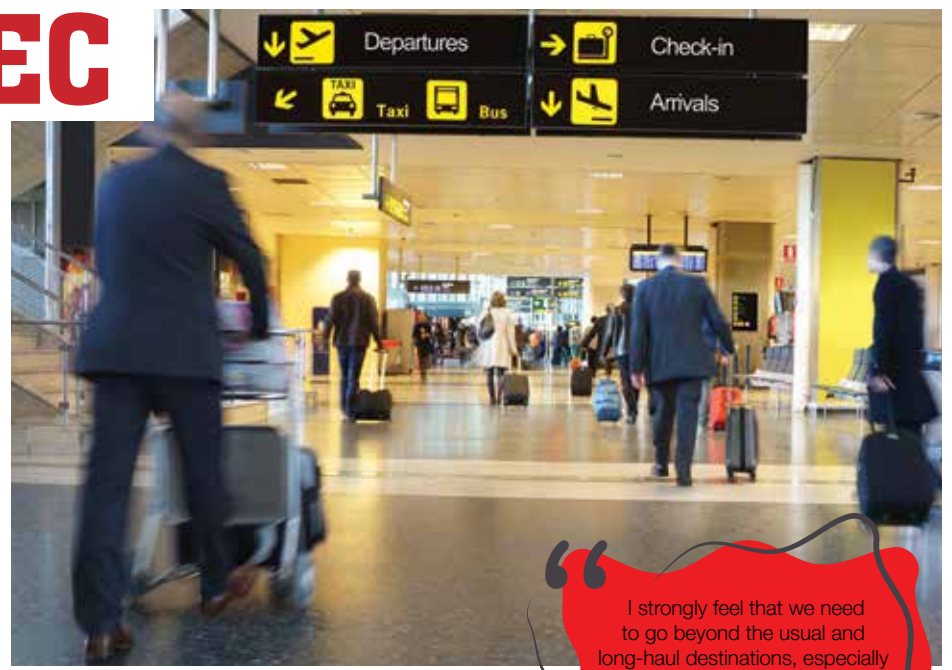
BIMSTEC

SAARC that was established in 1985 to promote regional cooperation among members (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) in areas

of trade and investment, transport, culture, etc. is largely defunct because of strained India Pakistan relations. The last SAARC Summit, a biennial event, was held in 2014.

Now more recently, BIMSTEC, that has five of the seven SAARC members excluding Afghanistan and Pakistan, has been into greater prominence. Five of the seven SAARC members, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, are also in BIMSTEC grouping along with Myanmar and Thailand.

With over 1.8 billion in population, BIMSTEC is home to nearly a quarter of world’s population. All these countries share close cultural connection and can potentially be a vibrant tourism



“I strongly feel that we need to go beyond the usual and long-haul destinations, especially keeping the Visa hassles and high-ticket prices in mind and open up our tourism to countries close to home. These countries have huge tourism potential, and we must strengthen our tourism ties with them, not just for outbound, but also inbound
– Jyoti Mayal”

source markets for each other, but unfortunately that is not the case.

‘Tourism’ is one the 14 priority areas that BIMSTEC has identified and India is the Lead Country for the sector. BIMSTEC can, if it works like European Union, unleash unprecedented growth and development in the seven-member grouping in creating new jobs and employment, infrastructure development, and supporting myriad allied sector that thrives because of tourism.

Europe’s Tourism Windfall

It is highly unlikely for a destination to develop robust international tourism arrival without a vibrant and thriving regional tourism. If we look at some of the most mature tourism destinations, especially in Europe, it only reinforces that fact.

With a rich cultural heritage and diversity backed by ease of travel within the continent, especially among the 28 member European Union, Europe is home to five of the ten most visited countries in the world. But not only the largest destinations, the continent also is home to some of the strongest tourism source markets. Nearly 51 per cent of the international tourist arrivals takes place in Europe alone and within Europe, the 28-member European Union account for over 80 per cent of Europe’s and 40 per cent of world’s total international arrival!

Dig deeper and you will find that probably around 80 per cent or more of this inbound is from neighbouring countries!

So why are European destinations there right at the top? Europe indeed is a continent with many developed and upper- and middle-income countries but the ease of travel within the continent has been the biggest catalyst of growth in travel and tourism on the continent. Whereas in our own backyard crossing state borders are sometimes a challenge. Both, Indian and international tour operators have repeatedly complained of long queues and jams at state border toll points. Many of them are of opinion that crossing state borders in India is more time taking than crossing international borders in Europe. Whereas, as an EU national, one enjoys the right of free movement within the Union and a few more countries on the continent.

Take example of France. The country is ranked number one globally in terms of visitation. Of the nearly 90 million tourists that visited France in pre-Covid 2018, the top seven source markets were all neighbouring countries surrounding France, namely, the UK (13 million), Germany (12.3 million), Belgium-Luxemburg (11.6 million), Italy (7 million), Switzerland (6.8 million), Spain (6.7 million) and Netherlands (4.7 million). These seven countries alone contributed a staggering over 70 per cent of tourist arrivals into France!

Tourist arrivals in the world’s second most visited destination, Spain, also tells a similar story. In 2022, Spain’s top ten source markets (Nordic countries combined as single region) are all neighbouring European countries, with the exception of United States. Of the nearly 72 million tourists that Spain received last year, over 15 million came from the UK, 10 million from France, 9.7 million from Germany, 4.3 million from Nordic countries, 4 million from Italy, 3.9 million from

“The seven-member BIMSTEC (The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) grouping of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand, should be declared as a ‘Borderless Tourism Region’ in order to tap the huge potential that the countries in the grouping provide each other
– Ranil Wickremesinghe”





“ When we look at most visited destinations like Spain, it gets over 15 million visitors from the UK alone. Whereas India's pre-Covid foreign tourist arrival was under 11 million. Closer study and research will provide actionable data, insights and recommendations for the BIMSTEC countries to devise strategies to develop a robust regional source markets like the European countries.
 – Sarab Jit Singh ”

goes overwhelmingly in tourism's favour as an industry to be keenly looked at and be developed is its incremental contribution to economy, jobs, inclusivity, social development, infrastructure development and more.

According to World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Prior to the pandemic, Travel & Tourism (including its direct, indirect, and induced impacts) accounted for 1 in 5 new jobs created across the world during 2014-2019, and 10.3% of all jobs (334 million) and 10.4% of global GDP (US\$ 10 trillion) in 2019. Such a share in job creation is incredible! But now, an even greater argument for tourism is the fact that in the coming years WTTC predicts that one in four jobs will be created in the travel and tourism sector!

Seamless and facilitative travel, be it visa free travel, or making BIMSTEC a 'Borderless Tourism Region' as the Sri Lankan President called; such an initiative could unleash great social and economic dividend for the seven members of the groupings.

UNWTO Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvili, in his forward message for 'European Union Tourism Trends,' a research by WTO and co-funded by European Union, says, "Sustained growth in tourism has been instrumental in supporting the economic recovery of many European countries, largely contributing to job creation, GDP and the balance of payments. Today, tourism is one of the key pillars of the EU strategy for jobs and inclusive growth."

“ Sustained growth in tourism has been instrumental in supporting the economic recovery of many European countries, largely contributing to job creation, GDP and the balance of payments. Today, tourism is one of the key pillars of the EU strategy for jobs and inclusive growth
 - Zurab Pololikashvili ”

Netherlands and so on. Spain also tells a very similar story to that of France's in terms of share of tourists from neighbouring countries. In case of Spain also, it's top seven European tourism source markets (At 2.8 million, United States was Spain's 7th largest tourism source market in 2022) contributed over 70 per cent of inbound tourism share.

United States was the third most visited country in the pre-Covid 2019 with over 79

million international visitors. Sandwiched between Canada and Mexico, United States received nearly 50 per cent of its inbound share from these two countries alone. Canadian arrivals was recorded at over 20 million and Mexico contributing nearly 19 million visitors.

Few things are very clear here. Strong numbers or top ranked tourism destination in terms of visitor arrivals will require strong neighbouring source markets. And in order to develop strong neighbouring tourism source markets, destinations will have to facilitate ease of travel by addressing Visa related issues facilitative and seamless travel options between countries.

Commenting on need to work towards boosting regional tourism, TAAI President Jyoti Mayal, says, "I strongly feel that we need to go beyond the usual and long-haul destinations, especially keeping the Visa hassles and high-ticket prices in mind and open up our tourism to countries close to home. These countries have huge tourism potential, and we must strengthen our tourism ties with them, not just for outbound, but also inbound."

Why Go Regional

International tourist arrivals reached 1500 million worldwide in 2019, generating US\$ 1.9 trillion in visitor spending. Tourism accounts for over 10 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 7 per cent of world exports and one in ten jobs worldwide. However, what

In conclusion

Emerging from a devastating financial crisis, Sri Lanka is keen to get back to business and financial health. The country is keenly looking at 'Tourism' as one of the sectors to help revive its economy and create jobs. Bangladesh is keen to diversify beyond its economic mainstay, the textiles and garment industry. Given its vast cultural and heritage treasures, the country is well positioned to tap into tourism sector. For Both India and Bangladesh, home to rich Buddhist sites, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar and Bhutan can provide steady flow of Buddhist tourist. Needless to say, that there can be tremendous synergy between these destinations in boosting overall travel and tourism.

Lately India has put forth some ambitious tourism targets for itself. The country has set the target of generating USD 56 billion in foreign exchange through some 30 million international tourist arrivals by 2030. Furthermore, it wants the tourism sector to be US\$ 1 trillion sector by 2047, the centenary year of India's independence, with 100 million foreign tourist arrivals.

Tourism today accounts for 10% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 7% of world exports and one in ten jobs worldwide. According to Sarab Jit Singh Managing Director, Travellite India and former Vice President of FAITH, "When we look at most visited destinations like Spain, it gets over 15 million visitors from the UK alone. Whereas India's pre-Covid foreign tourist arrival was under 11 million. Therefore, boosting regional tourism can have huge dividend for all the stakeholders. We need to measure economic strength of the BIMSTEC countries, the product, size of their respective markets. More studies and research needs to be done to fill an important gap in the availability of data. A closer study and research will provide actionable data, insights and recommendations for the BIMSTEC countries to devise strategies and to develop a robust neighbourhood and regional source markets like the European countries."



We are looking at achieving close to 100% capacity in Indian market, Malaysian Airlines CEO

As the global air travel hasten toward the pre-pandemic levels, a lot of ground is yet to be covered Ahmad Luqman Mohd Azmi, CEO of Airlines, Malaysia Aviation Group talks to T3, on how the scenario is unfolding.

How does your quarterly performance (Q1, Q2) scenario look like? What is the overall percentage of traffic & load factor from the routes operating from India?

With the reopening of borders in 2022, we have since emerged on greater footing financially and operationally, with parent company Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG) having achieved three consecutive quarters of financial profitability since 3Q 2022. In Q1 2023, we recorded RM550 million in operating profit, while revenue reached RM3.39 billion, 7% ahead of the group's target for the quarter.

Malaysia Airlines has achieved 90% of its pre-COVID capacity and expects to reach pre-COVID levels once China demand starts to bounce back by the end of Q4 2023. In addition, Malaysia Airlines will also inject more capacity to destinations that have experienced a surge in demand such as Australia and South Asia. Average load factor from India is at 81% for YTD June 2023. We are looking at achieving close to 100% capacity in the Indian market by the end of this year.

What is the current operational profile in India and overall?

India remains one of our key focus markets. We have increased our connectivity from India to Malaysia from 52 weekly flights to 55 weekly flights with the reinstatement of three new flights from Bangalore beginning April 2023.

As a member of the Oneworld alliance, Malaysia Airlines connects to more than 900

destinations in over 170 territories. Placing significant emphasis on India, we will continue to review opportunities in the market and will gradually add new routes, increase frequencies, or upgrade aircraft to meet the increased travel demand.

Please draw light on your recent partnerships, and strategy for upcoming associations.

At Malaysia Airlines, we recognize the significance of collaboration and have established strategic alliances with airlines worldwide. Specifically for travelers from India, Malaysia Airlines has interline partnerships with Air India and Vistara, enabling seamless journeys on connecting flights operated by both carriers. Additionally, we are actively exploring opportunities for codeshare partnerships with Indian airlines or those within the Oneworld community.

What promotional & marketing strategies are you looking to incorporate for Indian market for the Monsoon season?

At our airline, we prioritize hyper-personalization, which involves segmenting customers, creating tailored products, and crafting targeted marketing messages for relevant channels. To provide targeted offerings, we have developed specialized programs such as MH Explorer for students and MH Biz Pro for SMEs and corporates.

Our Horizontal Fare Family (HFF) offers flexible fare options (Lite, Basic, and Flex) tailored to customers' travel needs, preferences,

and budgets, each with unique benefits like baggage allowance and seat selections.

Additionally, our Bonus Side Trip program promotes travel to Malaysia, allowing passengers to explore cultural destinations like Alor Setar, Langkawi, Johor Bahru, Kota Bharu, Penang, and more at minimal costs. We are also working closely with State Tourism Boards to position Malaysia as a top-of-mind wedding destination.

Which Indian routes are gaining maximum yield? Which new routes are on your radar for expansion?

We aim to add two more flights from Kochi by the end of August, which will increase our flight frequency from India from 55 weekly flights to 57. In order to strengthen our customer base in India, we have partnered with Acumen Overseas to enhance our services and offerings tailored to the Indian market.

Globally, the routes we operate are experiencing consistent growth in load factor performance and robust forward bookings. This trend is especially prominent during the festive season, with domestic Malaysian destinations (specifically Peninsular Malaysia to Sabah/Sarawak) and international destinations like Bali, Phuket, Bangkok, Jakarta, as well as long-haul destinations such as London, Australia, and India, showcasing strong load factors.

- **Kuhelika Roy Choudhury**



Ahmad Luqman Mohd Azmi

Air India unveils its new avatar



Air India's new logo symbol – 'The Vista' – is inspired by the peak of the gold window frame, signifying limitless possibilities, progressiveness, and the airline's bold, confident outlook for the future. Air India's brand-new aircraft livery and design features a palette of deep red, aubergine, and gold highlights, as well as a chakra-inspired pattern. It also boasts a striking new custom-made 'Air India Sans' font, marrying confidence with warmth to position Air India as premium, inclusive, and accessible.

Campbell Wilson, Air India CEO & MD, said: "Our transformative new brand reflects an ambition to make Air India a world class airline serving guests from around the globe, and that represents a new India proudly on the global stage. The new Air India is bold, confident, and vibrant, but also warm and deeply rooted to its rich history and traditions that make Indian hospitality a global benchmark for standards in service."

Designed in partnership with the brand transformation company, FutureBrand, the new look reimagines the iconic Indian window shape, historically used by Air India, into a gold window frame that becomes central to the new brand design system – symbolising a 'Window of Possibilities'.

Travellers will begin to see the new logo throughout their journey starting December 2023, when Air India's first Airbus A350 enters the fleet in the new livery.

- **Team T3**

Guest Column

Embracing the travel technology era

Discover new possibilities of BUSINESS & GROWTH as ITQ President & CEO, Sanjay Kumar, shares some valuable tips for professionals in travel to unleash the potential in modern travel retailing



Sanjay Kumar

Exploring beyond leisure, travel has evolved into a transformative force for personal and professional growth. It provides unique opportunities to explore new cultures, gain fresh perspectives, and foster valuable connections. For travel professionals, travel can be a catalyst for success, helping to build networks, close deals, and expand horizons. However, turning travel dreams into reality requires careful planning, execution, and a proactive mindset.

Amidst the ever-changing landscape of the travel industry, travel retailers face the exciting challenge of turning travel into an unforgettable experience for the travel buyers. As technology continues to shape the way we travel, harnessing the power of innovative travel technology solutions has become paramount.

Here are some valuable tips to help travel retailers unleash the potential of modern travel retailing, enabling them to provide exceptional experiences for their clients and grow their business:

- **Understand Your Clients' Travel Objectives**

To effectively serve your clients, it is crucial to understand their travel objectives. Are they seeking unique cultural experiences, adventure travel, or business-focused trips? By gaining a deep understanding of your clients' travel objectives, you can curate personalized offerings that align with their desires, enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

- **Embrace Innovative Travel Technology Solutions**

In today's digital era, travel technology solutions are revolutionizing the way travel retailers and agents operate. Embrace innovative platforms that provide access to comprehensive travel content, including flights, hotels, tours, and activities. These solutions simplify the booking process, offer real-time availability, and provide valuable insights and analytics to optimize travel experiences. Travelport+ is one such platform that uses modern travel technology to enhance operational efficiency, streamline workflows, and deliver seamless experiences to your clients.

- **Curate Unique and Tailored Travel Experiences**

Differentiate yourself in the competitive travel market by curating unique and tailored travel experiences for your clients. Go beyond standard itineraries and embrace customization. Dedicate sufficient time to comprehend the preferences, interests, and aspirations of your clients. Tailor travel packages that align with their desires, whether it is immersive cultural experiences, adventure travel, or luxury getaways. By curating personalized experiences, you can create memorable journeys that leave a lasting impression on your clients.

- **Leverage Data and Analytics for Personalization**

Data and analytics play a crucial role in understanding your clients' needs and

preferences. Use travel technology solutions that capture and analyse client data, including booking history, travel preferences, and feedback. Use this information to personalize your offerings, provide relevant recommendations, and anticipate future travel desires. By leveraging data-driven insights, you can deliver highly targeted and personalized experiences that meet your clients' expectations.

- **Foster Strong Relationships with Local Partners**

Collaboration with local partners is essential to providing authentic and immersive travel experiences. Build a network of trusted local suppliers, including hotels, tour operators, and transportation services. Establish strong relationships with these partners to ensure seamless coordination, access to exclusive offers, and insider knowledge of each destination. By working closely with local partners, you can create unforgettable experiences that showcase the best of each location and offer your clients an unparalleled travel experience.

- **Stay Ahead of Travel Trends**

The travel industry is dynamic, with trends constantly evolving. Stay ahead of the curve by monitoring industry trends, consumer behaviour, and emerging destinations. Invest in continuous education and training to expand your knowledge and stay up-to-date with the latest developments. This will enable you to offer your clients fresh and exciting

travel options, capitalize on emerging markets, and provide insights into the latest travel trends. By being a trendsetter, you can position yourself as an industry leader and attract new clients.

- **Provide Exceptional Customer Service**

Exceptional customer service is a cornerstone of success in the travel industry. Ensure that your team is well-trained, knowledgeable, and equipped to provide outstanding service to your clients. Respond promptly to inquiries, offer 24/7 support, and go the extra mile to exceed expectations. By delivering exceptional customer service, you can build trust, foster loyalty, and secure repeat business and referrals.

Witness the success with the modern travel technology of Travelport+. Our innovative solutions streamline operations, enhance personalization, and provide real-time insights to optimize travel experiences. With our comprehensive platform and network of local partners, you can curate unique journeys and deliver exceptional customer service. Stay ahead of the competition and shape the future of travel by using Travelport+ smart technology. Together, let's empower travellers to transform their dreams into unforgettable experiences, and in turn, strengthen the growth of the travel industry.

- **By Sanjay Kumar, President & CEO, ITQ**



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Kamat's newest 'IRA by Orchid Hotels' to drive next phase of growth

With F&B at the heart of brand USP, IRA is keen to make its presence in tier II and III markets.

Kamat Hotels India is set on its promotional and expansion spree, with an intent to differentiate itself in the market. To establish itself as one of the only few players with a strong F&B background with culinary excellence and guest satisfaction, Kamat Hotels India Ltd brings to light its latest venture, IRA by Orchid Hotels, the chain of upper-mid-market hotels that aims to cater tradition with innovation and serve the aspiring Indian traveler.



IRA by Orchid Hotels claims to be a home away from home, where guests can unwind as well as explore hidden gems in the city and the local culture, ensuring carefully crafted culinary delights for the guests. IRA by Orchid Hotels will cater to the adventurous spirit within the modern traveler, offering an experience especially food and banquets.

"F&B is poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the identity of IRA as a brand. We recognize that the culinary experiences we offer will leave a lasting impression on our guests and contribute to their overall perception of our brand. With this understanding, we are dedicated to curating exceptional dining experiences that showcase our commitment to quality, innovation, and personalized service," said Vishal Kamat, Executive Director, Kamat Hotels India Ltd.

The brand has outlined a clear roadmap for its expansion, especially in Tier 2 & 3 cities with plans to launch its hotels in Mumbai and Bhubaneswar from July this year. In the current year, Ira aims to open 8-10 new hotels across India, with Sambhajinagar (Formerly Aurangabad), Nashik, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, and Dehradun identified as the target locations.

"We believe in making a positive impact on the lives of our dedicated team members, valued partners, and the wider society", mentioned Vishal Kamat, unveiling the ethos behind the brand, IRA. "We are thrilled to bring IRA, a brand that strikes the perfect balance between tradition and innovation. With Ira, we aim to continue the legacy of our brands while infusing it with a fresh and exciting energy that resonates with the aspiring India."

Kamat Hotels witnesses a stable performance in the first half of 2023, which bodes well for the hospitality firm. Kamat further mentioned that the brand's consistent performance is a testament to its resilience in the face of a challenging operating environment. The brand's new IRA by Orchid Hotels is said to have received well by both internal stakeholders and external audiences alike, generating palpable excitement. Kamat Hotels is betting on the F&B segment to drive its growth in the coming years.

"Kamat Hotels has garnered significant interest from smaller cities, with many people keen to work and lease their hotels into IRA." According to Kamat, the brand's focus on smaller cities is a smart strategy, given the potential for growth in these areas. Smaller cities often have untapped potential in terms of tourism and hospitality, and Kamat Hotels is well-positioned to capitalize on this trend.

- Kuhelika Roy Choudhury

Merlin Entertainment sees India as a market with immense potential

With presence in Mumbai, Merlin plans to put staffs in Delhi and Tier 2 cities in 2024

Merlin Entertainments, a global powerhouse in the world of attractions with over 140 attractions worldwide, 23 hotels and 6 holiday villages in 24 countries and across 4 continents, brings a diverse range of experiences to the table.

According to Shannon Bailey, Regional Trade Sales Director – APAC, Merlin Entertainments, "Our commitment to India is strong. For the Indian market, we understand the importance of catering to diverse interests, from cricket to Bollywood and beyond. For Madam Tussauds, Singapore, 80% of the visitors are Indians. During the peak, it gets about 6000 a week, making India number one for Singapore. But for the UK and Australia, it's probably number 5. For shorter length like Bangkok, India was #1, but China has overtaken and now India is at about #4 in Bangkok. For Australia, Merlin Entertainments has the share of about 60% of 2019, but mostly due to visiting friends and relatives.

Merlin Entertainments sees India as a market with immense potential and is dedicated to unlocking its full potential. "There is a lot of opportunity for growth and the numbers are definitely heading in the right direction. It's a market that we haven't even touched the surface of and

it's just waiting for it to explode" reiterates Bailey.

Merlin has a dedicated team based in the country and is continually expanding its presence to meet the growing demand. Bailey mentions, "We have two full-time staff both based in Mumbai. The plan for 2024 is to increase the number of staff in Delhi and Tier 2 cities. We're expanding as we see demand from India and it's untapped," adds Bailey.

Merlin aims to engage with the Indian B2B market through various channels, including participation in travel shows and collaborations with tourism bodies. "We are lucky that we get the support from the agencies and we go to most of the shows because it's important to engage. We go through a DMC or an ITO. We don't work directly with the travel trade in the market, we make sure that the direct partner based in India is dealing with the DMC or a channel manager."

She further adds, "And in terms of support, depending on the part or the tourism body, there could be an opportunity where we can do a campaign as well. We have a marketing budget and India is a market that we definitely put money aside for."

- Kuhelika Roy Choudhury

Onora sees 21.5% uptick in revenues, Q2 not so good - Ashish Vohra

Hopes positive for the third quarter as the business on books looks healthy

With its recent foray into the well-being resorts segment, when asked about the potential and challenges, Vohra reveals that



Ashish Vohra

the potential is huge,

and Onora has a portfolio of very high-end luxury wellbeing resorts in India as well as basic Ayurvedic ones. "We felt that there was a need for a holistic, luxury wellbeing resort offering that would be targeted towards a larger audience. Hence, we decided to launch Bookmark Resorts", mentions Vohra.

"The biggest challenge for us at present is to find the right manpower that has an in-depth understanding of the concept of wellbeing and what all it entails. Wellbeing is all about the soft skills and human touch."

Talking about the current composition of the market share, and plans to penetrate in newer segments, Vohra says that the wedding, MICE, and F&B segment would be about 35-40% of the overall business, and are not planning to penetrate in newer segments at present. Towards the technology advancements side, Onora Hospitality is migrating to a cloud-based centralized software, which will improve CRM and data management capabilities, and run corporate level marketing, promotional programmes as well as manage guest profiles more effectively.

Vohra also draws light on the importance of OTAs, that is expected to see a compounded annual growth rate of 10-15%. "The B2B agents have also very smartly and effectively transitioned into the DMC category as well as got B2C agents into their network. At the moment, both the segments are rapidly expanding. Hopefully, this will help the hoteliers as they themselves don't have the bandwidth to reach remote B2C locations where there is a fair amount of buying capabilities", Vohra concludes.

- Kuhelika Roy Choudhury

Red Sea Global Partners With WTTC

Red Sea Global (RSG) is now a destination partner of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). This collaboration allows RSG to exchange knowledge and best practices with a network of industry leaders and experts who share its vision for a more sustainable future in tourism. RSG also benefits from WTTC's annual Economic Impact Research for more than 185 countries and 26 regions around the world. Additionally, RSG will be able to take the lead on strategic WTTC initiatives, namely, Travel & Mobility, Sustainable Future, and Digital Transformation.

"This year we are welcoming our first guests to The Red Sea destination. Our partnership with WTTC helps us to open the eyes of the world to the beauty, diversity, and cultural heritage of the Saudi Arabian Red Sea coast," said Tracy Lanza, Group Head of Global Brand and Marketing at Red Sea Global.

"At both The Red Sea and Amaala, we have chosen to go beyond sustainability and seek to make a positive, regenerative impact on the environment and on society. This partnership also allows us to show the industry what we have achieved, to demonstrate that there is a better way to develop and operate, and to encourage others to pursue regenerative tourism for the benefit of people and planet."

Julia Simpson, WTTC President & CEO, said: "With the addition of Red Sea Global as a valued member, the World Travel & Tourism Council is reinforcing our shared commitment to a more sustainable and regenerative future. Red Sea Global's commitment to uplifting communities, driving economies, and preserving our environment aligns seamlessly with the ethos of WTTC. Together, we shall pioneer a path where innovation, responsibility, and prosperity converge, creating destinations that not only inspire but actively enrich the lives of all stakeholders."

The Red Sea and Amaala destinations are expected to generate 120,000 jobs and receive up to 1.5 million tourists annually, boosting local economies and providing opportunities for sustainable growth. Additionally, the focus on regenerative tourism practices will ensure that the natural beauty and resources of these regions are preserved for future generations to enjoy.

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