

TAAI's TRAVEL & TOURISM INITIATIVE

NAMASTAAI

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CRUISE TOURISM THE NEW WAVE



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EX HONG KONG
2/5 Night Cruise



SUPERSTAR LIBRA
EX PENANG
1/3 Night Cruise



THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Efficiency or Effectiveness? Both. It's time to *Live BIG!*

A few stunning statements released must be reviewed with seriousness.

Destinations worldwide received 561 million international tourists (overnight visitors), 21 million more than in 2015.

18.33 million Indians travelled overseas in 2014 as compared to 16 million in the previous year. UNWTO predicts Indian outbound has potential to grow to 50 million by 2020.

Chinese outbound during 2015 grew by 12 per cent to 120 million passengers and they spent 104.5 billion dollars, an increase of 16 per cent from previous year.

A statement from IATA suggests - By 2032, it expected that passengers flying would rise to 6.5 billion as compared to 3.1 billion during 2014. Aircraft flying will rise to 43,560 during 2034 as against 21,600 during 2014.

There are more such startling and mind-boggling statistics that suggest ***"times will never be the same again."***

Travel and tourism industry is poised for incredible growth. Undoubtedly. With a massive rise in the "middle-class" population – 1.8 billion during 2009; to 3.2 billion projected for 2020 and 4.9 billion people by 2030, a colossal change will result in the scale of economies. Today's exponential times are witnessing amazing yet true scenarios. The bizarre competition offers "speed and convenience" as key selling features that traps buyers, particularly millennial billions, who will dominate the next 20-30 years.



How do we connect with our future? Are we ready with our insight on how we will grow beyond our today? Are we driven by an easy "default" or by a complex "design" that meets evolution? What is our next five-year growth - in terms of how much we will sell - how many passengers would we serve? What will our earnings be to sustain success and growth?

It is a loud call – alerting us to check our levels. The dichotomy of living – my efficiency vs my effectiveness – must transcend us into those reflecting bigger numbers – bolder goals – better results. The debate does not end with our efficiency barometer suggesting our apt capabilities. An investment in technology or enhanced infrastructure cannot guarantee delivery. Many start-ups are choked with poor results, despite peripheral dressing. Talents must meet the skill. Learning must transition into application. Investments must quantify returns. Efficiency without effectiveness may be the symptom to be fine-tuned.

We spend considerable time as people, as businesses, as families in acquiring qualifications that decorate our profiles. But that is not the total picture for success. There must be ongoing labour – there must be output that supports results – there must be evolution in our thought leadership as disband the challenges that limit us. It is time for us to hone our discernibility that helps us to distinguish between our efficiency vs what we actually achieve. We must tweak our strategies to win-over these astounding times.

Every year, TAAI is one year older. Every year, there is one more year of happenings to add to our narrative script. Apart from our key strengths, age and size – we must radiate change and share best practices. An association like ours has miles to go – many more mountains to climb and impact more learning. We can only be as strong as our weakest links. It is an opportune time for us to "collective learn" new approaches that support introspection and inspiration. It will be a delightful gesture to support us "unlearn" more than learn, to unbundle rigidity and to dispel limiting myths.

I invite you to join us to post our positive experiences, powered thoughts or perceptive visions that our readers of NAMASTAAI can benefit from. If there is a bigger success to earn, for our association, for the industry and for us, it starts with us, now and immediate. Let's do it together.

With warm regards
Sunil Kumar R
President, TAAI
sunilkindia@gmail.com

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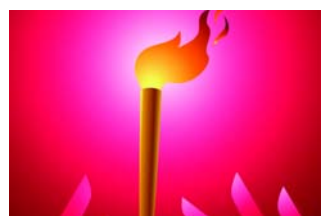
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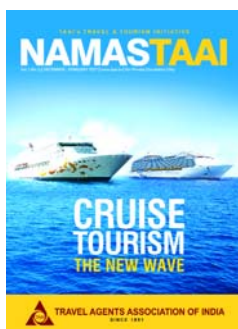
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ABOUT THE COVER IMAGE

Emerging as a popular leisure travel choice globally, the cruise industry's growth is further bolstered by development in port infrastructure and changing traveller trends. According to a 2015 report titled 'Market Potential for Cruise Tourism in India' brought out by International Research Journal of Business and Management, India ranks as the ninth most popular tourist destination in the world and is today considered as a preferred cruise destination. Recognising cruise tourism as a thrust area, the Government of India is taking steps to promote the cruise tourism industry and position India as a global cruise destination.

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Enjoyable New Zealand

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Wellington - Picton - Christchurch -
Queenstown - Mt Cook - Christchurch

From **NZD 2868** pp*



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Highlights : Auckland - Waitomo - Rotorua - Napier -
Wellington - Christchurch - Dunedin -
Queenstown - Glacier Region - Christchurch

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Highlights : Auckland - Waitomo - Rotorua -
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Promises to keep in the Promised Land

TAAI makes an impact in Israel

BY REEMA LOKESH



When an association that represents a certain industry or section of society travels overseas for their committee meeting, they are no short of being brand ambassadors of their own country. They travel with an aim to explore a new culture and connect with the people, leaving back a strong message of friendship and long

standing partnership in business and beyond.

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) recently travelled to Israel on an invitation by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of Israel, supported wholeheartedly by the Vice President of

United Federation of Travel Agents Association (UFTAA), Yossi Fatael. The aim and objective was clear - to strengthen tourism ties between both the countries.

Sunil Kumar, President, TAAI, who led the 28 member delegation of TAAI MC members, stood out as a true leader



making an impactful speech at the 23rd International Mediterranean Tourism Market (IMTM) 2017, at the TLV Convention Center Israel. His speech endorsed India's faith in Israel as a country that is strong and self-reliant. He also said that in his years of travel to around 72 countries, he was amazed to note how he missed out on Israel, a country that has a unique tourism product offering. He thanked the Ministry of Tourism and Yossi Fatael for making this possible for his team and himself.

This speech at IMTM 2017 spoke about India's connection with Israel and how the two countries are completely

ready to support and work as strong partners in the tourism business. He received a standing ovation from the delegates present at the inaugural session. He spoke with conviction and commitment to explore and understand the tourism wealth of both the countries.

Apart from the ministry, most tourism organisations like the Israel Association of Travel Agents and Consultants, Israel Hotel Association, The Jerusalem Development Authority and others were impressed with the President's speech and were hoping to work with India aggressively. The TAAI visit truly proved to be a positive development for Indo-Israel

trade and tourism ties. Yariv Levin, Minister of Tourism, Government of Israel, gave the TAAI committee a warm reception and was keen and positive to take the mission to the next level. He spoke of strategic tourism tie-ups, which will further encourage tourism movement between the two countries, who have a similar cultural and historic past. A plan was underway to sign an MoU between TAAI and the Ministry of Tourism, Government of Israel for tourism promotions and business development.

Though the trip was short, the team travelled to key tourism hotspots of the country. From Tel Aviv, a city that never sleeps to Jerusalem, the spiritual and cultural capital and from there on to the Dead Sea area and the En Gedi Kibbutz experience, the delegation experienced all this and more on their four day tour to Israel. Apart from the sights and sounds, the team also got to savour the Israeli cuisine and palate. From the well known Indian food house Tandoori to authentic Israeli gourmet hubs, it was interesting for the delegation to experience the flavours of the Mediterranean and the Israeli wine story.

Speaking about his visit and experience in Israel, Lokesh Bettaiah, TAAI Hon Secretary General clearly stated that in his 27 years of travel he hasn't seen a city like Jerusalem. He was impressed by its



The MC meeting was successfully conducted at the David Citadel Hotel in Jerusalem. From learning about a new destination to interacting with their tourism counterparts, it was Mission Accomplished for team TAAI in Israel



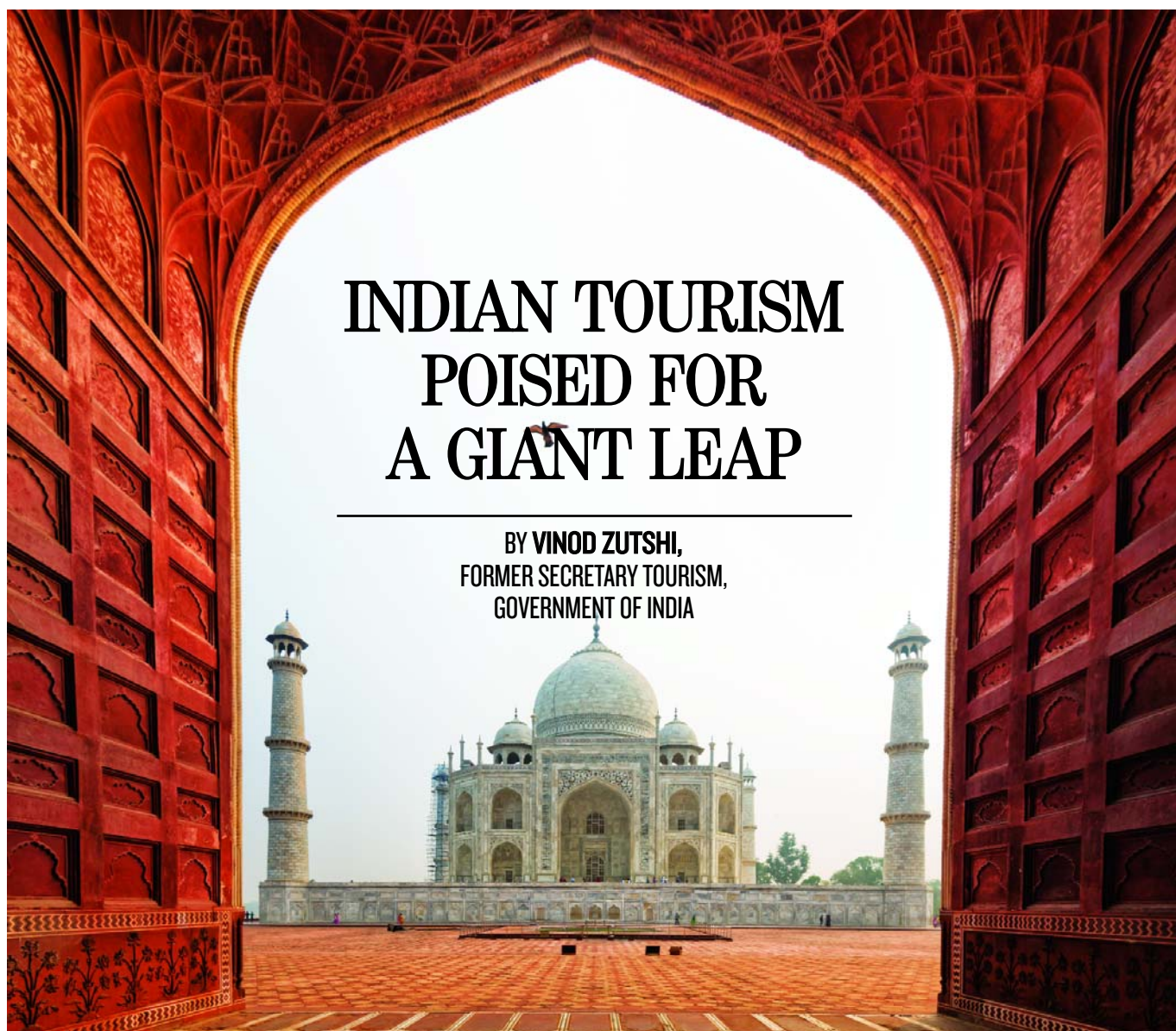
architecture and cleanliness and felt it's a truly unique city, and was glad to have experienced it first hand as he had only heard about the classic city from other travellers in the past. The Tel Aviv marina view from the Hotel Crown Plaza, provided a visual treat of the sunset over the Mediterranean. Marzban Antia, TAAI Vice President, was impressed with the vibrancy of the city and unique shopping experience of

the Dead Sea health and cosmetic products. Jay Bhatia, TAAI Hon. Treasurer, felt both the cities are poles apart in terms of their aura and character. This makes Israel unique, as it offers a variety of tourism experiences within a very small geographical area. For most MC members, this was one of their best MC meets overseas. The MC meeting was successfully conducted at the David

Citadel Hotel in Jerusalem. From learning about a new destination to interacting with their tourism counterparts, it was Mission Accomplished for team TAAI in Israel.

TAAI MC acknowledges the efforts of Sankalp Bharadwaj for the wonderful video and photos of their visit to Israel.





INDIAN TOURISM POISED FOR A GIANT LEAP

BY **VINOD ZUTSHI**,
FORMER SECRETARY TOURISM,
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Tourism in India, in totality, has done very well in the year 2016 and we are poised for stronger growth in the coming years. India registered the best ever number of foreign tourist arrivals during the calendar year 2016 with a double digit growth of 10.7 per cent, a rate unprecedented in the past many years. The redeeming feature is that this growth has been more than double as compared to an average growth rate of 3.9 per cent in international tourist arrivals around the world as per UNWTO barometer. The growth in terms of foreign exchange earnings has been even greater than the arrivals. India registered an impressive Rs 1,55,675 crore as foreign exchange earnings with a growth rate of 15.2 per cent over 2015.



I can state with all confidence that the growth trend in foreign tourist arrivals will further go up and we are aiming at the robust growth rate which may go upto 15 per cent in 2017.

And to my mind it is a doable target. In December 2016 we registered a growth rate of 13.8 per cent over the December 2015 figure. Further, with huge public investments having been made in the tourism infrastructure by the government, with aggressive branding and promotion of Incredible India, with greater team work amongst government and stakeholders and an extremely conducive environment for tourism in the country, the target of 15 per cent growth in foreign tourist arrivals is certainly achievable.

I call upon the representatives of the tourism industry and the entire tourism fraternity working for growth of tourism in India to join us to achieve this goal.

The scenario of domestic tourism is equally impressive. After having recorded domestic tourist visits to the tune of 1.43 billion tourist visits, we are heading for the best ever figure of domestic tourist visits which is likely to touch 1.65 billion tourist visits during 2016. With domestic airlines recording more than 20 per cent growth, with large scale facilitation in rail travel and with consistent expansion of roads and with larger disposable incomes of the people, India is heading towards a stronger growth rate upto around 18 per cent every year in domestic tourism.

I would like to share the result of an online analysis made by PR specialist Bell Pottinger on social media like Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, YouTube, Instagram, during the course of World Travel Market 2016 which revealed that India gained online traction after being named one of the hotspots for 2017 and was second most talked about destination in the world.

I would like to share some of the major initiatives which the Government of India and the Ministry of Tourism has undertaken:

- The biggest game changer for the tourism industry of our country has been the e-Visa scheme introduced by our government. We started with e-Tourist Visa for the nationals of 43 countries in Nov. 2014 which has now expanded to nationals of 161 countries. The nomenclature of the existing 'e-Tourist Visa' has been changed to 'e-Visa' with three new sub-categories i.e. 'e-Tourist Visa', 'e-Business Visa' and 'e-Medical Visa' added. Further, the e-Visa regime has been liberalised. The window for application under e-Visa stands increased from the existing 30 days to 120 days. Duration of stay in India under e-Visa has been increased from the existing 30 days to 60 days. On e-Tourist Visa and e-Business Visa, a foreign national will be permitted double entry as against single entry at present. In the case of those availing e-Medical Visa, triple entry will be permitted as against single entry at



The biggest game changer
for the tourism industry of our
country has been the e-Visa
scheme introduced by our
government

present. e-Visa from five sea ports has been permitted.

- Ministry of Tourism has initiated specific efforts to position Incredible India as a competitive brand in the international market to promote its destinations and tourism products. These include launch of 24x7 toll free multi-lingual Tourist Infoline handling 10 international languages besides Hindi and English, distributing the 'welcome booklet' to tourists arriving at international airports, organising international events like the International Buddhist Conclave, International Tourism Mart to attract international tourists, aggressive branding and promotion of the tourist destinations in the country through the Incredible India campaign both globally and in domestic markets.
- For the first time, the Ministry of Tourism has also taken the initiative of organising a Tourism Investors Summit to position the Indian tourism sector for inviting investments.
- It has been our endeavour to provide a world class experience to our visitors and fellow citizens. We have taken big steps towards development and improvement of tourist infrastructure across the country. The Government of India has formulated a scheme,

Swadesh Darshan, for integrated development of tourist circuits around specific themes. Since its launch in January 2015, the ministry as on date has sanctioned 51 projects worth Rs 4267.46 crore to 28 states and UTs covering 12 thematic circuits and around 400 destinations under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme.

- The 'National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive' (PRASAD) was launched by the Ministry of Tourism in January 2015 for development and beautification of the identified 22 pilgrimage destinations. Under this scheme 25 projects have been identified and an amount of Rs 404.89 crore has been sanctioned under PRASAD scheme till 31.12.2016.

Some other initiatives that the ministry is going to carry forward include:

- Developing India as a cruise tourism destination
- Providing tourism infrastructure facilities in 100 Adarsh monuments and destinations alongwith WiFi facilities
- Providing pre-paid SIM cards to tourists arriving on e-Tourist Visa at airports.
- Improvement of 24 railway stations in tourist destinations with Ministry of Railways
- Working with Civil Aviation Ministry and private airlines to provide increased connectivity
- Accelerating growth of medical tourism with the help of Medical Tourism Board constituted in the ministry
- Making and promoting India as a prime destination for Wellness Tourism, Buddhist Tourism and Heritage Tourism and to create and promote Adventure Tourism with the help of Adventure Tourism Board constituted by the ministry.
- Promote and hand holding of homestays and to augment training skill development and capacity building infrastructure.

I am flagging these areas here primarily with the objective that while the government is leading from the front to promote various sub-sectors within tourism sector, an integrated development of tourism can happen only when the private stakeholders join hands in our initiatives and efforts.

TAAI, TCA Abu Dhabi unveil 63rd convention memories in New Delhi



After concluding a successful convention in Abu Dhabi, the Travel Agents' Association of India (TAAI) team, along with Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), hosted an event in New Delhi to celebrate the memories of the convention. The evening event was held at Shangri-La's Eros Hotel in New Delhi to thank everyone for their good wishes and support in making TAAI's 63rd convention a huge success. The initiative of TAAI and TCA Abu Dhabi, to offer India a world class and most exquisite destination with abundant locations for MICE, tourism and special events, was strongly reflected in the manner the TAAI convention was held.

Majority of the stakeholders of the tourism industry had gathered for the event. Addressing the gathering, Sunil Kumar, President, TAAI, stated, "We have partnered with Abu Dhabi because we feel there is huge potential in the country. We need to be genuine in our knowledge and appreciation to TCA and our members have committed to promote Abu Dhabi to the best of their ability. In the next one and a half year, Abu Dhabi must see a huge rise in Indian tourist arrivals, which will be an acknowledgment of Indian credibility. I

would urge my colleagues and media to give prominence to the country because it truly deserves it."

The audience enjoyed the 20-minute video which depicted TAAI's efforts in bringing the industry together to promote the country. It gave an insight of the convention. The video captured the major happenings spread across the three days of the convention.

Extending gratitude to the sponsors, Kumar mentioned that they overcame the challenge of keeping the convention in an expensive destination like Abu Dhabi only due to the extensive support of their sponsors who believed in TAAI. He also mentioned about the media present in large number, covering the day-to-day happenings of the convention. "This evening is also dedicated to our very supportive media; over 50 media personnel were there at Abu Dhabi and they covered the convention. The media had a huge impact on the convention. People from all over the world were able to get glimpses of the convention taking place in Abu Dhabi and importantly, our sponsors," he stated.

The evening also saw the unveiling of the fourth issue of NAMASTAAI,



which was completely dedicated to the convention in Abu Dhabi. Ending his thoughts with forward approach, Kumar added, "We don't have to live on our past, we need to look into the

future and perceive levels that would not only benefit our past capabilities, but also come forward as our future legacies. As an industry, we should leave a mark so our successors are able to thank us for the

contributions." The session was followed by a dinner where the industry gathered to relive the memories of the convention and share their experiences.



President Sunil Kumar addresses Mount Carmel College, Bangalore - ‘Tomorrow Begins Now’



A two-day International Conference TEJ 2017: Asia's Tourism Potential - Path to Economic Development was jointly organised by Department of Travel & Tourism, Economics and Journalism, Mount Carmel College Autonomous, Bangalore on February 1 and 2, 2017. The objective was to unravel the tourism potential of the Asian region and its economic development.

Guest of Honour, His Excellency Dato (Sir) Prof Joseph Adaikalam, Founder & Chairman of Binary University, Malaysia and Dr Sr Arpana, Principal Mount Carmel College signed the MoU which aims to integrate courses with plans to conduct conference and seminars resulting in exchange programme for students and faculty members. Chief Guest was none other than our President Sunil Kumar (also President of UFTAA) who enthralled the audience with his interactive talk on ‘Tomorrow

Begins Now: Preparing us to successfully encounter complex tomorrow’.

Dr B George, Associate Professor, Head Department of Tourism Management, Madurai Kamaraj University College, Madurai delivered the keynote address on ‘Challenges and Opportunities for Tourism in Asia’. The conference observed presentation of over sixty research papers that includes research articles from Australia and Sri Lanka along with panel discussions conducted by Departments of Economics and Journalism. The organisers conducted an inter-collegiate competition ‘Incredible India -The World's Destination’ which explored the untapped tourism marketing potential of our various states in India. It was indeed an excellent interactive function for the students, faculty and specially invited guests.



UFTAA Board meets in India

Partners again, with SATTE

Excellent hosting by Le Meridien, New Delhi & Le Meridien, Gurgaon

TAAI NR chairperson coordinates two great evenings - Thanks to 21 Gun Salute

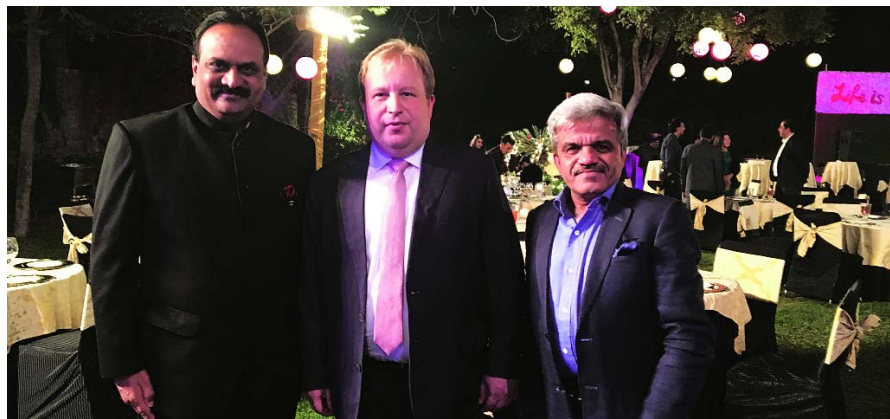
International Vintage Rally



Once again, India hosted UFTAA Board Meeting during February 2017 at New Delhi. For UFTAA, this was an important Board Meeting. It drew extensive plans including the establishment of the International Global Tourism Forum. The Board Meeting was hosted on February 18, by Le Meridien, New Delhi and on February 19, by Le Meridien, Gurgaon. UFTAA again, partnered with SATTE and promoted several overseas delegates participate. The relationship will continue, said President Sunil Kumar. He added that UFTAA concluded to have a strategic partnership with TTG Group from Italy. UFTAA's Tourism meet is proposed in Italy and UFTAA



members will be offered an invite. UFTAA will also launch its "Operations Hub" to promote tourism in Istanbul, Turkey, under the Chairmanship of Cetin Gurcun. IATA's NewGen ISS featured prominently with IATA Chairman Yossef Fatael, briefing on the new revolution. UFTAA's CEO Ramesh Marwah supported by Co-ordinator Ashok Harkara, planned the meet well. Thanks to Rajan Sehgal, TAAI NR Chairman, two evenings for UFTAA were very special.



21 Gun Salute International Vintage Car Rally supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, was held at India Gate from February 17 - 19 where around 100 vintage and classic car exhibits from all over the world were displayed. The event was inaugurated by former Secretary of Tourism, Vinod Zutshi amidst a huge crowd of enthusiasts. As part of the function, gala evenings at the National Rail Museum on February 17 and at the residence of H E Georg Zehetner, Charge de Affaire, Embassy of Austria on February 18 were arranged, where royal families from various states of India and foreign delegates and connoisseurs of culture were entertained. Also present were TAAI President Sunil Kumar and Northern Region Chairman Rajan Sehgal alongwith the Board of Directors of UFTAA all of whom were special invitees and interacted with Suman Billa, Joint Secretary of Tourism, Government of India.



Sunil Kumar at IATA PAPGJC Geneva – February, 2017

Conclusions arrived on IATA's revolutionary NewGen ISS program

“ This is a MUST READ for every travel agency!”. Important to be pro-active. Presentations will be held in our Regions & Chapters – Sunil Kumar



4 pillars to renew the BSP

It was an important day for the travel industry, globally. UFTAA's President, who is the President of TAAI, was joined by his colleagues on UFTAA, who went prepared with extensive debates on the most revolutionary change in the Passenger Agency Program that will be implemented globally, effective June, 2017. This important global meeting between the Association and Airline Representatives witnessed intense debates. Thankfully, conclusions arrived on the proposed implementation will benefit.

Here are some key aspects of NewGen ISS, IATA's new resolution on Industry Settlement systems – as presented in the PAPGJC meeting

Resolution 8xx (8xx will be soon replaced with a new number) was adopted by the Passenger Agency Conference held during September, 2016.

What is NewGen ISS program all about?? : *The distribution landscape today is evolving rapidly. Agents and airlines come in range of shapes, sizes and business models. Similarly, new distribution and payment channels have emerged outside the traditional BSP channel. In order to ensure that the BSP continues to meet the needs of Agents and Airlines, the BSP must adapt to this changing environment. Under NewGen ISS, IATA is moving away from a one-size fits all approach and towards greater segmentation by offering new accreditation models, more targeted risk management based on an agent's risk profile, and new ways of doing business through the introduction of IATA EasyPay.*

IATA restructures its global offices – The introduction of NewGen ISS program needs IATA support of a 24 hour access. Applying technology and optimising the global clock, IATA announced that it will consolidate its activities predominantly in two main operation centers - Singapore and Madrid. There will be some “hub” access in Beijing and Montreal. Offices at Amman; Miami henceforth will not be functional.

The four NewGen ISS features

- o New Agency Accreditation Models
- o Remittance Holding Capacity (RHC)
- o IATA EasyPay, a new pay-as-you-go solution for the industry
- o Global Default Insurance, a new Financial Security type for Agents.

New Agency Accreditation Models (3 Models to be offered to those seeking IATA accreditation): Agents may voluntarily convert across models if and once they meet the applicable requirements and credit conditions)

- o Standard Accreditation with No Cash Facility (No Credit)
- o Standard Accreditation with Cash Facility (As it exists today)
- o Multi Country Accreditation.

Standard Accreditation with No Cash Facility (No Credit): This new model for IATA to admit agencies who will not have any credit limit and thus not required to submit any financial security; or go through annual financial review, is expected to



witness a large increase in the number of IATA agencies, globally and in particularly, India. Such agencies can issue airline tickets based on credit card usage and/or IATA Easy Pay.

Remittance Holding Capacity (RHC) & Risk Management:

A key objective of the new program is to promote safer selling and to mitigate default losses, as these undermine the confidence of all stakeholders in the system. Accordingly, the proposed change under NewGen ISS is the introduction of a threshold for outstanding BSP Cash sales, held in trust by the Agent, pending remittance to the BSP, i.e. a Remittance Holding Capacity (RHC).

Determination of RHC: The First Proposal - Agent's daily average cash turnover from its three highest reporting periods over the past twelve months plus an additional 15 per cent growth threshold. Proposal also includes up to five exceptional increases in the RHC per year. After discussions it is now proposed as : Agent's daily average cash turnover from its three highest reporting periods over the past twelve months, but with a growth threshold of 100 per cent (instead of 15 per cent) : Proposal will be tabled at the 2019 PA Conference.

IATA EasyPay, a new pay-as-you-go solution for the industry

IATA EasyPay is a key enabler, which will facilitate both the implementation of new accreditation models and the Remittance Holding Capacity. This will be a new form of payment to IATA by an agency. This new industry payment solution is based on an ewallet model, whereby funds are secured at the time of ticket issuance, i.e. an Agent may only use IATA EasyPay as a form of payment if the Agent holds sufficient funds in its IATA EasyPay account. At the time of ticket issuance, the funds are irrevocably blocked. Since this will operate as a private payment instrument, no chargebacks will be allowed.

This is an option to an IATA Agency to utilize this incase of high sales volumes – The credit to Agency towards easy pay will be on “real-time” basis. Agencies admitted as IATA accredited with NO CASH facility (No Credit) will depend on this in addition to credit card sales.

Global Default Insurance (GDI) - a new Financial Security type for Agents:

GDI entails the introduction of a new and voluntary Financial Security type in the form of global insurance. A global insurance policy will be brokered with a top credit risk insurance company, and Agents will be able to list themselves under the policy on a voluntary basis for a defined cover amount. The deliberations resulted in confirming that GDI is “an option”. Agencies keen to continue with their existing options (Individual BG or Insurance or Joint Bank Guarantee) may continue to do so.

Our Association representatives reiterated that for the



NewGen ISS program to be successful, it is important that Resolution 890 (Agency Credit Card usage) be also amended to allow the Agencies use the Travel Agency Corporate Credit Card. IATA's response was positive and they assured of a new resolution replacing the existing 890 which prohibits the usage of an Agency Credit Card.

BSP Manual for Agents: The new BSP Manual for Agents is currently being drafted, with regular reviews by an Agent/Airline task force. The objective of the Manual rewrite is to update the content, which currently dates to 2011, and provide a reference for Agents given the NewGen ISS changes.

IATA proposed Agency fees restructure with options to enable agencies seek admissions; transfer from one accreditation model to the other including to go for multilocation model. The fees structure also includes changes to agency ownership status and change of location. Association representatives asked for a review to lower the fees.

PCI DSS – the new norm. Mandatory to comply and to retain IATA accreditation

Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) is endorsed by PA Conference as an amendment to Resolution 818g, indicating PCI DSS compliance as an accreditation requirement and specifying non-compliance action to be taken against agents who will not be able to provide compliance evidence to IATA.

Within [iata.org \(http://www.iata.org/services/finance/Pages/pci-dss.aspx\)](http://www.iata.org/services/finance/Pages/pci-dss.aspx) this website is developed which contains a general information on PCI DSS, emphasising potential risks that non-compliance with PCI DSS that travel agency may face and more importantly providing agents with a list of evidences that must be submitted to IATA in order to show compliance and suggested first steps that agents need to take in order to initiate the process of compliance.

Effective June 1, 2017, PCI DSS compliance will be a mandatory condition to obtain and retain accreditation as an IATA Accredited Agent in all its Accredited locations under the Passenger Sales Agency Rules in Resolution 818g. Non-compliance with PCI DSS security standards could result in two instances of irregularity being recorded against your agency.

TAAI at VFS launch of China Visa Centre



Kishen Singh – Head of Strategy and Business Development for China – VFS Global; Neeraj Malhotra, TAAI Northern Region Secretary; B T Ramnani, TAAI MC Member; Sunil Kumar, President TAAI; H.E. LUO Zhaohui, Chinese Ambassador to India; JIANG Yili (Ambassador's wife); Zubin Karkaria, CEO, VFS Global Group; Vinay Malhotra, COO - Middle East & South Asia, VFS Global; Rajji Rai, past President TAAI; Wei Xiaodong, Vice Director-General Service Bureau for the Foreign Ministry and its Overseas Missions of the People's Republic of China

TAAI at SATTE 2017

UBM India commenced 2017 on a robust note with its biggest travel trade engagement show SATTE 2017 at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi on February 15, 2017, supported by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and 'Make in India' initiative of the Government of India. TAAI President Sunil Kumar was a special guest at the inaugural function. TAAI managing committee members such as Paras Lakhia, Anil Kumar, Imtiaz Qureshi, Ajay Kumar Ramidi, Bhagwan Ramnani, Devesh Agarwal, Shamim Ahmed Shah, Krishna Gopalan too attended the event.

This 24th edition of SATTE - South Asia's leading B2B travel and tourism trade exhibition saw over 870+ participants from over 40 countries and 28 Indian states take part and the three day event witnessed participation from the cross section of global and Indian travel and tourism markets. It witnessed a ribbon cutting ceremony at the venue to begin the proceedings formally with Chief Guest Kapil Mishra -- Minister for Water, Tourism, Culture, Arts and Language – doing the honours along with



Michael Duck, Executive Vice President, UBM Asia, and Yogesh Mudras, Managing Director, UBM India, in the presence of a number of key dignitaries and TAAI MC Members.

As a pre-cursor to the expo, UBM India hosted the SATTE Awards 2017

for the first time which was an endeavour to recognise and celebrate the excellence, achievements and innovations of key stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry. SATTE continues to receive support of TAAI and international body - UFTAA amongst other associations.

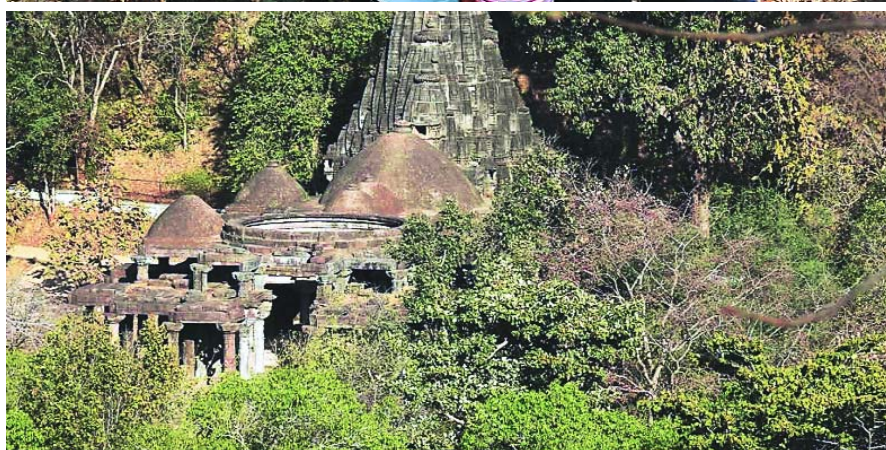
Gujarat Chapter explores forest tourism

TAAI Gujarat Chapter organised a familiarisation trip for its members to Polo Forest, in present-day Sabarkantha district, Abhapur, Gujarat. The office bearers also graciously invited airline heads /senior managers /representatives from various international and domestic airlines as a goodwill gesture thus giving the members of the travel trade fraternity and the airline industry an opportunity to interact and bond with each other.

The ancient Polo City (modern day Polo Forest), is located 160 kms from Ahmedabad, which is majorly a Jain pilgrimage site. The word Polo originates from the Marwari word “Pol”, essentially meaning “Gate”, symbolising a gateway between Gujarat and Rajasthan. Located near the banks of the Harnav River, it boasts of ancient historical Hindu and Jain temples with exquisite architecture and is also a nature lover’s delight.

After arriving early in the morning from Ahmedabad, members checked in at the Polo Tent City & Resort and later inspected the property, an eco-friendly resort, which has approximately 30 luxury tents, with air conditioning, clean sanitation facilities and has an overall good - quality ambience and accommodation. After lunch, the TAAI office bearers and the Active members held a Chapter meeting for issues/concerns pertaining to the travel trade.

Shortly after the members and the airline delegation embarked on a guided trekking nature walk tour amidst the Harnav River and dam where they visited the heritage sites such as the Shiva Sharneshwar temple, the Jain temple, the Polo forest step-well and also completed an Ayurvedic Udyan visit where everyone got educated regarding the different kinds of herbal/medicinal properties that Mother Nature holds for mankind. Adventurists could also try a hand at zip-line, horse riding and cycling. After the trek, everyone got ready for the



highlight of the evening where the Polo Tent City & Resort hosted a nightly cultural programme, a musical extravaganza where all the guests got an opportunity to shake-a-leg and display their break-dancing/Bollywood moves.

The night concluded after the guests enjoyed a gala scrumptious Kathiyawadi dinner. The office bearers, airline delegates and the members whilst leaving the next day expressed their gratitude to the

management of Polo Tent City & Resort for their hospitality in organising a wonderful excursion for the TAAI team. TAAI Gujarat Chapter would also like to express its sincere gratitude to The Tourism Corporation of Gujarat for giving them the opportunity to explore and get acquainted with the destination and the TAAI team will diligently promote the annual Polo Festival in collaboration and guidance with the Government of Gujarat.

TAAI meets up with ITQ in Ahmedabad

Sandeep Dwivedi CCO of ITQ - Galileo (centre) met TAAI MC Member and CRS & Technology Chairman Shreeram Patel (left) in his office in Ahmedabad on December 19, 2016 for a short visit. Extreme right is Yashpal Chauhan - Senior Business Manager - Relationship Management Guj/MP/CG, Interglobe Technology Quotient - Galileo in Ahmedabad. Patel was happy to welcome Dwivedi and Chauhan and the trio had a meaningful interaction.



Amadeus CEO & team with TAAI



Rajiv Bhatia, Chief Commercial Officer of Amadeus India (centre) met TAAI MC Member and Chairman, CRS & Technology, Shreeram Patel (second from right) on January 12, 2017 in Ahmedabad along with TAAI Gujarat Chapter Chairman, Paras Lakhia (extreme right). It was a good interactive meet. Bhatia was accompanied by Meenakshi Jani (extreme left), Manager - Business Development, Guj & MP, Amadeus and Kunal Bhanushali (second from left), Vice President - Western India, Amadeus.

TAAI Vice President at GPS, Nagpur

Marzban Antia, TAAI Vice President along with Satinder S Ahuja, Honorary Consul, Consulate of Georgia; Ankush Nijhawan, MD, Nijhawan Group; SanJeet, Vice Chairman, PATA India and MD, DDP Group; Harmandeep Singh Anand, Co-Founder, GPS; Raju Akolkar, CEO, GPS and Executive Directors, Madhu Saliankar, Rishiraj Singh Anand and Tanushka Kaur Anand inaugurated the Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) on January 20, 2016, at Hotel Centre Point, in Nagpur with the traditional lighting of the lamp. 108 exhibitors showcased their various products and offerings for the Tier II and Tier III markets with over 800 buyers attending. Moving towards a greener future, the organisers ensured the



event was paperless by integrating the GPS mobile app with a host of options. Out of the six interactive business sessions at GPS, the one on GST by

CA Manish Gadia saw a full house listening to the recent amendments in the Service Tax and CENVAT Credit slabs.



Gujarat Chapter discusses crucial industry issues

Chairman Paras Lakhia and his office bearers, Virendra Shah Secretary and Prashant Madhani, Treasurer convened an important meet for its Chapter members on “Demonetisation “ and other matters on January 17, 2017 in Ahmedabad. Before the Chapter meeting commenced, there was a presentation by ICICI Bank regarding various avenues offered by the bank for cashless transaction and to curb the effects of demonetisation, that has cast its gloomy shadow on the booming tourism and hospitality industry in India. Winter travel season has been almost crippled by this unexpected event of affairs as people have curtailed overseas travel. India’s hospitality industry’s pay-in-cash- clientele too has been severely affected. Members appreciated the efforts of the bank in answering several questions put to them.

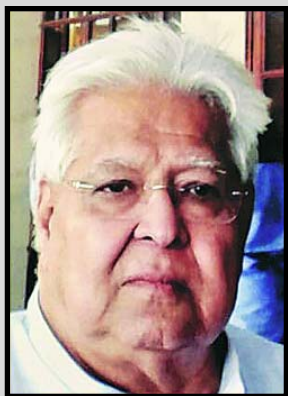
The chairman then drew the members’ attention to TAAI’s strong objection to the IATA – BSP link charges of US\$ 360 per year for enhanced version. He informed the house that due to TAAI’s strong resistance, IATA has not clubbed this amount in its annual fees invoice and they have still not sent invoice for usage of enhanced version of BSP link. Members were in agreement with TAAI’s argument that IATA should give all the present access in its Basic version which they were giving members prior to this charge. All members decided to give letter of opposition to office bearers stating their strong objection to this charge of IATA.

Lakhia briefed members about the new TAAI-IATA Joint Bank Guarantee Scheme. He mentioned that this scheme is to commence soon and members will be given time frame to complete formalities till April 17. The scheme would come into effect from July 1, 2017. It’s a good opportunity for new members to join in and those who have not taken advantage of this scheme in the past. He later introduced four new Active members in the Chapter and welcomed them to the TAAI Family. Secretary



Virendra Shah explained the new rules of Service Tax applicable from January 23, 2017.

After the meeting, a presentation was given by C P Travels about EB-5 Investor Visa programme. Purpose of this presentation was to show a different business segment to members which would mean more revenue to them.



Ram Nagpal

O B I T U A R Y

January 15, 2017 saw the sudden and sad demise of Ram Nagpal of Apex Travels & Tours, Mumbai. He was a very senior member of TAAI from the Western Region and a stalwart of the travel industry. TAAI Membership expresses its deepest condolences and stands together with the Nagpal family in this moment of grief.

Saurashtra - Kutch Chapter meet at Christmas



Chairman Devendra Shah and his team of Saurashtra - Kutch Chapter arranged a chapter meeting on December 24 and 25, 2016 at a five-star resort of Bhavnagar. It was a very fruitful meeting wherein MC member Shreeram Patel was specially invited. After his welcome, he updated the members on the current situation in the travel industry giving a brief on IATA - BSP's upcoming plan regarding annual fees. Members were happy to interact with him and put several questions to him regarding airline matters, all of which he answered aptly and assured to assist in solving these issues.

VFS Global who were invited to the meet had an informative chat with the members regarding visa facilities and services, how to cater to valued clients etc. Members were particularly happy when Rahul Rele, Senior Manager - sales from Mumbai did an informative presentation covering UK visa, Schengen and DVPC (UAE). Singapore Airlines (SQ) and Kuwait Airways (KU) were also invited to give their respective presentations for their carriers' products. Nimay Kusumgar, Sales Head of Gujarat region, SQ and Manan Thakkar Sales Manager, KU gave fine presentations containing good product information and upcoming features.

End of the year was time for some cheering up and getting together for members whilst welcoming Christmas. They were treated to sumptuous cuisine and feet-tapping entertainment at the discotheque. Special mention must be made of the wonderful hospitality offered by the resort to the members and their families. Anand Thakkar, General Manager of ISKON Club, Bhavnagar and Payal Bhatt Assistant Manager Sales - Ahmedabad took members the next day for a property visit of the resort, and briefed them of its future plans. Sporty members even had a game of volleyball on artificial grass carpet.

Yes, it was Christmas and all joined in the celebrations, looking forward to welcoming the New Year that was around the corner. Certainly a wonderful way to end the year !





Pune Chapter's 10th edition of TAAI Cricket Tournament



TAAI Pune Chapter conducted the 10th edition of TAAI Cricket Tournament. Chairman Krishna Gopalan and his team were busy with the event - one of the most sought after in Pune Chapter's annual calendar. This year a total of 28 teams participated over three weekends from December 10, 2016 till the finals on December 24, 2016.

Combined team of Akbar Travels + BCD Travel won the coveted Trophy and Prasanna Purple Team were the Runners up. The battle for the trophy was well fought with the right spirit as always.

The event was supported by IndiGo, GoAir and Prasanna Holidays. IndiGo offered two return air tickets for the Best Bowler and Best Batsman of the tournament. Man of the Series was awarded by GoAir with two return tickets on their network.

Prasanna Holidays sponsored two nights/three days "Konkan Darshan" and "Ashta Vinayak tour package for the Best Catch of the Tournament (Ajaz Shaikh from BCD) and Best Knock by a player over 40 years of age (Pravin Yadav from Travel Masters, Pune). The prize distribution was followed by lunch organised for all team members and spectators who thoroughly enjoyed the sumptuous lunch.







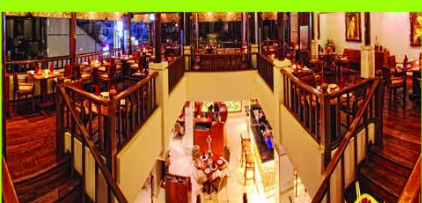
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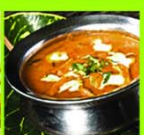
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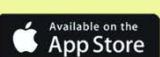


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MPTDC associates with Nagpur Chapter

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation arranged an interesting FAM trip on January 14, 2017 for TAAI Nagpur Chapter wherein 10 members joined the trip. The first visit was to Jalmahotsav, three hours from Indore, a wonderful creative initiative, that has received encouraging responses from travel agents, tour operators and adventure tour operators for its various unique manifestations of varied cultural ethos of the region, known for the ethnic flavour and celebrative zest all by the riverside of Narmada!

The Chapter members enjoyed their stay in most sophisticated tents - a real amazing experience and later visited beautiful Omkareshwar and Maheshwara well known for its Mahakal Temple, a famous and venerated Shiva temple.



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VFS Global launches country-wide network of Japan Visa Application Centres

VFS Global is undertaking a countrywide expansion of its Japan Visa application network, bringing visa application facilities to applicants in 13 additional cities in India.

Till now, New Delhi, Chandigarh, and Jalandhar were the only cities where applicants could submit Japan visas applications through VFS Global. Applicants from other cities in India had to submit their visa applications, either in

person or through a travel agent, at the Japanese Consulates in Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru.

The network expansion comes soon after Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's statement in November 2016 (during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Japan), when he expressed his intention to enhance the bilateral relationship with India by expanding the number of visa application centres for Indian nationals.

The new centres will be a combination of full-fledged Visa Application Centres, where processing will take place at the centre itself, and 'submission centres', where applicants can submit their application and collect the receipt against the submission. The applications from the 'submission centres' will then be forwarded to the respective main hubs for processing.

In North India, the existing centres were complemented by submission centres launched in Jaipur and Gurgaon on February 17, 2017. East India will be covered by a main Visa Application Centre in Kolkata (launched on March 3, 2017). For the western region, effective March 10, 2017, a Visa Application Centre is being set up in Mumbai with Ahmedabad, Pune and Goa having submission centres.

In the south, centres in Chennai, Bengaluru, Pondicherry, Hyderabad, Cochin and Trivandrum are set to commence operations by March 31, 2017.

VFS Global has served the Government of Japan since 2010, and also manages Japan visa processing services in Sri Lanka, Russia, Thailand, P.R. China, and Vietnam.





TASK roadshow TAAI Nagpur Chapter associates

Travel Agent Society of Kashmir arranged a roadshow in Nagpur on February 3, 2017 for its members. Jatindra Nakade, Chairman, TAAI Nagpur Chapter was invited as the guest of honour for this function. Mohammad Hussain Mir (K.A.S.), Director Floriculture – Kashmir and Mohammad Ibrahim Siah, President of Travel Agents Society of Kashmir were present at the event, apart from many suppliers from Kashmir who graced the occasion.

The Chapter members including former Hon Secretary of TAAI, Harmandeep Singh attended the roadshow in good spirit to support the promotion of this beautiful state.



Chairman Nakade and his members appreciated the wonderful hospitality provided by M P Tourism. Indeed Madhya Pradesh, the heart of incredible India is one of the biggest tourist attractions as it is blessed by river Narmada, natural beauty and wildlife

TAAI Southern Region Airline interactive meet

Representatives of Gulf carriers such as Emirates, Etihad, Oman Air, Qatar Airways and Kuwait Airlines had an interactive session with TAAI Southern region members in Chennai after their region's meeting on January 9, 2017 arranged by Chairperson Hema Chander and her team.

The airlines and members exchanged views on current aviation scenarios, amidst bonhomie, the event being a perfect platform to come together.



TAAI-TAFI joint Western initiative

All Active, Associate & Allied Members of TAAI & TAFI Western Region were invited to the meeting in Mumbai on the hiked Service Tax for the fraternity on February 6, 2017.

2016 ended with demonetisation and in spite of all the hassles agents hoped 2017 would be better, but mid-January the amendment in Service Tax was announced. The implication of which would be far reaching and a matter of immense concern for the trade.

The Association Heads collectively and individually are working hard to get the matter addressed at the highest levels. The Budget that was rolled out on February 1 created its own impact. TAAI and TAFI arranged this important meet for its Membership to get a more comprehensive understanding of the

Service Tax and also to understand the Union Budget 2017 better. Thus they invited CA Manish Gadia a senior Service Tax professional to talk more on these subjects to the members. Gadia gave a presentation on the subject inviting member queries thereafter and there were plenty for him to take on and answer one by one. Members mentioned how they were confused with the government's notice on Service Tax but appreciated Gadia for taking time off to explain the nitty gritty of the tax increase that may significantly impact the financial models of those engaged in tour and travel booking.

The recent amendment, instead of clarifying the issue, creates more doubts for the industry. Senior member Madhav Oza also explained the new Service Tax rates and rules, which have come into effect on January 22 in a simplistic jargon.

TAAI at OTM 2017

TAAI supported OTM 2017 organised by Fairfest Media and was prominent at the International Trade Show from February 21-23 at the Bombay Convention & Exhibition Centre with its own stall that saw many agents and allied services requesting for TAAI Membership. TAAI staff were at hand to cater to all their inquiries and give away forms to commence the enrollment process.

Exhibitors from 60 countries showcased their destinations at OTM 2017. Highlights were the workshops conducted on Film Tourism and Destination Indian Weddings and the Travel Blogger Speed-Networking Session that witnessed 45



eminent travel bloggers. Ministers of Greece, Punjab, Indonesia and top diplomats from UAE, Turkey, Cyprus, Egypt, Malaysia attended the show, including National and State Tourism

Organisations. TAAI Vice President Marzban Antia, Hon Treasurer Jay Bhatia and Western Region Chairman, Sampat Damani attended the trade show on the first day and visited the TAAI stall.



Parthasarathy Varadan

OBITUARY

Parthasarathy Varadan, founder and managing director of Comfort Leisure passed away on February 8, 2017 in Bengaluru. Having 40 years experience in the service industry, he was responsible for overseeing the creation of successful businesses in the field of cargo, foreign exchange service, visa services, insurance, medical tourism and travel and leisure services as a thought leader, businessman and a manager who facilitated many youngsters in shaping their career path and been an inspiration to many.

He started flagship brand TT Logistics and secured the exclusive right to represent British Airways World Cargo for 20 years, including the management of cargo operations in all metro

airports. He initiated a foreign exchange business under the TTK brand, when RBI allowed the liberalisation of forex operations, nurtured the forex business to 22 offices over a period of six years and successfully sold the business to Tata Finance. He was the first person in India to conceptualise and offer Unique Visa Outsourcing Services to the embassies and consulates in India and abroad with operations under the brand TT Services in the setting up of offices in Sri Lanka, Philippines and Korea.

He was also instrumental in getting Trafalgar Tours to India under TT Travels brand which was later brought in under Comfort Leisure as its GSA. He was also an active member of TAAI and various other organisations.

Malaysia Appreciation Night 2017 in Mumbai



Datuk Seri Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, Director General Tourism Malaysia with a delegation of Tourism Board officials, representatives and officials from several regions' travel agents and tour operators were in India to woo Indian travellers and to mark this wonderful event they hosted - the Malaysia Appreciation Tourism Night 2017 on February 20, 2017.

Datuk Seri Mirza Mohammad Taiyab in his welcome speech, echoed the sentiments of both Jay Bhatia, Hon National Treasurer and Sampat Damani, Chairman – TAAI WR that it's time Malaysia reinvents itself. More than a decade ago, Malaysia had positioned itself as being a tourist friendly country offering everything that every tourist desires.



In spite of visas being a major hurdle, Indians flocked in great numbers to visit this beautiful destination. Indian tourists are now the most sought after visitors by all countries. To woo them back, Malaysia Tourism will be opening new destinations, offering new experiences. The visa issue is being addressed with the introduction of a single entry e-Visa for Indian travellers making it quicker and cheaper.

TAAI was represented by Jay Bhatia, Sampat Damani and Madhuri Kanga, Hon Treasurer TAAI Western Region.

Malaysia Tourism Officials acknowledged and appreciated the continuing support from the Indian travel trade and honoured the top 20 agents for their contribution.

TAAI at Hospitality India North & West India Travel Awards 2017

TAAI attended the Hospitality India North and West India Travel Awards 2017 held in Mumbai on February 23, 2017. which was followed by the release of its 2nd Edition of Hospitality India Coffee Table Book. The Hon. Minister of Tourism of Greece, Elena Kountoura was the chief guest at the inaugural function where Rajan Sehgal, Chairman, TAAI Northern Region delivered the welcome speech. TAAI office bearers, Vice President Marzban Antia, Hon Treasurer Jay Bhatia, Western Region Chairman Sampat Damani and Secretary Sameer Karnani too graced the occasion.



TAAI, TAFI Western Region interact with VFS

Visas continue to remain a major issue for Indian travellers. In the pursuit of gearing the trade to better handle the visa related issues for the oncoming season, TAAI Western Region had been pursuing VFS to have an interactive session with agent members of TAAI and TAFI. The efforts culminated in one such session wherein more than 60 frontline staff were briefed by VFS team of the subtle changes which have been brought in by the Missions they represent.

VFS Team was led by Monaz Billimoria, Head of VFS West, South & Sri Lanka ably supported by Mohammed



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Aamir and Dipti Kamath. The team leaders of several VACs had put together a small presentation, highlighting the issues they thought are the hurdles and certain points which need to be looked into by the trade. Sampat Damani, Chairman, TAAI Western Region posed a series of questions and concerns on behalf of the trade that needed to be addressed.

TAAI Western Region team led by Damani comprised of Madhuri Kanga, Hon Treasurer TAAI Western Region whilst VFS team was led by Abbas Moiz, Chapter Chairman TAFI Western Region.

TAAI support at IITT 2017

IITT held its fourth edition of travel & tourism exhibition from February 9 – 11, 2017 at the MMRDA grounds, Mumbai and was committed to take travel and tourism to the next level of networking. Organised by ABEC Exhibitions & Conferences the event has been supported by TAAI since its inception in 2014. Valsa Nair, tourism secretary, Maharashtra Tourism, was the Chief Guest. Special invitee, Western Region Chairman Sampat Damani participated in the lighting of the lamp on stage as well as the cutting of the ribbon at the inaugural function. His speech invoked good applause when he said, “Knowledge gained must be knowledge shared.”

A noteworthy part of the event was the IITT CONNECT LOUNGE – a one of a kind new speed networking feature introduced from last year that facilitated a fruitful interaction between the exhibitors and buyers. Madhuri Kanga, TAAI Western Region Treasurer also attended the inaugural function.



Western Region attends Sri Lanka Tourism roadshow



The roadshow was conducted to increase destination awareness and highlight the new attractions in Sri Lanka. The roadshow saw an attendance of 30 participants from Sri Lanka comprising of leading travel companies and hoteliers besides the national carrier, SriLankan Airlines

This February, Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau conducted a roadshow for the travel trade and wedding planners in Mumbai, with an aim to increase footfalls to the Emerald Island. The roadshow saw an attendance of 30 participants from Sri Lanka comprising of leading travel companies and hoteliers besides the national carrier, SriLankan Airlines.

Sampat Damani, Chairman, TAAI Western Region inaugurated the roadshow along with Madubhani Perera, Director of Marketing - Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, Udeni Perera, Manager Western India - SriLankan Airlines, Lubaina Sheerazi, COO - Blue Square Consultants and Viranga Bandara, Assistant Director Marketing - Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau.

Damani also addressed the audience and encouraged them to extend support to the visiting delegation.

Speaking about India as a market, Perera said, "India is a very important market for us. We have seen an annual rise in arrival numbers from India over the years. The roadshow was conducted to increase destination awareness and highlight the new attractions in Sri Lanka. We hope this event will add a positive impact and further increase Indian footfall in Sri Lanka. Further we have planned several promotional activities for Indian markets."

The roadshow was organised by Blue Square Consultants and received an overwhelming response as a large number of agents and wedding planners attended the event.



Visit of Malaysian Tourism Minister to India

Hon. Minister of Tourism, Malaysia Dato Seri Mohamed Naji Abdul Aziz along with a high power tourism delegation visited Delhi recently. Chairman TAAI Northern Region Rajan Sehgal was a special invitee for the scheduled luncheon meet. The Hon. Minister was welcomed by the Chairman and Atul Lall, GM of The Claridges. The entire delegation was delighted to receive a copy of TAAI's exclusive publication, NAMASTAAI and were highly impressed with its presentation.



Cricket action in AP & Telangana Chapter



Chairman Ajay Ramidi of AP & Telangana Chapter and his office bearers arranged an exciting 20 overs cricket tournament in Hyderabad on January 21, 2017.

Participating teams were Chairman Team, Secretary Team and Hyderabad Nawabs. Matches were well-fought with Secretary Team emerging as the proud owner of the winner's trophy. Man of the Match, Zaffar of Cox and Kings, won a GoAir ticket.

Rajasthan Chapter meets in Ranthambore National Park



It was Ranthambore for members of TAAI Rajasthan Chapter! They held their meeting at a boutique five-star hotel Juna Mahal in Ranthambore on January 7 and 8, 2017. The resort, sprawling over 8 acres, offered unmatched luxury and comfort besides their gracious hospitality in the tranquil environs of nature. C V Singh, director of the hotel was on hand himself to greet TAAI members on arrival with a traditional welcome. The meeting saw matters of concern being taken up, after which, an evening safari was in store for the members in a pre booked canter by Chairman, Manoj Sogani and his team. Imagine watching the famous tigers of Ranthambore National Park in their natural habitat!

Members were given a FAM trip around the Park that was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1957 and in 1974 it gained the protection of "Project Tiger". It got its status of a National Park in 1981. The park is one of the biggest and most renowned national parks in India, located in the Sawai Madhopur district of southeastern



Rajasthan, 130 km from Jaipur and spread over an area of 392 sq kms. The Park is a wildlife enthusiast's and photographer's dream and a treat for nature lovers. Verdant greenery with a gamut of other species of chirpy birds and animals is priceless and worth enough to be explored at least once in a lifetime. Members thoroughly

enjoyed the trip and some were first-time visitors who were awed by the sheer natural beauty of the park.

Once back at the hotel, there was exciting entertainment and a live ghazal programme awaiting the members. Sumptuous cuisine made the night even more memorable.

Blood Donation Camp held by Rajasthan Chapter

On January 28, 2017, TAAI Rajasthan Chapter organised a blood donation camp in Jaipur. A first time endeavour, the chapter invited all the trade partners including non-IATA agents, airlines and other stakeholders of the fraternity. Throughout the day, coffee, snacks, soups were served and lunch on the venue was also organised both for the donors and participants by the Chairman Manoj Sogani and his office bearers Dashrath Singh Rathore and Sunil Jain. The blood camp was organised with support of Santokba Durlabhji Hospital. A special thanks to Sunil Jain for his outstanding support in arranging mobile vans and doctors for the camp and assisting in all necessary arrangements with volunteers from the trade. A total of 185 units of blood were donated by trade partners including a few enthusiastic ladies.

Certificates from TAAI were given to all donors and prizes of silver glasses to three donors selected in a lucky draw at the evening's closing ceremony. The first three donors of the day and all lady donors were presented with a shawl as a token of appreciation. The highlight was that each and every one who arrived at the camp was greeted with the tilak and garland welcome! TAAI has always supported such camps with the help of its members and fraternity partners and gauging the huge success of this camp, the chapter has decided to plan more such initiatives in the future.



UP & UK Chapter felicitates Lucknow Airport Director

Timely assistance is always successful! A delegation of travel agents and airlines led by Sunil B Satyawakta, Chairman, TAAI Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter and Kazi Saeed, Chairman, airport operators committee and Airport Manager Oman Air, felicitated the Airport Director of Ch. Charan Singh International Airport, Lucknow, P K Srivastava and his team of maintenance engineers involved in repairing DVOR in record time, thus saving immense inconvenience to passengers and huge revenue loss to the airlines. Gayatri Khanna, Treasurer TAAI UP & UK Chapter; Anupam Shukla member TAAI; Amit Pathak, Vice Chairman AOC and Airport Manager Jet Airways; Gaurav Bhatnagar of Thaismile and representatives of Vistara and IndiGo were part of the delegation.

The DVOR (Doppler Very High Frequency Omni Range) installed in operational area and a radio equipment which provides guidance to the arriving and departing aircrafts had become unserviceable from 1500 hrs on Saturday, January 14. Operations of aircrafts were hampered from Lucknow airport. Though the airlines were informed that the next operations would only be possible by Monday, January 16, the maintenance team worked with immense vigour and operations were brought to normal by 0030 hrs the same night.



The hard work of the team which consisted of A P Gupta (JGM-CNS); Ravindra Kumar Srivastava (AGM-CNS); Kamlesh Kumar (Senior Manager - CNS) and Dayanand (Manager - CNS) was appreciated by the delegation. Also appreciated were Ganga Shankar Sr. Commandant CISF and Sanjay AGM ATC for their continuous support beyond natural timings.

TAAI supports Akanksha Meet on Tourism Studies Department of Pondicherry University

The Department of Tourism Studies, Pondicherry University launched its prestigious flagship programme Akanksha, the annual two-day institute-industry interface event on February 24, 2017, which was inaugurated by Manoj Mishra, Managing Director, Zenith Leisure Holidays, New Delhi in a function held at the School of Management Auditorium in the campus. Akanksha is a programme of the department which configures panel discussions and special lectures involving distinguished industry practitioners, entrepreneurs, experts from the public sector, and academics from across the country who will also interact with the students of the department. The resource persons representing the tourism, hospitality, and allied industries will deliberate on the pertinent issues that impact their businesses and the prospects and challenges faced by the tourism sector. TAAI MC Member Devaki Thiyagarajan graced the occasion as a special invitee.

In his inaugural address, Mishra underscored the profound requirement of trained and professional manpower in tourism and allied industries. He also provided some refreshing insights on how academic institutions can collaborate with the travel and tourism companies for striking a win-win situation. The inaugural function was presided by professor G Anjaneya Swamy, Dean, School of Management, Pondicherry University. Swamy highlighted the innovative practices which can leverage tourism education in the country. B R Babu, Secretary, Puducherry Tourism shared his experiences as a visiting faculty of the department in the 90s and gave an overview of the diversification of tourism products taking place at the global level.

The fast paced and explosive technological advancements that catapulted tourism to a different high was stressed upon by Suresh Bethi, Senior Vice President – travel division,



Infiniti Travel Solutions, Chennai who was the guest of honour. The keynote address was delivered by Aman Kaushik, Chairman and Founder, Fulcrum Learning Solutions, New Delhi. He illustrated the paradigm shift taking place in the field of tourism worldwide.

Study materials were distributed to school children from the villages of Puducherry in collaboration with Valmiki Foundation and Rotary Club during the inaugural session. Valmiki Hari Kishan, Director, Valmiki Foundation, Secunderabad was the special guest of Akanksha Meet '17. He also spoke on the occasion. Professor Y Venkata Rao, Head of the department rendered the welcome address. While Dr Sherry Abraham, Faculty Co-ordinator, delivered the scope of the meet. Surya Sundaram, student coordinator, proposed the vote of thanks.

Thiyagarajan distributed the TAAI Certificates and Scholarship amount to the outstanding academic performers of the Batch 2014-16. TAAI has always been supportive of such educational initiatives.

The annual publication 'Yatra' and the alumni newsletter 'PUTSAL' were released during the occasion. The Puducherry Heritage Photo Essay was organised as part of the inauguration. The crowd puller of Akanksha Meet '17 was the special lecture rendered by Suresh Joseph, former Civil Servant and Director – operations in Kazmunai India, an avid globetrotter holding the record for solo expedition by car touching the capitals of all the 28 states of the country and the headquarters of the 17 zonal railways, covering 23355 kms and becoming the first person to do so on the topic 'Passion on Wheels.'

Eastern Region in action



At the meeting

TAAI Eastern Region Meeting held on December 15, 2016 was well attended by members. It was the last meeting of 2016 and members discussed the way forward for 2017.

With Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina

On January 9, 2017, Honorary Consul of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sanjay Agarwal invited TAAI Chairman Eastern Region Devesh Agarwal and TAFI Chairman Anil Punjabi along with Prashant Binani to meet the Hon'ble Ambassador, Dr Sabit Subasic to discuss promoting tourism to Bosnia and Herzegovina .

Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), in short, often known informally as Bosnia, is a country in South Eastern Europe located on the Balkan Peninsula. It has beautiful mountainscapes , numerous medieval castle ruins, cascading rafting rivers, waterfalls and bargain-value skiing in its landscapes. It was a good interactive meet with both the associations thanking the Hon Consul for this opportunity.



Movie time



Chairman of TAAI Eastern region Devesh Agarwal and his team organised a movie outing for their members and airline staff on January 26, 2017 in Kolkata. The movie was none other than the current box office hit KAABIL. The show was pre booked in advance for the members and appealed to one and all. It was a good time for greeting and meeting with members thoroughly enjoying the popular film wherein both the leading actor and actress are blind and has oodles of revengeful action !



Chandigarh Chapter holds 6th meeting

There was good attendance at the 6th meeting of TAAI Chandigarh Chapter held on January 28, 2017 in Chandigarh. Chairman Baljit S Shergill and his office bearers also invited six airlines and some GDS staff who were able to interact with the members. The meeting commenced with silence in remembrance of late Jeeti Sagger, owner of Sagger Travels, Ludhiana who passed away in London and was very dear to Chandigarh and the Punjab market. Shergill

introduced the new members who were excited to be a part of the TAAI Family. He also read out the details of the previous 5 meetings as a quick review so that the new members also got to learn past activities of the chapter specially the formation of the new 4 Committees as recommended by the national committee such as – Airline Council, Business Development, Travel & Tourism and Allied Services. Service Tax issues and other concerns too were a part of the agenda.



GST analysis

By Manish Gadia

We present the GST Analysis - major impacts on tourism industry - for our member agencies to refer to and be guided. Readers are requested to consult your own tax advisors/practitioners and what is given here is based on our consultant's interpretation and cannot hold TAAI and GMJ & Co responsible for any unintended mistake of interpretation or any action taken on the basis of this Note. Acknowledgement to our Service Tax Council - MC Member Devaki Thiagarajan and MC Member Bhagwan Ramnani, TAAI consultants: CA Manish Gadia and CA Sumit Jhunjhunwala of M/s GMJ & Co.

Tour Operator Service: Any person engaged in the business of planning, scheduling, organising or arranging tours (which may include arrangements for accommodation, sightseeing or other similar services) by any mode of transport, and includes any person engaged in the business of operating tours in a tourist vehicle may be referred 'tour operator' and such services provided by a 'tour operator' may be referred as 'Tour Operator Service'.

Issues in taxability: While the government is vying to promote tourism in India and attempting to make certain cities and states as 'tourist hubs', its policies to levy GST on Inbound Tourists may not support the initiative. As per the Model GST Law, the provisions relating to determining the place of supply of a particular service state that tour services given by an Indian tour operator even to foreign nationals shall attract GST. If the popular belief of taxing services @ 18 per cent is to be believed, then in such case, the foreign nationals may be required to pay 18 per cent GST on tour packages booked through Indian tour operators.

In such a scenario, such tourists may prefer to book the tour to another destination where tax levy might be

comparatively less or through tour operator of Origin Country. As a result the Government of India may stand to lose the opportunity to earn foreign currency and the Indian tour operator may stand to lose business opportunity to their foreign counterparts. Such a taxation regime may not be beneficial to the interest of the trade. However, the trade may strongly represent before the government to levy minimum GST on tour services given on Inbound Tours.

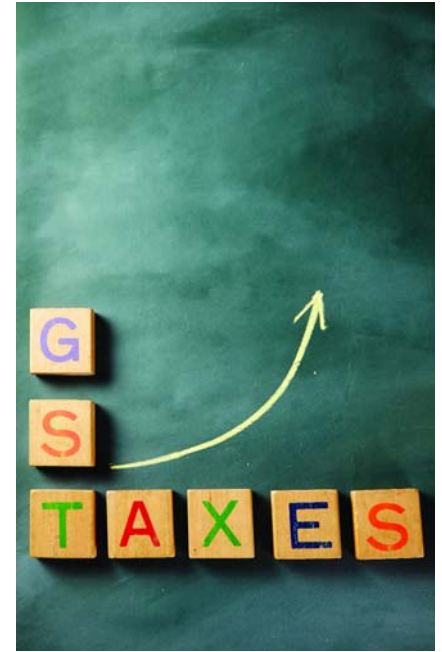
Issues in Input Tax Credit: A tour operator providing a package tour typically has below major expenses on which GST shall be charged by respective vendors. However, the availability of Input Tax Credit on the same may be restricted as detailed below:

Cost of air ticket - Since airlines presently issue invoice in name of passenger and do not issue tax invoice on tour operator/ agent, the tour operator may not be able to take Input Tax Credit of GST paid by it on transport of passengers.

Cost of accommodation - Although hotels may issue invoice on tour operator, but if the tour operator and hotel are located in different states, then tour operator shall not be eligible to take credit of the State-GST charged by the hotel.

For eg, a tour operator based in Mumbai books hotel in Himachal Pradesh. In such case hotel may be charging Himachal Pradesh State GST and Central GST, out of which HP State GST shall not be eligible as Input Tax Credit to tour operator since he is based in Mumbai.

Land transport /Transfers: Provisions of Model GST Law place specific restriction on taking of credit pertaining to motor vehicles and if such scenario continues under GST era, then tour operator may not be eligible for credit of GST paid on Land Transport expense.



Entry to sightseeing park/ locations: Apart from the practical issue whether the park shall treat the transaction as B2C or B2B and issue the tax invoice of the park containing the details of the tour operator viz. Name, address, GST registration number of the tour operator, the tour operator may nevertheless not be eligible to take credit of the State-GST charged by park if the tour operator and park are located in different states.

For eg, a tour operator based in Mumbai books entry tickets to Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad. In such a case, the amusement park may be charging Telangana State GST and Central GST, out of which Telangana State GST shall not be eligible as Input Tax Credit to tour operator since he is based in Mumbai.

To put it in nutshell, while the government may levy GST on tour operator services, the tour operator who may be in a position to take Input Tax Credit of GST paid by it at various stages, may have to pass on the cost of such GST to tourists, thereby raising the end cost of tours and ultimately decline of tourism in India.

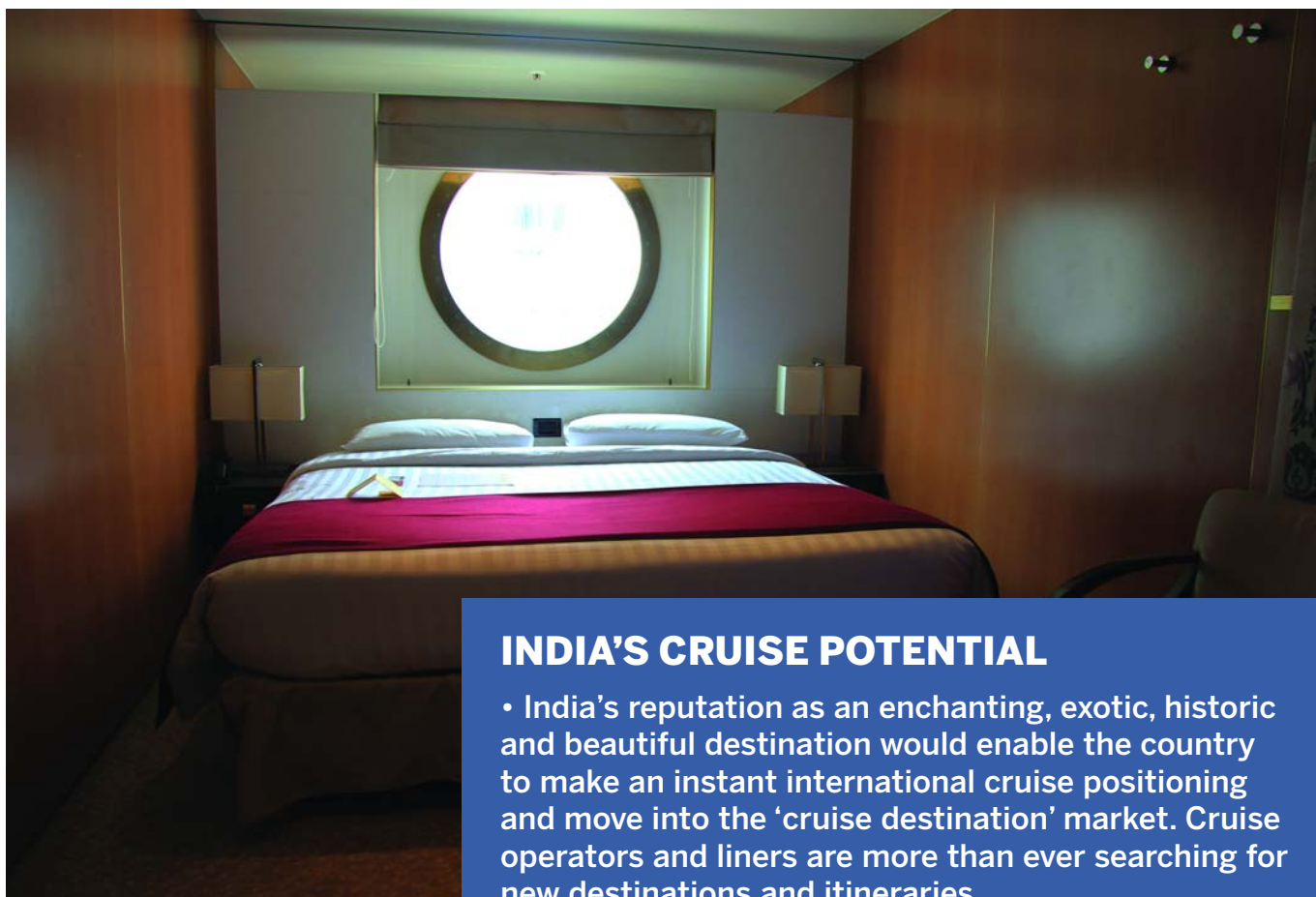


Cruise Tourism: The new Wave!



One of India's tourism products that still lies unexplored and is yet to receive its due attention from local authorities is Cruise Tourism. Our country's 7500 kms coastline has not been able to attract major cruises as it lacks the basic infrastructure which holds paramount importance for the sector. But with the government's initiatives to develop existing ports and boost infrastructure, India might soon be the next cruise hub in South East Asia





Initially considered to be the privilege of the elite, the only option for the aged and an obvious choice for the honeymooners, the cruise tourism market has over the years broken away from this stereotypical image to appeal to a much larger traveller base. Today, cruise tourism is becoming an increasingly popular leisure choice worldwide thereby gaining greater significance in the global tourism pie and creating a niche for itself. Recognising cruise tourism as a thrust area, the government of India has been wanting to promote the cruise tourism industry and position India as a global cruise destination.

According to a 2015 report titled 'Market Potential for Cruise Tourism In India' brought out by International Research Journal of Business and Management, India ranks as the ninth most popular tourist destination in the world and is today considered as a preferred cruise destination. The government of India, as part of its cruise tourism development initiatives, has identified six Indian ports to be developed as 'world class cruise terminals' and to be

INDIA'S CRUISE POTENTIAL

- India's reputation as an enchanting, exotic, historic and beautiful destination would enable the country to make an instant international cruise positioning and move into the 'cruise destination' market. Cruise operators and liners are more than ever searching for new destinations and itineraries.
- India's long coast line and strong port positioning imparts a natural advantage to the country to attract international cruise lines.
- India's positioning in South East Asia and its proximity to already popular cruise destinations would enable strong cruise circuits to be created over a period of time.
- India's strong domestic tourism sector would enable the country to achieve a strong domestic cruise sector that could complement the growth and support viability.
- India's impressive growth in the tourism sector would impart an important advantage to its cruise tourism positioning mutually strengthening each other.
- The cruise ports selected for development are also strong tourism states, especially Kerala, Goa and Chennai. This could provide an important platform for cruise tourism to takeoff.

promoted as 'integrated Indian cruise circuit.' These ports include Mumbai, Goa, Cochin, New Mangalore, Tuticorin, and Chennai. It is to be noted that these cruise ports selected for development are also strong tourism states, especially Kerala, Goa and Chennai thereby providing a ready platform for cruise tourism to takeoff.

The Minister of Tourism, Mahesh Sharma recently pitched for strengthening the cruise tourism, as he lamented that the country lagged behind in the segment despite having 7500 km coastline. The government has developed terminals at four major ports- Mumbai, Mormugao, New Mangalore and Cochin but is yet to develop the required infrastructure for tourists to have a smooth entry into the city. That the cruise business has potential is no rocket science. The fact remains that this concern has been discussed, debated, deliberated upon since over two decades. A story related to this sector needs to be treated with clarity and spelt out in two parts. First, India's cruise tourism potential in terms of passenger movement, and second, India as a cruise tourism hub. Though some global cruises had a few sailings to India in 2007 and 2009, and made Indian ports their "home port", none of them stayed for long. Inadequate infrastructure and no clear cruise policy were the major reasons for this.

The Indian government is committed to growing cruise tourism. India has sought advice from Singapore Government to promote cruise tourism by modernising infrastructure at all major and minor ports. Shipping minister, Nitin Gadkari has recently said that Rs 5,000 crore would be spent to develop infrastructure at the Mumbai Port Trust which will become a port exclusively for passenger traffic (and cargo facilities will soon be terminated).

With Mumbai as the new home port of Costa neoClassica, comes the interesting development that a lot of concerted efforts are being made at every level to develop and promote India's financial capital city as the country's cruise tourism hub. Sanjay Bhatia, chairman, Mumbai Port Trust revealed that there is a clear mandate from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to union minister for shipping, Nitin Gadkari to make Mumbai the gateway for

STAKEHOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Ministry of Shipping, being the apex body, would need to look at the macro level policy/ approvals/incentives issues, its role essentially being to develop proactive policies to simplify procedures while looking at pioneering initiatives to develop new products like river cruises to support the overall development.
- The Port Authorities would be directly responsible for all aspects related to the development and operations of the Cruise Terminals, including initiating suitable/positive measures to initiate bankable Private Sector Participation in the development of Cruise Terminals.
- The Ministry of Tourism should act in its areas of strengths which would include synergistic hinterland /regional tourism development to support cruise terminal development as well as giving financial support where necessary, creating tourism related infrastructure and linkages and enabling the necessary capacity creation to service the sector.
- The State departments of tourism would have responsibility for tourism development within the state including state level marketing efforts and coordination for creation of circuits.
- The private sector would bring in the typical efficiencies related to the sector for successfully funding and managing the cruise terminals, operating and managing all facilities, tourism related infrastructure in the hinterland and the tourism related services – restaurants, hotels, other accommodation, travel and trade, communication, publicity and marketing.
- The Ministry of Environment and Forests would play a proactive role to enable the development of cruise tourism in environmentally sensitive areas including sound policy measures, framework /guidelines for environmental compliance, provide approvals etc subject to meeting certain basic environmental standards and stipulations and other quality certification measures, etc.



NEW TRENDS

● NEW GENERATION TAKES TO THE WATER

Younger generations - including Millennials and Generation X - will embrace cruise travel more than ever before.

● TRAVEL AGENT USE INCREASES

Travel agents will continue to be the matchmakers between travellers and cruise lines in 2017.

● MORE PRIVATE ISLANDS ON CRUISE ITINERARIES

In 2017, cruise lines offer ports on a total of seven private islands.

● NEW CRUISERS WILL TAKE TO THE SEA

Interest in ocean cruising is projected to remain strong in 2017 - nearly half (48 per cent) of non-cruisers expressed interest in taking an ocean cruise.

● DRIVABLE PORT LOCATIONS IN FAVOUR

Cruisers like the convenience and cost of driving to a cruise port.

● LURE OF CELEB CHEFS

Several cruise lines feature restaurants and dishes created by famous chefs.

● DEMAND FOR EXPEDITION CRUISES

Adventure travel is growing at a record pace and cruise expeditions are seeing the impact.

international cruising. In 2017, Mumbai is expected to see 100 ships coming to the city. A significant amount will be spent on upgrading the cruise terminal. All facilities that are available in airports will be provided at the cruise terminal. There will be ease of business in terms of immigration, etc. New SOPs have been prepared which will be further improved.

UNTAPPED MARKET

The fact however remains that India's cruise story is yet to unfold, the current market share is nowhere near its potential. Industry experts agree that the Indian market share in the global scenario is very limited and marginalised. Except for South Asian cruises, Indians form a very small percentage on any other cruising region, may it be Alaska, Australia, Caribbean, Japan, Mediterranean or Mexico. While the concept of cruise vacation is catching up in metros and mini-metros, there is still a long way to go.

The future looks optimistic though. The outbound cruise tourism business in terms of Indian passengers opting for a cruise holiday through the fly and cruise format has been experiencing a growth of around 13 - 15 per cent year-on-year, which is a good trend considering challenges outbound tourism has experienced from India in the past few years. In fact 2016 has been the best year and growth has been consistent. With the increasing trend of Indian travellers willing to experience unique destinations, cruising is becoming more and more popular. Being one of the fastest growing economies of the world, India is an emerging market for outbound cruise tourism for international cruise liners.

As per the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) 2015 of the World Economic Forum, India ranks 35th in Air Transport Infrastructure and 50th in Ground & Port Infrastructure from 141 countries of the world. Looking at the rankings which India has received over so many years of promoting tourism in domestic and overseas market, it is obvious that we as a country are moving in the right direction to achieve the desired results of one per cent tourist arrivals and cruise tourism per se plays an important role. India has a vast coastline and huge potential as a destination - most cruise

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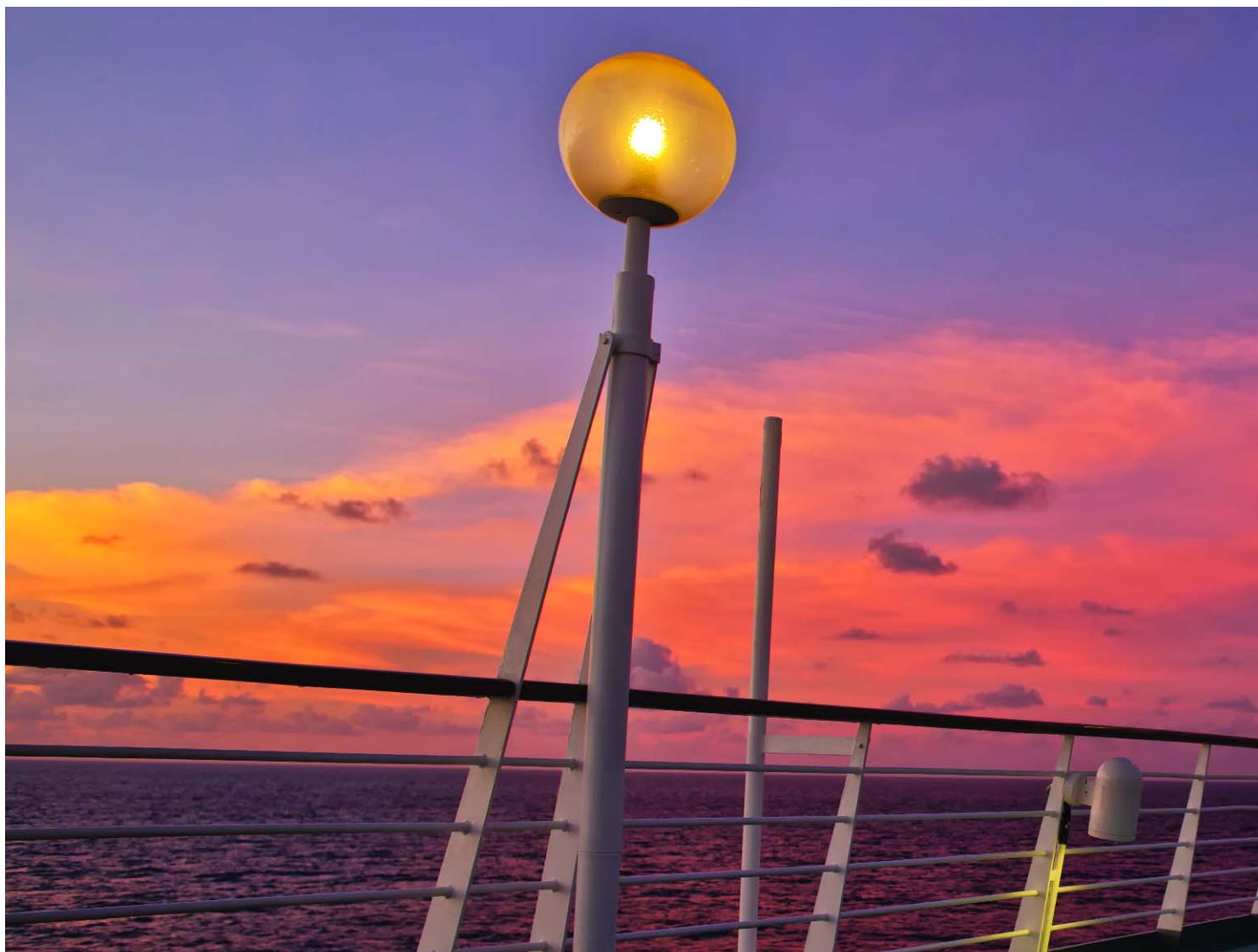
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2017 NEW SHIPS

26 New Ships on Order (as of December 2016)

**Total Investment of More than \$6.8 Billion
in New Ocean Vessels in 2017**

Year	Ocean	River	Ships Ordered	New Capacity
2017	13	13	26	30,006
2018	15	2	17	29,448
2019	20	2	22	51,824
2020 – 2026	32	0	32	119,510
Total	80	17	97	230,788



EMERGING TRENDS

The trend of chartering a ship and do a religious discourse on board for more than a thousand passengers is getting popular. Many such programmes have been done on cruises including the Alaska cruise, Caribbean cruise and of course Singapore cruise. These groups range from 1200 to 300 people. Indian weddings on cruise is another novel concept that has caught the fancy of HNI segment. Others celebrate their 25th anniversary or 50th birthday celebrations. Family reunions have become a trend where an upmarket client is looking for an excuse to get together and have a family reunion. These groups are typically 50 - 100 people, but very event oriented where every lunch or dinner has a theme. The clientele is mostly in the age group of 50 plus, who can afford to spend 20-30 lakh on their friends and relatives. MICE events on cruise has been growing in popularity in last six-seven years, ranging from the regular Asian destinations to Mediterranean cruise and even Alaska.

The cruising sector is moving at a steady pace and attracting more and more Indians to cruise from the shorter two nights itinerary to the longer seven nights itinerary as well. Star Cruises has noticed a recorded encouraging growth in recent years. There has been a consistent increase in the share of Indian passengers. Guests from middle and upper middle class segments are frequent travellers experiencing cruising as a new alternative to their travel options. Star Cruises offers a series of Fly Cruise holidays from India, allowing travellers to experience the unique opportunity of visiting exotic destinations by both air and sea, all within a single trip.

Cruiseliners are now focusing on Asia especially in the winter months from November to March (where ships cannot sail to Alaska and Scandinavia). Though the cruise industry in India is in its nascent stage, currently there is a lot of interest for sailings in multiple ports of Asia which includes ports in India. Various international sailings of leading cruise liners of the world are being sold in India through dedicated offices or representations. Costa Cruises has been making strong moves to establish a cruise industry in the region, by not only having

companies have shown great interest in wanting to move ships to India. Star Cruises has a well established positioning in the India market and the company has been one of the forerunners in operating sailings few years ago ex-Mumbai, but pulled out due to bureaucratic bottlenecks. However, the outbound movement for this cruise company has been encouraging over the years.

Though there has been minor progress over the years in this business, it is just the tip of the iceberg. Most experts feel that there is a lot which the travel fraternity

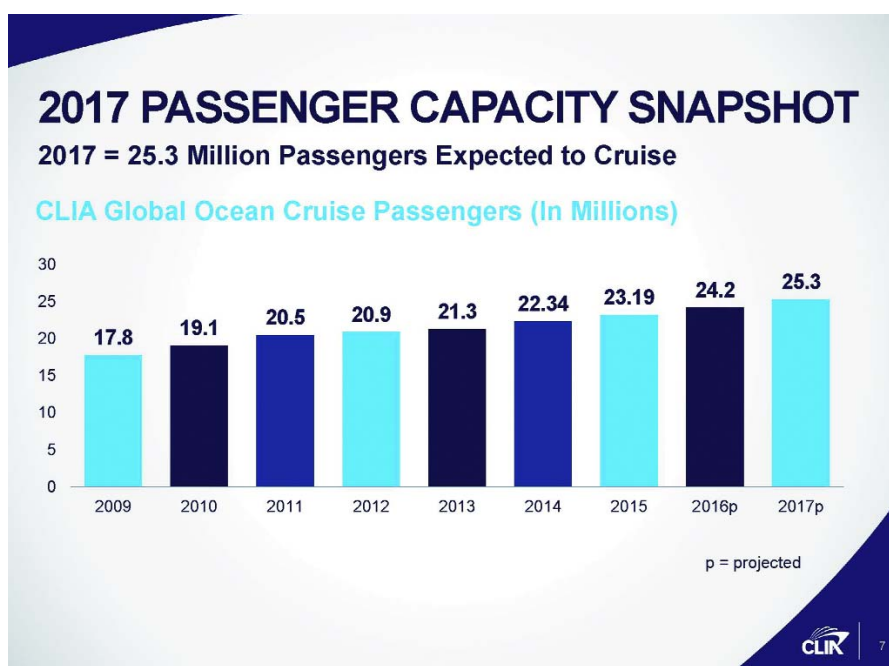
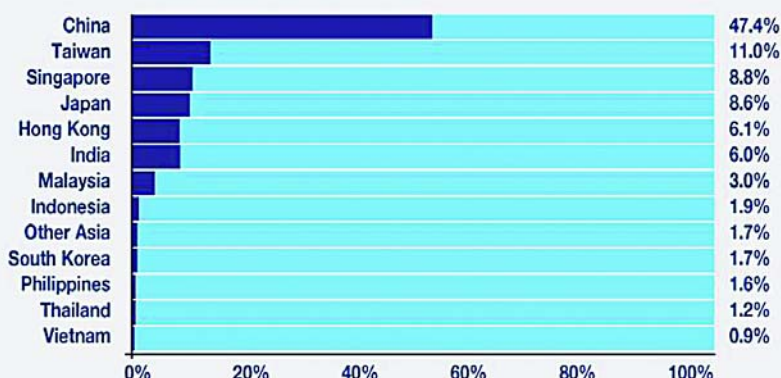
first needs to understand about this niche sector. India is a B2B market for cruise liners with more than 95 per cent of business coming from trade partners. In such a scenario, it is extremely important for them to put an effort to understand the product. Selling a cruise holiday has better margins and it is an opportunity which needs to be carefully studied and capitalised upon. Trade partners need to study the product before selling and not only sell as a onetime opportunity. The fact remains that the cruise category is way below in the holiday consideration due to lack of awareness and misconceptions.

State of the Asia Cruise Industry:

NO SIGNS OF SLOWING DOWN

Cruise Lines International Association releases 2016 Asia Cruise Trends Study

PASSENGER VOLUME BY SOURCE MARKET 2016



multiple sailing options in Asia but from Mumbai as well. In fact, it is the first cruise liner to introduce sailings from Mumbai to Maldives and back. The Government of India has also been proactive. India has the potential of becoming a big market for cruising, not only because of the long coastline but also a large consumer base waiting to experience a cruise from their own country.

The consistent growth in the outbound cruising has made all the stakeholders sit up and take notice of this hugely popular vacation option, which in other countries is almost considered as an industry. Once there are two-three cruise lines home porting their ships around the coast of India, there would not only be massive growth in passenger sales, but also the allied businesses which support and get support from cruise business.

NARESH RAWAL, Vice President - Sales, Genting Hong Kong speaks about India's cruise market

How big is the cruise market in India, and how has it been growing during the last five years?

India has a beautiful coastline and additionally an emerging cruise market. An average spending capacity by Indian passengers has increased over the years. Looking at this scenario, most of the cruise operators want to target India as a "Port of Call" and the impact has been very positive.

How would you see cruise tourism in India catch up with the rest of the world in the next five years – maybe upto 2020?

India is poised for making a significant mark in the international tourism industry, both as a cruise destination and source market. At Genting Hong Kong, we are optimistic of this steady growth as cruising today is fast reaching the wider

leisure market in India, especially with the emergence of new visible trends in the local cruise tourism market. This is further supported by both India's solid domestic and international tourism sector, which complements the growth and viability of the cruise tourism sector in the country. With strong support from the local government, we are confident that India is on the right path to be one of Asia's leading cruise hubs.

Is the India market mostly on budget category of cabins or does it have a fair share in the premium category as well?

Cruising is one of the most developing forms of holiday from the Asian subcontinent. More and more Indians are adopting themselves to take a cruise holiday. Today a cruise ship can cater to all kinds of holiday makers from families with children, senior citizens,



honeymooners and the MICE market, which is the most evolving segment. More and more people are choosing cruises because it is an all-inclusive package which not only takes care of the stay, but also includes meals, entertainment and covers various destinations at the same price. It is hard to plan a land-based holiday which has a mixture of all of these at an affordable price. I see a paradigm shift; today cruise passengers have evolved from the regular two/three nights itinerary to the longer five nights itinerary and are now showing high demand for balconies and suite cabins.

INDIA AS A CRUISE HUB

The following are the bottomline factors which would determine success for developing India as a a cruise hub:

1. Bringing cruise ships to Indian shores

It would be imperative for India to

attract the existing cruise ships to India. Today there are around 315 vessels cruising around the world. Taking the routes into consideration, there are around 150 ships which can 'call' at Indian ports, during the off-season in their typical routes, such as vessels plying from US

West Coast to Hong Kong, Singapore to SE Asia and Gulf/Mediterranean, South Africa to US East Coast. India's strategy would lie in 'pulling' these cruise vessels to our shores by creating the necessary infrastructure and attractions, positioning, linkages and affiliations.



CRUISE PASSENGERS COME FROM AROUND THE WORLD*



Similarly, India can also try to woo the cruise operators position one or two of their cruise ships in India, using the Indian Ports as 'home ports'. The recent example of Costa Cruises proves that rather than bringing new cruise ships, the objective would be to attract existing cruise ships, cruise operators and cruise lines to adopt India either as a turnaround port or as a home port.

2. Developing River cruises to support cruise tourism

Like Europe India has destinations in its interiors many of which are connected by beautiful rivers. Developing River cruises that connect these destinations would not only create the access that is so important for cruise tourism, but would also enable India to strongly position its tourism destinations and its exotic heritage.

India's strategy in creating river cruises would lie in:

- Linking cruise terminals to river cruises that connect significant destinations would stimulate cruise ships to touch India for the sake of the destination. For example, Sarnath, the key Buddhist

Like Europe, India has destinations in its interiors many of which are connected by beautiful rivers. Developing River cruises that connect these destinations would not only create the access that is so important for cruise tourism, but would also enable India to strongly position its tourism destinations and its exotic heritage

pilgrimage destination, lies on the Ganges. Offering this as a river cruise would be a powerful stimulus to the large base of Buddhist tourists who come to India from other Asian countries. Linking this to one of the cruise terminals would ensure that the cruise ships from the Buddhist countries – especially Japan, China – come to India.

- Planning river cruise development in sync with the larger Inland Waterways Transport Development Plan of the Ministry of Shipping while also relating it to the larger tourism potential and proposed cruise terminal development.
- Linking River cruises in India to ecotourism and rural tourism, both of which form a priority area for tourism development as many of the rivers in India link to interior villages, rural areas, exotic locations, forests, sanctuaries etc. Some of the river cruises could be linked to adventure activities like rafting, sailing, river crossing etc, while certain other river cruises could offer other entertainment elements, refreshment, pleasure trips, floating restaurants or

CRUISE MAP OF THE WORLD



guesthouses, local sightseeing, nature watching, safaris across forests, sanctuaries etc.

3. Making Cruise Terminals into vibrant destinations

India should develop Cruise Terminals that not only provide positive experience to the passengers but also act as 'gateways' to the wider tourism offering in the hinterland/region. The more tourism product a cruise terminal is able to offer within the shortest possible time, the more successful it can be as a 'port destinations'.

The first imperative is that world-class facilities cruise tourists are used to and look forward to be made available at Indian ports. Despite the fact that the investment may not yield adequate returns in the near future, it is felt that unless this is done, it will not be possible to promote and market India as a cruise destination. Huge investments required to develop requisite cruise infrastructure at ports can be justified on grounds of broader economic benefits to the nation.

Secondly, Cruise Terminals should be made into mini tourism destinations much like a tourist village showcasing India's art and handicrafts, ethnic bazaars, a small

museum offering a birds eyeview of the tourist attractions of the region, food stalls with typical Indian cuisine, children's play area etc. It should effectively promote the 'India Brand' while simultaneously increasing commercial and business potential of the terminal.

Thirdly, the Cruise Terminal should also act as a gateway to the tourism offering of the region, thus becoming a destination in

For the cruise traveller, in addition to the cruising experience and the infrastructure and facilities at ports during port visits, the destinations covered and the general experience within the country/destinations visited would form a critical part of the overall product expectation

itself. Thus, for the cruise traveller, in addition to the cruising experience and the infrastructure and facilities at ports during port visits, the destinations covered and the general experience within the country /destinations visited would form a critical part of the overall product expectation. Hence it would be important to create links to significant destinations, heritage locations and natural features with the port so as to enable a special and varied experience that is holistically 'Indian'. This would also help to link the development of tourism in India to the development of cruise tourism, helping to synergise each with the other.

The following would be essentially to provide the connectivity required to link to tourism offerings to cruise ports:

- Connectivity through small and feeder aircrafts
- Connectivity through river cruises and exploiting inland waterways
- Connectivity through road transport where distances are not prohibitive.

Source:

*Cruise Tourism – potential & strategystudy
Ministry of Tourism, Government of India
Infographics: Cruise Lines International
Association (CLIA)*

TAAI TORCHBEARERS

FUTURE FORWARD

In the 2000's, TAAI moved forward in its role as a responsible and united voice of the industry to work towards the betterment of all its stakeholders





TAAI Past Presidents have all been inspiring in their endeavour to uphold the very fabric of TAAI's dignity, dedication and well-being. The years 2003 to 2011 saw the arrival of some dynamic travel professionals such as Balbir Mayal, Ashwini Kakkar, C V Prasad, Rajinder Rai and Iqbal Mulla taking over as Presidents of this august association and leading it forward successfully.

All of them endeavoured to be sensitive towards the concerns of the industry, upheld work done by their peers who pioneered changes in travel and tourism in India over the years and looked at tourist and aviation activity with meaningful determination, bridging the gaps between the agents of yore and modern entrants.

Balbir Mayal was a part of TAAI since nearly three decades, having held various positions of importance and serving as the President for two terms 2003-2005.

Mayal's year was another important era and it was during the most historic Managing Committee meeting at Pune, that insurance as a form of financial security was launched. Bajaj Allianz had then made a presentation and the team managed to effectively convince IATA to introduce this scheme which it did and the Insurance scheme was put in place.

The convention of TAAI during 2004 held at Kolkata, witnessed the key note address by Shiv Khera, an eminent motivational speaker. Another key feature of this convention was the launch of Kingfisher Airlines by Vijay Mallya. Col V Chadha was the Chairman of this convention. TAAI was able to draw a large crowd to the 'City of Joy' with well chosen, relevant and topical themes for its business sessions. The second year of Balbir Mayal witnessed another excellent

convention at Sri Lanka, which is well known to have offered the delegates, the players from world Drummers' Festival which enthralled the delegates. The most famous choreographer Chandana from Sri Lanka presented a memorable performance with his team depicting traditional, folk, creative and modern dance.

The website with a new outlook and titled "travelagentsofindia.com" was also launched during the year of Mayal. Sunil Kumar was not only responsible for the launch of the website and technology, but also successfully chaired the TAAI Convention at Colombo, Sri Lanka.

At this period of time, Malaysia gave a few selected agents the window to process Malaysian visas – thanks to the efforts of TAAI. TAAI members could not submit visas directly to the embassy. So TAAI travelled to Kuala Lumpur to meet the authorities and achieved success.

Ashwini Kakkar's association with TAAI extends for over two decades and for this entire duration, he was able to provide and receive active support. Over this period, on multiple occasions he had the good fortune of addressing various conventions and highlighting the opportunities and challenges facing the industry.

During 2005-2006, he had the special honour of serving TAAI as its President, where his emphasis was on the cause of survival and enhancement of the potential of the average travel agent. While vanishing commissions, enhanced taxation and rampant technological changes have played havoc with the industry in the past few years, it is his firm belief that like a doctor has a vital

role as far as his patients are concerned, all of us as travel agents will continue to have relevance as long as we can bring Knowledge, Protection and Delivery to all our customers at a fair price.

It was during Kakkar's presidency that TAAI embarked on technology, fully envisioned of the fact that technology will play a key role in the future of this industry. The task was assigned to the Hon Treasurer, Sunil Kumar, who was instrumental in offering to the entire membership, for the first time, fares of all airlines on one "crawler". For the first time, online registration with self allotment of hotel was offered to the delegates.

During Kakkar's tenure, UFTAA held its 40th UFTAA Congress in Delhi, India after a gap of 22 years and the Congress felicitated a veteran and founding member of the federation, Jimmy Guzder, also late past president of TAAI. Rajinder Rai was the Congress chairman.

The year also witnessed an excellent convention of TAAI at Hyderabad in 2006 with C V Prasad as Convention Chairman, which was not only well attended, but had great content. The panel discussion comprising of Vijay Mallya and Capt Gopinath and the debate that emerged is something that the membership cannot forget.

Kakkar said, "In these trying times, TAAI can have a significant impact by providing the bridge for the industry with principals on one hand and government bureaucracy and regulators on the other. TAAI also has a role in supporting the technological transformation of its constituents and I wish TAAI and all its members a bright future in the years to come."



C V Prasad has been with the travel industry since 1986 and led TAAI as President from 2006 to 2008. He was conferred with the President's Award for his contribution to TAAI in 2001.

Under his presidentship, the year witnessed TAAI's Managing Committee participating in the 1st ASEAN India Travel Trade Exchange workshop titled "Beyond Boundaries" in Singapore on April 14, 2007. The 56th Convention of TAAI was held in Chennai under the chairmanship of Rajinder Rai during Prasad's tenure with delegate figure crossing a stupendous count and presenting very interactive and interesting business sessions.

His second stint in 2008 saw the 57th TAAI convention going overseas to London and this was the first meet by an Indian travel trade association to be held in Europe. Shubhada Joshi was the Chairperson. The three-day TAAI Congress was the perfect opportunity to showcase London and Britain to the travellers of the future. For Indians, London was and is the natural gateway to Europe and the Americas and the London Congress became the portal to new opportunities for the travel industry in both countries.

Prasad also decided to launch TAAI's own exclusive travel and tourism exhibition in order to increase the size and scale of TAAI's Travel Mart and thus was born India Travel Trade Expo (ITTE). The name was made the property of TAAI and several exhibitions since then have been organised. Iqbal Mulla was made Chairman of this initiative.

Double honour was in store for Prasad as he was unanimously elected president of UFTAA for 2007-08. Prasad became the third Indian after 22 years to rise to the coveted post which brought glory to TAAI in India. This was a further recognition of India as an emerging market and also its capability to lead the world.

An MoU with Kazakhstan was signed during Prasad's term to promote tourism between the two countries.

TAAI's Diamond Jubilee in 2011 celebrations included the TAAI Travel Awards which was held in conjunction with the Indian Travel and Trade Expo (ITTE) on December 16 and 17, 2011 at Taj Lands End, Mumbai. The expo was designed to direct business to other related industries and also served as a great meeting ground for all stakeholders of the industry

Rajinder Rai led this august association from 2008 to 2011. The TAAI Convention in Dubai will be always recalled for the luxury it offered. Sunil Kumar was the Convention Chairman and presented the Congress with a difference. President Rajinder Rai launched TAAI Travel Awards during this convention at the then most majestic hotel, Atlantis The Palm. It was a dream project for him and the debut of the Awards became the toast of the country as it recognised outstanding contributions to the development and promotion of travel and tourism in a responsible and sustainable manner, as well celebrated efforts of leading organisations in the Indian travel, tourism and hospitality industry. A Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to the "Hospitality Legend", P R S Oberoi.

Rai's second term saw the staging of another successful convention in Phuket by venturing into South East Asia. The destination was much loved by the delegates and topical subjects were covered at the sessions. Jagdeep Rikhy was the chairman.

An MoU with Korean Tourism was signed during this term and many roadshows were organised later in India

to promote tourism to and from Korea as a result of this collaboration.

For the first time in the history of TAAI, IATA agent members were able to regain airline commission from 0 to 3 per cent with the efforts of Rai and his team.

In 2010, under Rai's presidentship, the India Travel Trade Expo took on a new mantle. ITTE - TAAI's own travel and tourism exhibition was organised in Mumbai creating a great networking platform for the industry and proved very successful. Iqbal Mulla was the Chairman of this exhibition.

The TAAI Travel Awards witnessed a new shift when it was held at Mumbai in 2010. The selection of the awardees was through a mail ballot and scrutinisers for the ballot were chartered accountants who not only were responsible to collate the scores, but also had received all sealed ballots. The Chairman for the Awards was Sunil Kumar.

Iqbal Mulla as President in 2011 began his stint with TAAI's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations which included the TAAI Travel Awards held in conjunction with the India Travel and Trade Expo (ITTE) on December 16 and 17, 2011 at Taj Lands End, Mumbai. The expo was designed to direct business to other related industries and also served as a great meeting ground for all stakeholders of the industry.

TAAI Travel Awards, at this glorious event, invited all past presidents of TAAI to honour them and learn from their past experiences and formed a crucial part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. The gathering saw the recognition of the hard work and efforts of the captains of the industry. N M Sharafuddin was Chairman of TAAI Travel Awards.

Earlier in November 2011, TAAI and Turkish Indian Tourism Council (TITC) signed an MoU to enhance and promote tourism between India and Turkey. As a result, TAAI was invited to hold its 60th Convention in Turkey and 2012 saw TAAI in beautiful Istanbul. In 2013, under Mulla's presidentship TAAI signed an MoU with Karnataka during the Convention held in Bengaluru.



“Goals. There's not telling what you can do when you get inspired by them

or what you can do when you believe in them. There's not telling what you can do when you act upon them”

Balbir Mayal

“TAAI can have a significant impact by providing the bridge for the industry with

principals on one hand and government bureaucracy and regulators on the other”

Ashwini Kakkar

“ We decided to launch TAAI's own exclusive travel and tourism exhibition in order to increase the size and scale of TAAI's Travel Mart ”

C V Prasad

“I shall always continue to respect and honour this premier association”

Rajji Rai

“The Diamond Jubilee celebrations of TAAI which clubbed the TAAI Travel Awards and ITTE was a mega event”

Iqbal Mulla



Israel: Beyond pilgrimage

Reema Lokesh,
experiences time
travel in a land that
speaks of character,
culture, cuisine and
colour all in one
breath

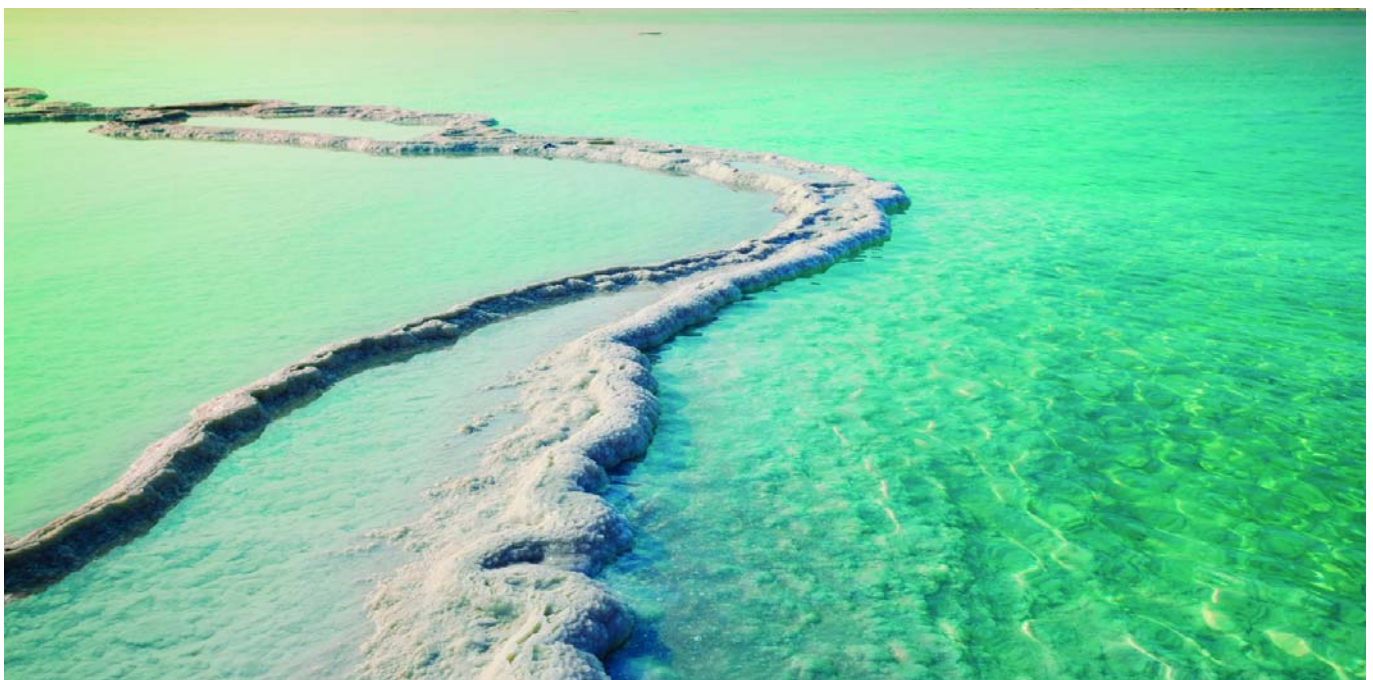


A tiny dot on the world map, this country is strategically located with continents – Asia, Africa and Europe at close quarter. From its spiritual high in Jerusalem to its geographical low at the Dead Sea (lowest point on earth), the story of Israel is clearly of character, culture, cuisine and colours. For many, Israel still reflects an image of a politically unstable zone with the army staying guard at every quarter. However for those who are well travelled, they know the truth is something else and that it is undoubtedly one of the most advanced and secured nations that is part of the Middle East and West Asia. For many travellers who have experienced the vibrancy of Tel Aviv – a city that takes pride in its nightlife buzz – the image of Israel is an antithesis of the preconceived image of instability. Like one of the Israelis said, if you want to enjoy Tel Aviv, step out of your hotel room not at 2 pm but at 2 am; that's when all the action begins. It is indeed action-packed. From live bands to theatre and art, from gourmet experiences to a wine and cheese story, Israel has a lot to offer to the discerning traveller, who is ready to travel with an open mind.

Israel interestingly is the melting pot of varied nationalities, who made the country their home since over decades. Hence the food is an interesting mix of flavours from across the world. From the staple food of Falafel and Shawarma, to a fine dining cuisine culture, the gastronomy trail

A RARE 4,000 YEAR OLD DOLMEN DECORATED WITH ANCIENT ROCK ART EXPOSED IN GALILEE

Archaeologists from Tel Hai College, the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem have recently discovered a mysterious dolmen (a large table-like stone structure) over 4,000 years old in a large field of dolmens, adjacent to Kibbutz Shamir in the Upper Galilee. What makes this dolmen so unique is its huge dimensions, the structure surrounding it and most importantly, the artistic decorations engraved on its ceiling.



coupled with the premium Israeli wine experience adds to the character of the place. From Casablanca to Chile, from Russia to Romania, there are people who will cross your path rather naturally.

For those who are lovers of history and ancient architecture, Israel is a perfect place for their case study. History lives in every stone in the region as they say. From stories of valour in the north close to the Lebanon boarder to some amazing narrations of living history in the southern desert region of the Negev and then on to the Red Sea close to the Egypt border, its all about time travel in

TOP 10 MUST DO'S IN ISRAEL

- 1** Visit Jerusalem - the land of creation, history, heritage and hope
- 2** Visit Nazareth, Tiberias and the Sea of Galilee for its history and charm
- 3** The Bahá'í Gardens in Haifa, comprise a staircase of 19 terraces extending all the way up to the northern slope of Mount Carmel
- 4** Stay afloat in the Dead Sea region. Indulge in some therapeutic treatments, which work for your skin. Definitely rub the black mud before you venture into the sea. Remember - no swimming, only staying afloat at the lowest point on the earth
- 5** Enjoy the Tel Aviv buzz, from its nightlife to the beach promenade and activities along the coast. It is also recognised by UNESCO as the white city. Once in Tel Aviv, the old Yafo city visit makes for some interesting ancient walks and trails
- 6** The Kibbutz is an experience indeed. Living at one gets you up close and personal with its life and living
- 7** A trip to the local markets 'Shukah Carmel' in Tel Aviv takes you into the heart of the local flavours and aromas
- 8** Visit the historic fortress of Masada, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Stories of bravery and sacrifice awaits you in that region. Enjoy the picturesque journey into wilderness and the Judean deserts to reach Masada
- 9** If time is on your hand, then the north of Israel is unique - from the snow capped experience in Mount Hermon to a visit to Acre, its heritage, culture and nature
- 10** In the southern most tip of Israel rests Eilat, a resort city near the Red Sea



Israel, taking you into an era back in time and then return to where all the modern world action is - from technology to trance music. Another must see experience in Israel, which is unique to that society is the Kibbutz lifestyle. It was one of the hallmarks of the Israel society that played a dynamic role during nation building. Stop by at one of the Kibbutz to witness a social movement that follows some best management practices. A journey to the Dead Sea and the Ein Gedi Kibbutz and nature reserve should certainly be on your to do list. It's a natural oasis located on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Masada, is one of the best archaeological sites in Israel, that takes you back in time denoting a story of heroism and honour. Haifa in the north is a good looking port city, which also houses the main centre of the Bahai faith. Roman history and architecture is well spread in the northern region as well. From the Sea of Galilee to Nazareth, the north has some interesting spots to explore and experience.

THE INDIA-ISRAEL CONNECT

For those who are unaware, Indians are revered in Israel. From Indian fashion to food from Indian music to yoga, from Bollywood to business, Israelis are hooked on the the spirit of India. This love for India, makes the Indian visitor to Israel feel all the more at home, where the barriers of language (if any) gets faded by the warmth of the Sabra (Israeli by birth). The TAAI journey to the promised land, was also termed as a beautiful eye opener to a place and people that is unique in every way.

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New e-learning initiative from PATA

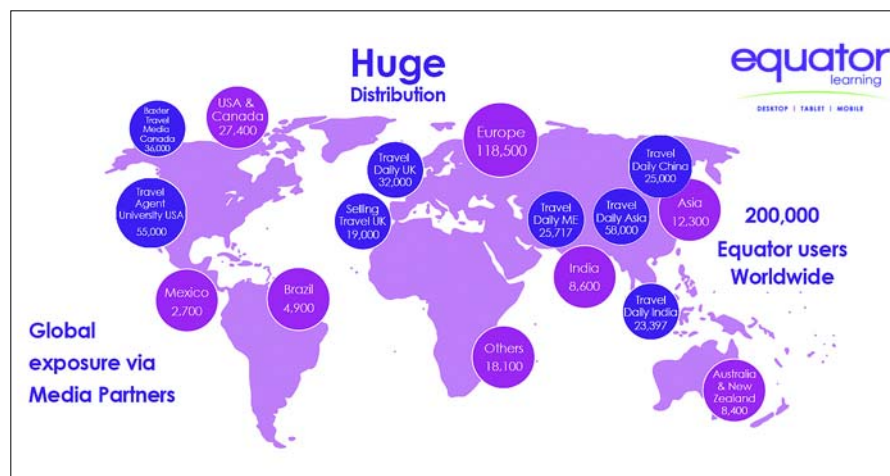
The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), in conjunction with Equator Learning, is launching a travel agent initiative to support organisations with travel trade marketing efforts

The Asia & Pacific Expert is a consistent and succinct online learning tool for travel agents that is applicable for all markets worldwide. Written in an innovative format, it supports and promotes the destination as well as any pre-existing learning platform. A simple and inexpensive annual fee secures a module in any chosen language(s). Working as a destination community, the audience potential is huge as agents may switch effortlessly between different members modules and qualify towards Asia Pacific Expert status.

“Knowledge is power. You have heard that many times before and know it to be 100 per cent correct. Travel agents are becoming increasingly time-poor and picking up unqualified knowledge. This can damage a destination and its reputation. The Asia & Pacific Expert is an efficient and user-friendly solution for all destinations, providing a clear and reliable source of information for travel agents,” says Chris May, Managing Director – Equator Learning.

This initiative offers PATA members the opportunity to create an impressive 30-minute learning module that will provide agents with essential information about a destination, empowering them with the ability to sell it correctly.

Unlike any existing stand-alone learning platform, the Asia & Pacific Expert gives agents all the facts they need to gain confidence while providing a new avenue to promote and link to an organisation's existing site. In addition, this will offer an agent a friendly portal



for all Asia Pacific destinations – providing the first one-stop shop for the region.

Equator Learning designs, manages and markets innovative, unique, multilingual and interactive online training and engagement portals for the travel and leisure industry. Whilst its sister brand Travel Uni distributes Trade engagement directly to the Travel Trade in multiple markets worldwide.

With a broad spectrum of international clients from all sectors of the industry, Equator is the name behind many of travel's most successful and award-winning e-learning courses including NYC, Las Vegas, Sandals Resorts, Alaska, SAGA Holidays and Jumeirah. With more than 200,000+ individual users of its training courses worldwide, Equator Learning operates online platforms for travel businesses in over 70 countries and in 12 different languages.

This initiative offers PATA members the opportunity to create an impressive 30-minute learning module that will provide agents with essential information about a destination, empowering them with the ability to sell it correctly. The Asia & Pacific Expert also gives them all the facts they need to gain confidence while providing a new avenue to promote and link to an organisation's existing site

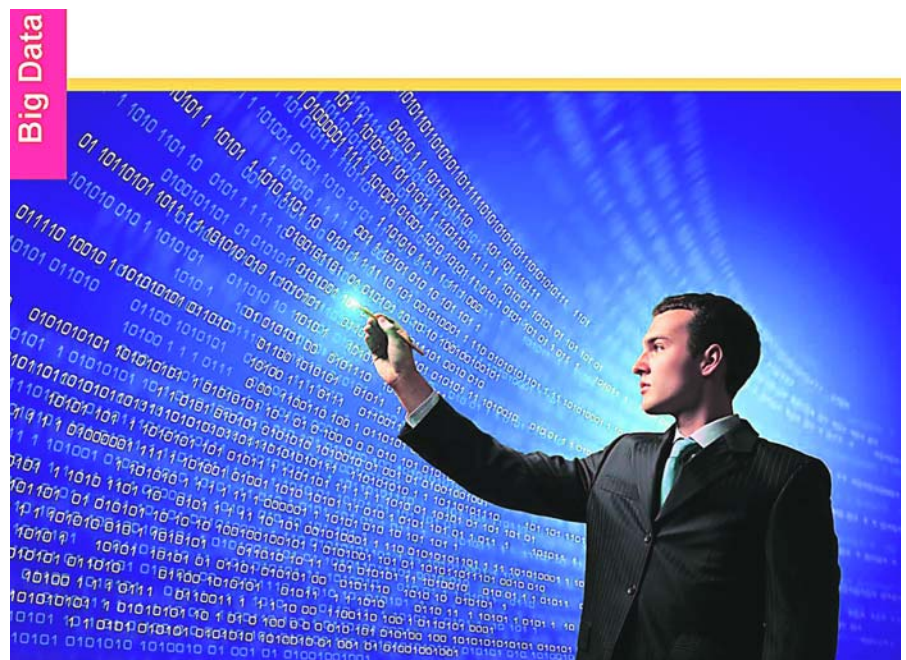
Big Data: The 360 degree overview for the travel industry

An Interglobe report outlines how travel companies can use insights from Big Data to grow their businesses

Let's consider these scenarios:

Scenario 1: Mike wants to go for a vacation. He does that at least once in two months. He wants to book a flight within US\$ 500, wants the seat to have extra leg space. He prefers vegan meal. He likes his hotel to be in the heart of the city and also booked a mini van to travel around. Now every time Mike plans his vacation he has to go through multiple airlines, hotel, OTA websites, and subsequently talk to various travel agencies to get all his preferences met. And even after going through so much hassle, there have been times when Mike had to compromise and settle for less, thus making his travel experience less enjoyable. How can Mike's experience be made better, easier and more delightful?

Scenario 2: Airline A has a customer B who makes a booking via the A's Philippines call centre. Customer B then goes to airline A's website to book ancillary services and also check his flight details. The customer has some special baggage requirements which he logs with airline's another call centre situated in India. He then goes on and books his hotel. After the vacation, customer B writes about the experience and reviews about various services on his Facebook page and travel blog. So how we do profile customer A? We have a vast amount of information about customer B that sits with different channels and geographies. Is there any means through which all this information can be collected and intelligently curated so business insights can be derived to offer a more personalised offers to customer B, which would be of much higher value to him? Can we deliver on the 'WOW' customer experience here? Now let's consider another scenario.



Scenario 3: Airline C and D offer a variety of fares and other ancillary products and services to its customers like excess baggage. But an OTA displays only the lowest fare option that the airlines offer. So a customer with extra baggage then looks at the OTA website to make a booking.

Despite Airline C having the better pricing strategy, it is unable to communicate the same to the customer as the interaction channel is controlled by the OTA. Due to data silos between the OTA and the airline, the customer loses out on a better deal and Airline C loses a well deserved business opportunity.

	Fare	Extra Baggage Allowance	Cost to Customer
Airline C			\$200
Airline D			\$250

The absence of extra baggage allowance information on OTA site drives the customer to book on Airline D and he ends up paying US\$ 250. Had the customer been aware of all information including baggage allowance, he would have booked Airline C and paid US\$ 200.

These scenarios depict the dilemmas and opportunities that the travel industry is facing today. Now travel providers have vast amount (petabytes) of data on every step that their customers take during their travel booking cycle. But the main challenge they face is converting this data

into value for customers. The right solution can open up immense opportunities for all – the customers, the travel providers and the solution providers.

WHAT IS BIG DATA?

Big data simply means lots and lots of data.

- Data about each and every step of your customer(s) – Volume
- Data from multiple sources, both internal and external – Variety
- Data which is generated every day, every minute, every second – Velocity

WHERE IS THIS DATA COMING FROM?

Before we go ahead and decide what we can do with this vast amount of data, we first need to analyse from where and how we are getting this data. Let's see how and where the customer, knowingly or unknowingly, leaves his footprints during a typical travel life cycle.

WHAT VALUE CAN BE DERIVED OUT OF THIS DATA?

The good news is that the data about customer interaction sits with you. But the big question is – what to do with this big data that can deliver value to the end customer and the travel service provider as well. The following represents a most

impactful of the many benefits that can be derived by analyzing and making this big data work for you:

1. Personalisation: Gone are the days of profiling, when the customers were segregated into different categories and offers were made for a particular category. Present day customers are becoming more demanding and the competition is growing each day. To retain the loyalty of its customers a service provider needs to stitch an offer which meets their individual requirements - a truly personalised offer. This personalisation has to be based on:

a) Past behaviours: "We see that you like an aisle seat with extra leg space. Book a seat on our economy plus class which has extra leg space and also get 30 per cent off on selection of aisle seat."

b) Social media relationships: "50 of your friends have flown with us this month. Know what they have to say about us and give us a chance to serve you!"

c) Location: "Want to try the best local cuisine? Visit 'The Alpines', just two blocks away from your hotel."

d) Itinerary: "We see that you are flying from Peru to Costa Rica next week. Would you like to try our Limo service for the airport transits?"

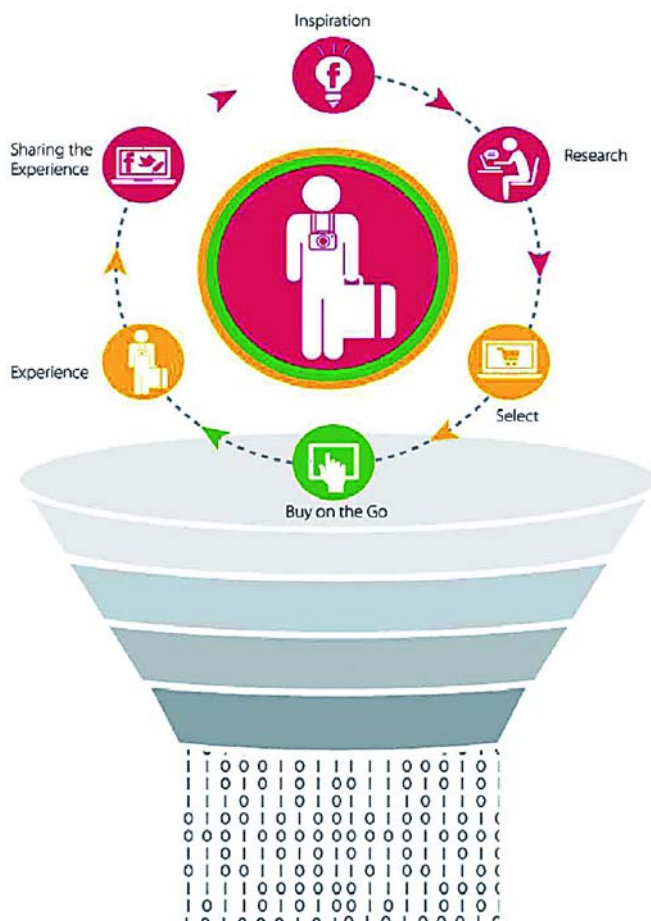
e) Ancillary sales: "Did shopping from the beautiful streets of Paris. Don't worry book for an extra bag now and get 20 per cent off on the extra baggage allowance!"

Today travel firms need to embrace 'Next Best Offer' analytics (Next Best Offer refers to the use of predictive analytics to identify the product or services that the customers, based on their past purchase behaviour, are most likely to buy in their next purchase) to reach their customers at the right time, at the right place, through the right channel and most importantly with the right offer.

2. Enhanced customer experience: A key factor in the success of any service organisation is the customer happiness index and travel service providers are no exception to this rule. The key differentiator which can help a service provider stand out is the quality of customer experience that it can offer.

By combining customer interaction footprints through all the channels, a firm can get a 360-degree view of its customers. This comprehensive knowledge can help the firm make better suited offers for its customers, provide additional services which can increase customers' delight or simply make a kind gesture which can touch its customers. All these actions go a long way in ensuring that your customers remain loyal to you. An example of the customer delight that can be created is the - KLM Surprise campaign. In November 2010, the international airline KLM surprised its customers: As passengers arrived at security checkpoints and gates, flight attendants were there to greet them by name and give them a personalised gift - something that the passenger could use on his or her trip, or enjoy when they returned home.

Flight attendants browsed Twitter and Foursquare, looking for people who mentioned that they were taking a KLM flight. Then, using the information the customer provided about him



Travel Life Cycle

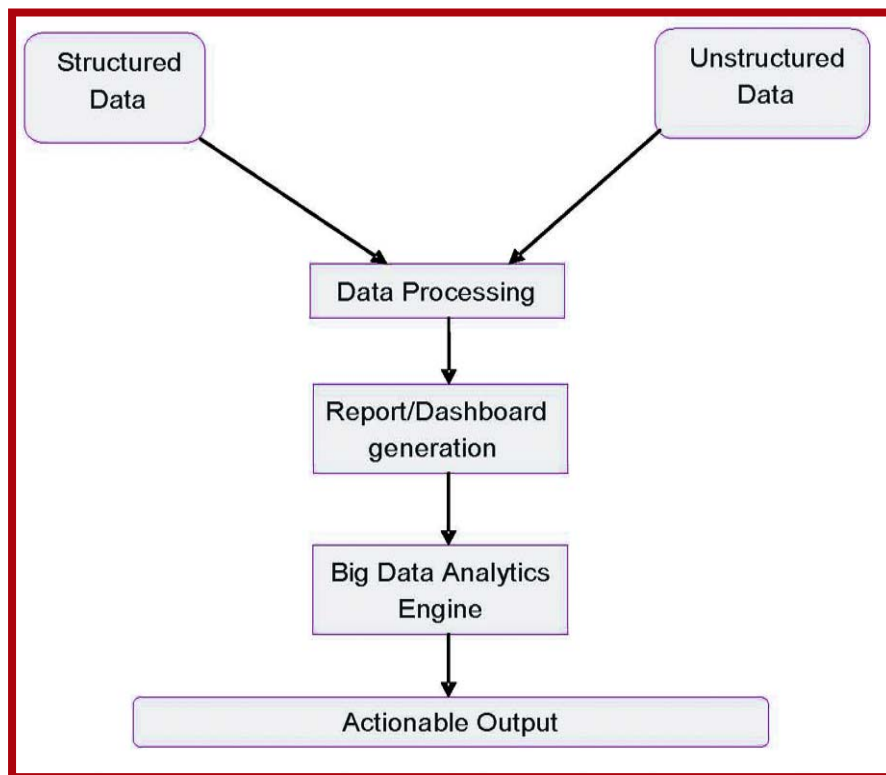
Travel life cycle phase	How customer generates data?	Where that data is found?
Searching: This phase is usually applicable in case of leisure travelers. In this phase the customer is searching where he wants to travel.	Browsing through travel service provider's website, traversing through OTA sites, clicking on ads on social media sites like facebook, pinterest, using marketing promotions by travel service providers, using travel search sites, online searching and travel blogs and publications	Online travel agencies logs, social media sites like facebook, travel service providers' analytical logs, travel search site logs, Google web logs, blogs and more
Planning: Before reaching this phase the traveler has narrowed down on the destination. Now he is planning various details of his travel, like, mode of transport to the destination, what kind of accommodation will he take, what mode of transportation will he use at the destination, places he would like to see, restaurants he would like to eat and more .	Calling up the travel providers' call centers, browsing OTA sites, surfing websites of travel service providers, reading other travelers' experiences on social media sites and blogs, surfing through travel review sites such as Tripadvisor, seeing pictures and videos	Call center logs, OTA web analytics logs, travel review sites database, social media sites and blog sites analytical databases, Google internet search database
Booking: After the traveler has planned his trip the next step would be to make all the necessary bookings like flight, hotel, transportation, tourist attraction sites etc.	Travel service provider's website/call center/social media page/on property, travel agency, OTA	Travel service provider's web database, call center logs, social media database, OTA database, travel agency database
Experiencing: In this stage the traveler is using the travel services i.e. he is flying through the airline he booked, staying in the hotel, driving the car he rented, having dinner at the restaurant he booked.	Traveler's on property feedback, online reviews/complaints registered via call centers, site, his movements, time spent on the service	Feedback logs, feedback with employees, location/movement database
Sharing: After the traveler has completed his travel, he shares his experience with his own and outside network.	Word of mouth, writing blogs, sharing experience on social media sites, travel review sites	Social media database, user's web profile database, travel review sites' databases

or herself on social media platforms, the flight attendants purchased a suitable gift and presented it to the passenger upon his/her arrival at the airport. As a result of this campaign, news of the KLM surprises spread like wildfire through social media – mentions, tweets,

retweets, and word-of-mouth. That November, the KLM Twitter feed was viewed more than million times. What made this particular campaign stand apart from other run-of-the-mill marketing campaigns is personalisation - which enabled the airline to offer

customers something that held real, tangible value.

3. Identifying most valuable customers: The major chunk of value from harnessing big data analytics can be derived by identifying the most profitable



customers. Marketing efforts can be directed to capture their attention, the offers can be better suited to their needs, and efforts can be made to drive loyalty. This is more important keeping in mind the fact that cost of new acquisition is higher than the cost of retention.

4. Revenue generation through Cross-sell and Up-sell: Inventory is only a part of the complete suite of services that a travel firm provides. There is a complete range of ancillary services which often get neglected. This is primarily due to

incomplete customer behaviour profile, because of which the seller, be it through OTA or any other channel, is not in a position to anticipate the right ancillary service that the customer is most likely to buy and hence misses out on a great revenue generation opportunity.

By analysing the past behaviour, social media activities and online behaviour of the customers, the travel service firms can target the right cross-sell and up-sell opportunities and the right channel as well. For e.g. – If a customer always books

an aisle seat in the airplane, the next time he books an air ticket, the airline or the OTA can offer him pre-booking option for the aisle seat upfront.

5. Targeted marketing: Marketing ROI is a figure which often raises eyebrows in the boardrooms. A high ROI tops every marketer's wish list. Key techniques for a high ROI demonstrate a campaign intelligently targeted to a specific set of customers, executed at the right time and delivered through the right channel. Consider a scenario where Julie, searches TripAdvisor for customer reviews on Spain and accommodation. Being a heavy Facebook user, she checks out the Facebook page for Spain travel and tourism. Based on Julie's online activity, an airline posts an offer for a flight to Barcelona on Julie's Facebook profile page. It's obvious that the chances for Julie to click on that advertisement would be much higher than clicking a promotional offer for flights to Prague.

FROM DATA SILOS TO DATA VALUE

The following framework presents an ecosystem overview that shows how actionable insights can be derived out of big data. The table that follows contains examples of the sources of structured and unstructured data, technologies and products that can be used for the different stages in the big data ecosystem.

Source: Interglobe Technologies

Ecosystem Component	Source/Products/Technologies
Structured Data	CRM data, Reservation System, Call center logs, ERP, Website logs,
Unstructured Data	Social Media, Blogs, Location data, Browsing behavior, Mobile data, Website content, Enterprise data not recorded in CRM or ERP(e.g. marketing e-mail responses, survey results etc.), customer- employee interaction data, weather data, news, reviews etc.
Data Processing & Report generation (Technologies)	Hadoop (HDFS, Mapreduce), Cassandra, Hbase, Hive, Cognos, Hyperion
Big Data Analytics	R, Sas, SiSense, Mahout, Datameer
Actionable Output	Mondrian, JGraphX, mxGraph, JavaScript Inforvis, Excel



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Business travel's biggest generation: Millennials

An American Express Global Business Travel report on what drives the millennial business traveller

Over the last few years, the habits of the millennial generation have often been considered in isolation, not factoring the overall change of traveller behaviour, preferences, and the influence of technology. But the fact of the matter is that these so called “habits” are not just part of a gradual shift - they are the majority of the working population's predominant behaviours and norms right now. By the year 2020, millennials will make up more than half of the global workforce. And when it comes to travelling for work, they already account for the largest segment of business travellers, with one recent study stating that 38 per cent of millennials travel for work, compared with just 23 per cent and 8 per cent of Gen-Xers and baby boomers, respectively.

So what kind of change is millennial travel driving within the business travel industry?

TECH-CENTRIC TRAVEL HABITS

Millennials are the first generation to have their entire lives, or nearly so, so deeply influenced by digital technology. It's perhaps the generation's most defining feature: They're “digital natives”, having been living in a connected world filled with smartphones and laptops ever since they can remember. And when it comes to travel, digital technology plays a huge role.

The most important among these millennial travel trends is the fact that they're driving demand for mobile

capabilities. In the vast majority of cases, millennial travel is researched on mobile, and both flights and accommodations are booked on mobile. And, though the business travel industry lags leisure travel with mobile booking technology, it is certainly reacting to this growth in demand from millennial business travellers.

TRYING SOMETHING NEW

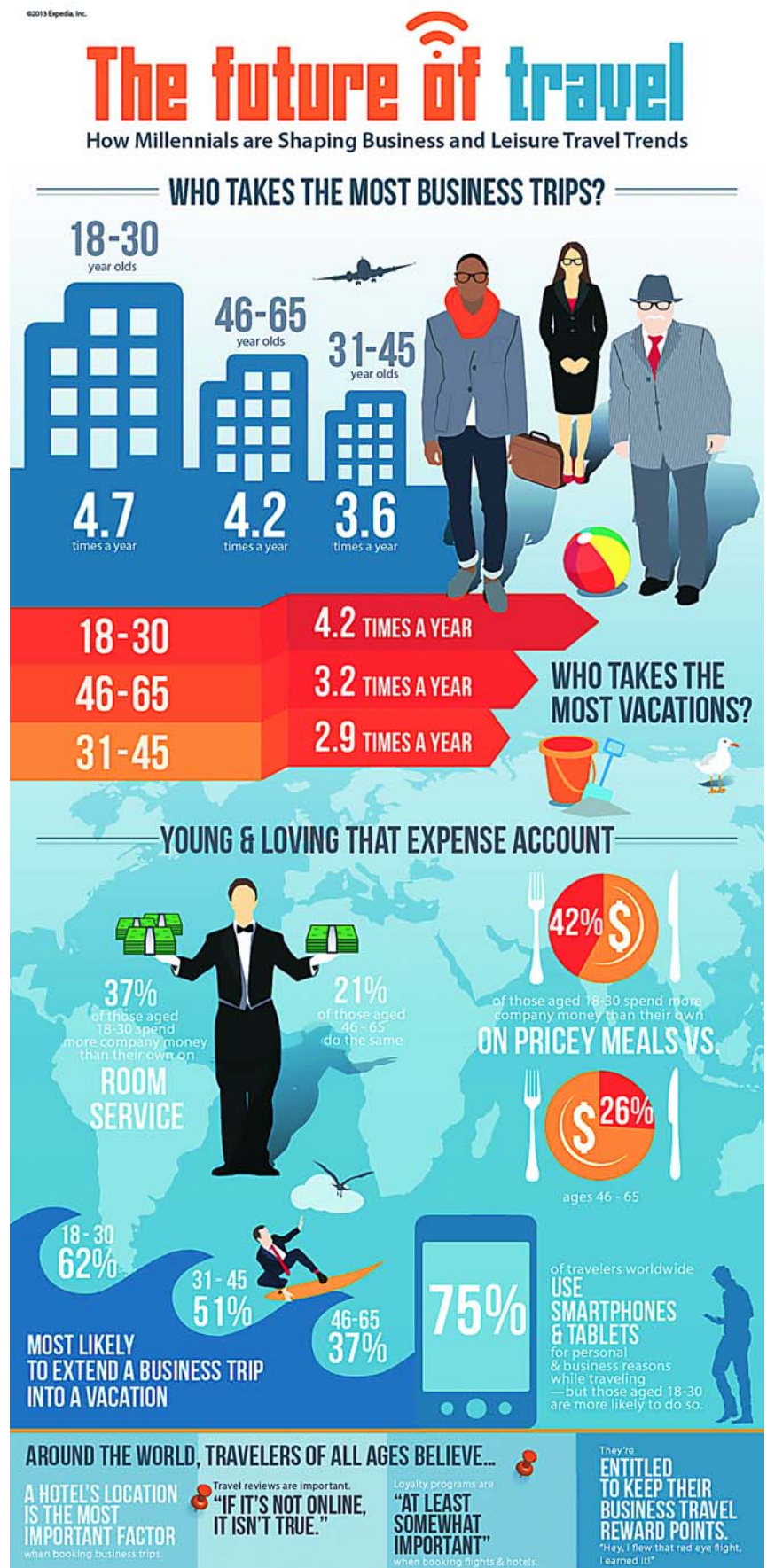
The growth and usage of mobile technology isn't just a millennial travel trend, it's also a key driver of other travel habits. Over the last few years, we've witnessed the sharing economy grow into an integral part of consumers' daily lives, blurring the lines between leisure and business travel services and accommodations. As it begins to bridge the

business travel gap, it's millennials who are most comfortable utilising these new services and technology. A survey of 1,650 travelers found that 74 per cent of millennial business travellers had stayed in a vacation rental, like those provided by Airbnb, while just 38 per cent and 20 per cent of Generation X and baby boomer travellers had, respectively. On top of that, 44 per cent of millennial travellers surveyed actually prefer staying in these types of share-economy accommodations. This preference that's forcing the hands of travel managers all over, bringing deeper integration into travel programmes for companies like Airbnb and Uber.

BUSINESS AND LEISURE

Millennial travel is driven by the idea that trips taken for either business or leisure - or both - should be based on the preference of the traveller. Driving satisfaction and delivering new, valuable experiences. One study suggests that 75 per cent of millennials are looking for travel experiences where they can learn something new. And these experiences should also be a part of business travel. The millennial travel trend that follows from these sentiments is the growth and prevalence of 'bleisure' travel among millennials who travel for business. A survey found that 55 per cent of millennial travelers were willing to extend a business trip for the sake of leisure travel. Many millennials are taking advantage of business trips to experience new places, and in doing so, it's just one more way that millennial travel habits are changing the face of business travel as we know it.

So what do these millennial travel trends mean for your travel programmes? In many ways, you may already be adapting to these different behaviours. Recognising that the improved traveller service and satisfaction desired by many millennial travellers can also lead to improved performance and compliance, travel managers have sought to use more traveler focused metrics, such as traveller net promoter score, or employee retention rates specific to your most frequent travelers, to measure the success of their programmes and to justify improvements to service. It's this interplay between traveler demand and your travel management's efforts to accommodate it will shape the future of business travel.





Passenger demand growth hits five-year peak in January

IATA figures show the strongest global passenger traffic increase in more than five years. India led domestic all markets in year-to-year growth for the 22nd month in a row

INTERNATIONAL PASSENGER MARKETS

JANUARY 2017 (% YEAR-ON-YEAR)	WORLD SHARE ¹	RPK	ASK	PLF (%-PT) ²	PLF (LEVEL) ³
Total Market	100%	9.6%	8.0%	1.2%	80.2%
Africa	2.2%	5.2%	3.9%	0.9%	70.1%
Asia Pacific	32.9%	14.3%	11.1%	2.2%	81.5%
Europe	26.4%	8.4%	7.0%	1.0%	79.4%
Latin America	5.2%	4.9%	3.7%	0.9%	83.2%
Middle East	9.6%	13.5%	11.2%	1.6%	79.4%
North America	23.7%	3.4%	4.1%	-0.5%	80%

(1) % of industry RPKs in 2016

(2) Year-on-year change in load factor

(3) Load factor level

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced global passenger traffic results for January 2017 showing demand (Revenue Passenger Kilometres or RPKs) rose 9.6 per cent compared to January 2016, the strongest increase in more than five years.

Results were positively affected by traffic associated with the Lunar New Year celebrations, which occurred in January this year, compared to February 2016. IATA estimates the holiday-related travel contributed up to one-half a percentage point in extra demand growth. January capacity rose 8 per cent, and load factor climbed 1.2 percentage points to 80.2 per cent.

"2017 is off to a very strong start, with demand at levels not seen since 2011. This is supported by the upturn in the global

economic cycle and a return to a more normal environment after the terrorism and political 'shock' events seen in early 2016," said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's Director General and CEO.

January's international passenger traffic surged 9.3 per cent compared to the year-ago period. Capacity rose 7.5 per cent and load factor climbed 1.3 percentage point to 80.3 per cent. All regions recorded year-over-year increases in demand led by the Middle East and Asia Pacific.

- Asia Pacific carriers recorded an increase of 10.9 per cent compared to January 2016, helped by the impact of Lunar New Year-related travel and solid growth on routes within Asia. Capacity rose 8.9 per cent, pushing up load factor 1.5 percentage points to 81.4 per cent.

- European carriers' international traffic climbed 8.3 per cent in January compared to the year-ago period against a backdrop of moderate momentum in the Eurozone economy. Capacity rose 6.7 per cent and load factor was up 1.2 percentage points to 80.3 per cent.

- Middle East carriers had the strongest year-over-year demand growth in January at 14.4 per cent. Capacity climbed 11.4 per cent and load factor rose against the year-ago period for a third consecutive month, up 2.1 percentage points to 79.8 per cent.

- North American airlines had the slowest demand growth, with traffic rising 3.2 per cent in January, compared to a year ago. Capacity climbed 3.1 per cent, and load factor

was flat at 80.3 per cent. Traffic on the transpacific market has continued to trend upwards but North Atlantic traffic growth has weakened since the middle of 2016, reflecting softer demand on UK-US routes.

- Latin American airlines' traffic climbed 8.2 per cent in January. Capacity rose 5.7 per cent and load factor increased 1.9 percentage points to 83.7 per cent, highest among the regions. Robust international demand within South America is offsetting weaker demand to North America.
- African airlines saw January traffic rise 5.6 per cent compared to January 2016. This reflects a recovery on the key routes to/from Europe, despite continuing weakness in South Africa and Nigeria. With capacity up 4.5 per cent, load factor rose 0.7 percentage point to 69.9 per cent.

DOMESTIC PASSENGER MARKETS

Domestic air travel climbed 9.9 per cent in January year-on-year. All markets except Brazil showed growth, paced by double-digit increases in China, India and Russia. Capacity increased 8.7 per cent and load factor was 80.1 per cent, up 0.9 percentage points.



India led domestic all markets in year-to-year growth for the 22nd month in a row; January 2017 traffic soared 26.6 per cent, marking the 15th consecutive month of 20 per cent-plus annual growth. Demand is being stimulated by strong flight frequency.

China's domestic traffic growth was not far behind, up 23.2 per cent compared to January 2016. This was the strongest monthly growth since June 2010. The timing of the Lunar New Year affected the results but ongoing robust expansion in the services sector as well as increasing flight frequency are boosting demand.

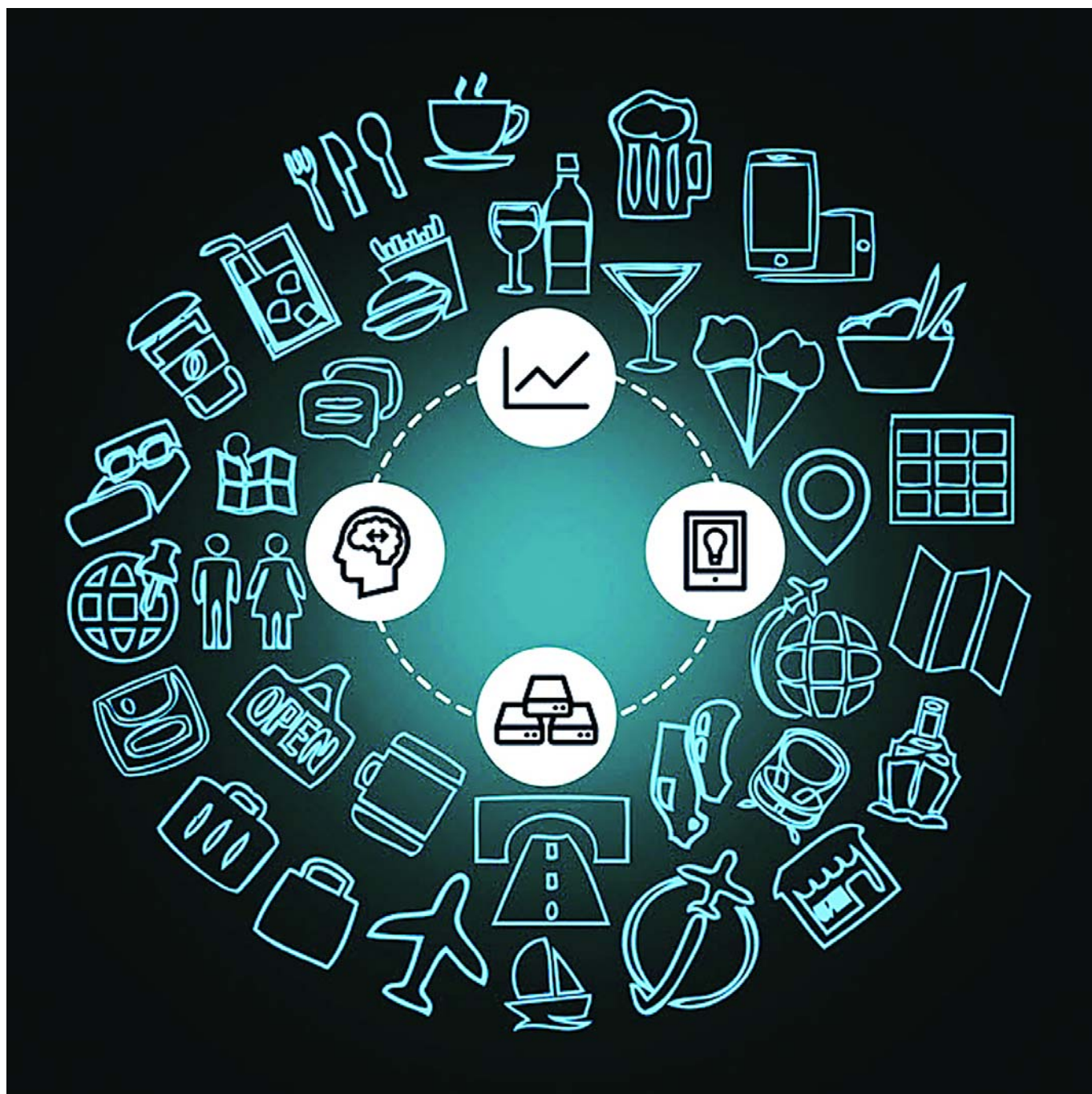
DOMESTIC PASSENGER MARKETS

JANUARY 2017 (% YEAR-ON-YEAR)	WORLD SHARE ¹	RPK	ASK	PLF (%-PT) ²	PLF (LEVEL) ³
Domestic	36.3%	9.9%	8.7%	0.9%	80.1%
Dom. Australia	1.0%	1.1%	-0.4%	1.2%	77.3%
Dom. Brazil	1.2%	-2.0%	-2.8%	0.7%	83.8%
Dom. China P.R.	8.7%	23.2%	18.5%	3.2%	83.2%
Dom. India	1.3%	26.6%	20.9%	3.9%	88.2%
Dom. Japan	1.1%	3.5%	1.3%	1.4%	65.2%
Dom. Russian Fed	1.3%	15.4%	16.6%	-0.7%	71.6%
Dom. USA	14.9%	3.5%	4.7%	-0.9%	80%

(1) % of industry RPKs in 2016
(2) Year-on-year change in load factor
(3) Load factor level

2017: What to expect

A combination of forces, including shifts in the global economy, game-changing innovation, geopolitical turmoil, natural disasters, pandemics, and rising consumer demands reshaped the travel landscape in 2016. Expect a similar climate in 2017, says the Deloitte 2017 travel and hospitality industry outlook



Most smart travel companies have come to accept this frenetic pace of disruption as the norm and must try to remain vigilant, as the winners in 2017 will likely be those most responsive to change.

NAVIGATING THE TECHNOLOGY PARADOX

Over the past few years, millions of dollars have been spent upgrading properties with tablet kiosks, assuming hotel guests would prefer a digital check-in experience. After all, digital kiosks have been a huge hit for airlines. However, in many hotels, newly installed kiosks went largely unused. Hoteliers failed to consider that guests might still value the opportunity to interact with staff to talk through the details of their stay - and possibly bargain for a suite upgrade. In the end, app-based mobile check-in proliferated, making hotel tablet kiosks virtually obsolete.

This is an important lesson for the travel industry. 2017 should be the year travel companies think beyond the 'what' of technology innovation and proliferation - the shiny devices, applications, and capabilities - and understand what technologies consumers are ready to adopt, and what experiences will drive real value. Travel companies must first envision the customer experience they want to deliver. Then, they can explore the technology options best suited to support their goals. Companies should resist the urge to invest in new technology simply because it seems innovative.

Making the right technology plays, however, will only become more difficult in the years ahead. From augmented and virtual reality to the Internet of Things (IoT), the promise of emerging technology has never been greater. What is poised to transform the travel experience in 2017 - and what technology is still mostly hype?

TRAVELLERS WILL FEEL THE TRUE POWER OF MOBILE IN 2017

2017 will be the year when travellers experience what mobile truly has to offer. Until now, travel suppliers such as hotels and airlines have tested the waters with basic functionality - including flight and hotel check-ins, boarding passes, itinerary updates, and shopping and booking

Delta Air Lines latest app upgrade enables flyers to track their bags using radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology. In reality, the number of flyers who lose their bags is actually quite small - but this is irrelevant. The underlying offer is peace of mind, and in this case, Delta Air Lines successfully leveraged technology to remove an existing pain point in the flying experience

capability. A confluence of technologies, including faster processing power, cloud computing, and IoT will come together to push the mobile channel to the next level - removing existing pain points from travel and improving the overall trip experience in the process.

Delta Air Lines emerged as a mobile leader late in 2016. The airline's latest app upgrade enables flyers to track their bags using radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology. In reality, the number of flyers who lose their bags is actually quite small - but this is irrelevant. The underlying offer is peace of mind, and in this case, Delta Air Lines successfully leveraged technology to remove an existing pain point in the flying experience. Travellers who fly with the carrier no longer have to wonder if their bags will meet them at their destination. This experience can make a difference the next time a Delta Air Lines flyer needs to choose between two carriers for their next flight.

In 2017, hoteliers will leverage the power of mobile to take the on property experience to the next level. For example, Virgin's hotel app 'Lucy' provides some visibility as to where things may be headed. Branded the app that 'Makes Things Happen', Lucy enables guests to control the temperature of their room, order room service, book spa appointments, and even text with hotel staff and other guests. 2017 may be the year when functionality like this loses its "wow" factor and becomes the norm. Hotels should seriously contemplate

the implications of falling behind during this next wave of mobile transformation.

MACHINES COME OF AGE

By machines, we do not mean robots that deliver towels to your hotel room (even though that is a reality in some hotels today). Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are reaching a new level of maturity and are poised to transform how consumers plan travel, as well as offer travel businesses a way to slash operating costs.

At a high level, AI is software built to think like a human - and it is at an evolutionary tipping point. Consumers already encounter elements of AI in their daily life in the form of complex yet overlooked functionality, such as texting autocorrect and product recommendations. Tech giants such as Google, Apple and Amazon are all heavily engaged in an AI arms race, which will likely push the technology into the consumer market at groundbreaking speed in 2017.

VIRTUAL TRAVEL AGENTS MAY BE CLOSER THAN WE THINK

So far, the most popular use case for consumer-facing AI within travel is virtual assistants and chat bots, which are typically embedded in messaging platforms. The vision of dozens of hopeful startups (and established industry players) is to remove some of the friction in online travel planning and booking, allowing consumers to text with virtual travel agents rather than visiting dozens of different travel websites. While virtual assistants are not new in travel, ones that become smarter as they interact with users are on the rise. The concept is forward-thinking - and represents a dramatic shift away from traditional online travel planning. But the vision may have a fundamental flaw: Are travellers ready to trust robots to recommend and book the perfect vacation at the best price? The question may sound a bit futuristic, but companies seem to be investing in technology without considering this critical point.

For 2017, AI holds the most promise for streamlining business processes and reducing operating costs. Airlines have moved past the experimentation phase



with machine learning to implementing it. EasyJet is using AI to better stock its planes with food and beverages prior to takeoff. A smaller branch of AI, robotic process automation (RPA), applies principles of AI to help increase efficiencies of enterprise applications such as customer relationship management (CRM) and supply chain management. Overall, throughout 2017, travel companies should be aiming AI at low-hanging fruit by implementing it to automate tedious customer service tasks such as reservation switches and cancellations.

SENSORS SHAPE THE TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Imagine a groggy business traveller arriving at a hotel after a long, sleepless, red-eye flight. Upon entering the lobby, the traveller's smartphone communicates with the hotel's property management system (PMS) and automates check-in. The PMS then sends a digital alert to the closest member of hotel staff to greet the guest by name and help with luggage. When the traveller approaches his room, the door automatically unlocks and the lighting, temperature, and entertainment settings automatically adjust to the traveller's preferences. After ordering room service, a connected dining tray senses the guest is finished eating, and alerts housekeeping for pick-up. It's no surprise that this traveller books with this hotel often because they find the experience to be exceptional.

These technological capabilities are enabled by IoT, a system in which sensors are embedded in objects linked through wired and wireless networks - not only via the Internet, but also through Bluetooth, near-field communications, cellular, and Wi-Fi. While the technology to facilitate these experiences has existed for quite some time, we are on the cusp of an explosion in the adoption of IoT due to the proliferation of connected devices and because costs and technological barriers are coming down.

THE PROMISE OF IoT

The promise of IoT goes beyond the customer experience. Hoteliers, airlines, and other travel companies can also leverage connected sensors to improve operational efficiencies such as energy and water consumption. Additionally, once enough sensors are in place, the integration

of advanced analytics and machine learning will propel the IoT platform to an entirely new level some are calling 'Cognitive IoT', which bridges the gap between virtual and physical, creating environments that learn and adapt to customer behaviour in real time. It may be a while until the travel industry reaches that level of sophistication, but the wheels are certainly in motion. IoT is scaling quickly - particularly in hospitality and retail, where machine-to-machine connections grew by 88 per cent in 2014.

While the future of IoT looks very promising, many travel companies are embracing the technology with some calculated caution. As with any leading-edge technology, hurdles exist. For hoteliers, developing a holistic and impactful IoT strategy will likely to be a challenging endeavour with many things to consider, such as deciding what functionality to aim at first, picking the right hardware and technology vendors, and coordinating a plan to retrofit existing properties. This could be particularly challenging for large hotel chains with multiple different owners, which should strive to synchronise implementation across properties to help ensure travellers have a consistent brand experience. Cyber security should also remain top-of-mind, as more connections create more vulnerability.

2017 MAY PROVE THAT THE GROUND TRANSPORTATION BATTLE IS FAR FROM OVER

Few industries have felt the impact of enabling technology like ground transportation. Within this segment, rising technology stars are challenging established industry incumbents for a

dominant position in the marketplace. 2017 will be a pivotal year where ground transportation players have something to prove.

Late in 2016, ridesharing receipts exceeded traditional ground transportation for the first time ever among business travellers. While this might lead many to believe that ridesharing is now the standard, the space remains open to competition. The ridesharing economic model is a complex balance that connects a healthy supply of non-contract, transient labour looking for the highest wage with demand from consumers looking for the lowest fare. Inevitably, ridesharing companies continue to battle for the long-term sustainability of the economic model while still navigating a complex regulatory environment involving labour and public safety.

While ridesharing brands have certainly established a strong foothold in ground transportation, do not expect former incumbents like rental car and taxi cab companies to continue on without a fight. They continue to implement technology at key pain-points, in an attempt to win back customers who have new expectations of what ground travel feels like. Overall, these dynamics set up 2017 as a year when ground transportation tackles a pivotal question with sector-wide relevancy, "Can a lowcost customer experience be a profitable business for all?"

CONCEPTUALISE YOUR BRAND AS A PLATFORM AND SEEK NEW AVENUES TO SCALE

Finally, in 2017, we urge travel companies to conceptualise their brands as platforms for new opportunity and growth. Travel is fragmented across many micro-experiences. For example, during a single trip, a traveller may transact with a variety of suppliers and businesses - including hotels and private accommodations, airlines, cruise ships, and multiple modes of ground transportation.

And don't forget destination activities and shopping. Most travel companies operate in just one (or maybe a few) of these verticals. With organic growth hard to come by in a consolidated and mature domestic market, travel brands must realise the benefits of scaling across

These technological capabilities are enabled by IoT, a system in which sensors are embedded in objects linked through wired and wireless networks - not only via the Internet, but also through Bluetooth, near-field communications, cellular and Wi-Fi



Internet of Things (IoT)

the travel experience - rather than only trying to grow within their vertical. While Airbnb has enjoyed phenomenal growth in the rental space, the private accommodation pioneer realised that technology that connects renters with local hosts is a perfect platform for selling nearby destination experiences. Airbnb users can now book private accommodations, as well as destination activities using the new “trips” feature. Airbnb not only opened up a new revenue stream, it now has greater visibility into the customer travel journey and a better understanding of its users’ preferences and behaviour.

Casinos are another example of a segment that stands to benefit greatly by embracing a “more is better” paradigm. In Las Vegas, sustaining gambling

revenue is proving to be a challenge - even for the strip’s premier properties. A shift towards online gambling options and fantasy sports is a likely driver. For major players in gaming, attracting visitors may require a complete rebranding of the casino experience, where traditional attractions like slot machines and table games share more of the limelight with other entertainment culture elements such as high-end restaurants, nightclubs, and shows.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WILL DRIVE MORE LOYALTY THAN POINTS AND MILES

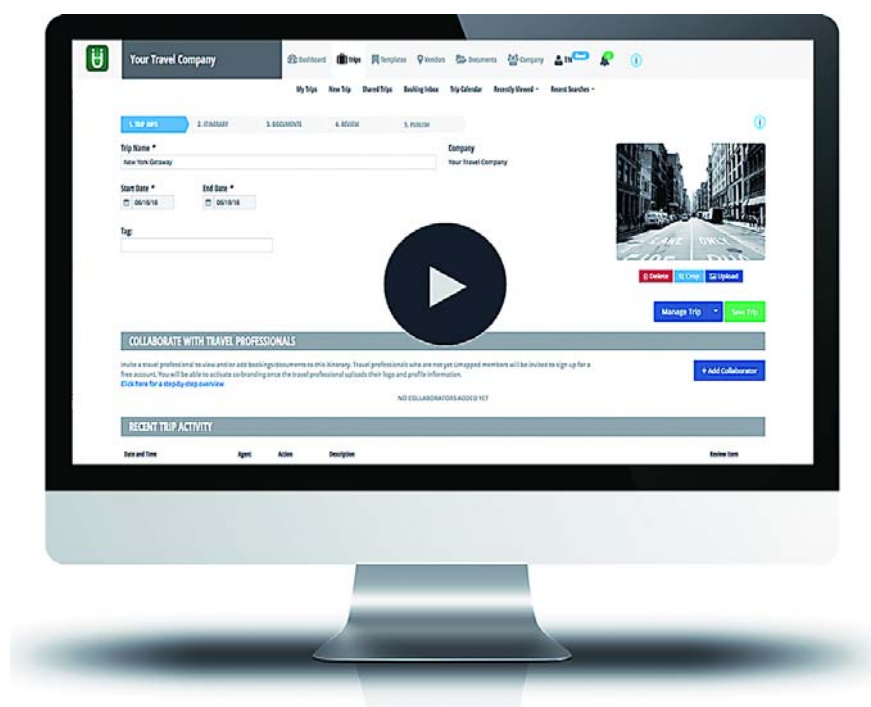
Expect healthy M&A activity and strategic partnerships throughout 2017 as travel companies continue to expand their offerings across the customer travel journey. Priceline’s acquisition of

OpenTable, is a clue that suggests travel companies are growing more willing to venture outside their comfort zones to provide travellers a more a more holistic offering. In this vein, hoteliers should reimagine the hotel experience to include strategic partnerships with retailers, restaurants, and local events and activities.

For years, travel suppliers have been trying to crack consumer loyalty by offering intricate programmes and schemes. 2017 calls for a shift in thinking to make customer experience paramount. Over the next 12 months, travel companies should leverage an increased awareness of customer expectations, re-imagined technology strategy, and differentiated offerings to provide unmatched travel experiences. Loyalty will follow.

Time for collaborative itinerary management

For travel agents, collaborative itinerary management can result in enhanced traveller engagement and also add to the revenue



Traveller engagement is no longer a series of one-off transactions—it's an ongoing dialogue and experience. Consumers today want to interact virtually with products and brands in multiple ways. Social media content and conversations with friends and influencers is one of the first places people go for travel planning. Smartphones and connected devices have opened the floodgate for businesses to be more in touch with their customers than ever before. (It is estimated that in 2016 there were more than 10 billion mobile devices surpassing the human population). The prevalence of mobile along with new apps like Google Trips have quickly made mobile itineraries a must have for travel brands.

For some travel brands, taking on the demanding, modern-day, tech-savvy

traveller is a daunting proposition. But it doesn't have to be. Consumers can reach out to a business through any channel and receive a response that meets their immediate, personal need. By connecting the “data dots,” travel brands can enhance customer service by helping customers discover relevant content and trip options that match their trip objectives and preferences. When data is used to its fullest, it reveals powerful insights, enabling brands to evolve from campaigns and transactional approaches to an authentic dialogue to push out content and messaging that encourages interaction.

The shift from static email confirmations to real-time “living itineraries” with visual and interactive experiences is fundamental to staying engaged with customers before, during

and after a trip. While customer engagement is often the top objective for companies considering itinerary solutions, Umapped collaborative itinerary management products also translate to measurable productivity improvements and incremental revenue.

Productivity improvements are made possible by automating the consolidation of bookings and content from multiple data points and layering in real-time communication and collaboration tools. Integrations with CRM, GDS and other itinerary sources add up to significant time-savings.

The combination of itinerary and customer data gives travelers relevant travel services that are embedded and bookable in their online itinerary with a single click. Hotels, local transit,

MOBILE IS TRANSFORMING HOW TRAVEL BRANDS AND ADVISORS ARE ENGAGING WITH THEIR CUSTOMERS



restaurants, and activities can generate commissions between \$2 and \$50 per booking. Of course, only a percentage of consumers will complete such bookings, but the average incremental revenue across all customers should generate incremental revenue of about two to three dollars on every trip you sell.

As people travel for leisure or business, they are seeking the greatest experiences while avoiding as much hassle as possible. Umapped helps travel and hospitality brands become more agile and responsive to consumer signals, activating profitable and engaging relationships at all stages along the travel journey. If you are easily accessible to your customers, you can save money, generate incremental revenue, and build stronger brand appreciation. The collaborative nature of Umapped lets travellers connect to

Available as a white label and API solution, Umapped helps leading global brands and travel advisors engage with their customers throughout their travel journey by delivering interactive, media-rich consolidated mobile itineraries with relevant offers, content, messaging and advice

their social channels, making your customers' experience with mobile itineraries more genuine and personalized beyond just their itinerary logistics.

Umapped is the award-winning collaborative B2B2C itinerary and experience platform for the travel industry. Available as a white label and API solution, Umapped helps leading global brands and travel advisors engage with their customers throughout their travel journey by delivering interactive, media-rich consolidated mobile itineraries with relevant offers, content, messaging and advice. The platform also maximises productivity and streamlines business workflow. With the Umapped API, developers can easily incorporate the unique functionality as part of their own applications and solutions.



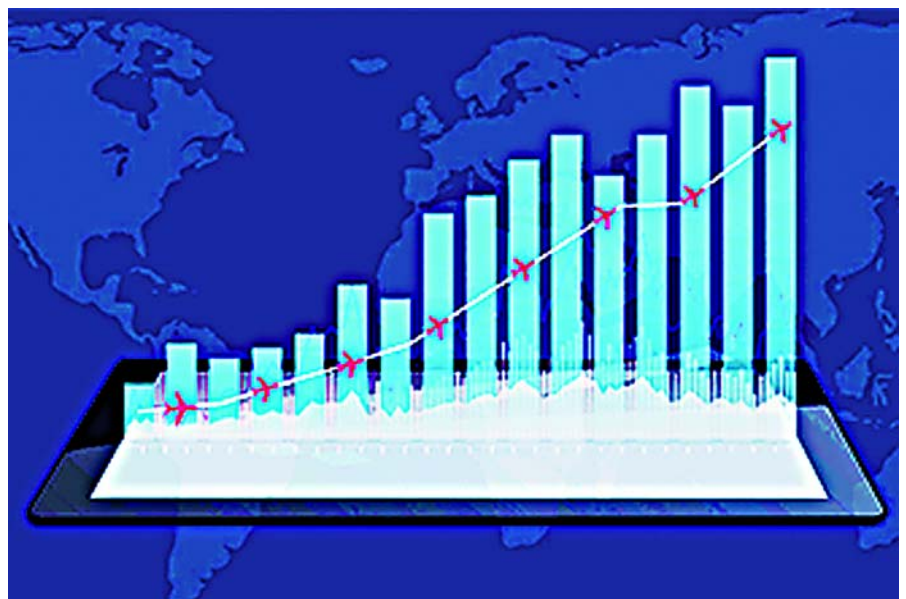
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- Share content - including tables and charts - via email or social networks, or use it for your own analysis.



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Technology and Digital Borders

Technology can make borders digital, rather than physical - but still be secure, says a new study

A fundamental rethink of the way travellers move across borders will be needed if a balance is to be struck between satisfying ballooning demand for international travel with the need to improve the integrity of border security. That is the conclusion of a new study, *Digital Borders: Enabling a secure, seamless and personalised journey*, published recently by the World Economic Forum. By 2030, a global population of 8.5 billion people will be taking nearly 2 billion international trips, and a forecasted 86 million new tourism-related jobs will be created by 2026. Enhanced digital screening will enable the travel and tourism sector to continue to be a major driving force for economic growth and jobs around the world.

The study highlights seven areas that need to be addressed and advanced to plan for the future of travel:

1. Increase intelligence and data sharing, particularly secure, routine and harmonised intelligence and data sharing between sovereign national governments and international security actors on international travellers. While significant efforts to date have been undertaken to improve regular and timely information sharing, additional cooperation and collaboration are needed in protected data sharing among the various agencies of governments, international organisations and the travellers themselves.

2. Provide advance passenger information, driving forward the UN Security Council Resolution 2309 (2016) that urges countries to "Require that airlines operating in their territories provide advance passenger information to the appropriate national authorities to

detect the departure from their territories, or attempted entry into or transit through their territories, by means of civil aircraft, of individuals designated by the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015)".

3. Make the traveller part of the solution through biometric profiling and other technology-enabled solutions. Looking to the future, national administrations should reconsider the role of the traveller in the travel security process and create an opportunity for travellers to own their qualified digital biometric profile and grant them the ability to push this secure accredited identification data in advance to facilitate travel. Traveller participation will enable the wider use of pre-clearance and will make international border crossings more efficient.

4. Use ICAO-approved enhanced and harmonised biometric standards. International organisations have established harmonised and routine

sharing of traveller data, including biometrics for identity verification and travel eligibility, which have improved security and facilitated international travel and commerce between partner countries. To further this, national governments need to implement the international standards established by ICAO and assist emerging economies in implementing them.

5. Expand multilateral agreements. Based on the success of bilateral agreements to date and on the current state of international security, governments should aim to expand established agreements to multilateral application. These extended agreements should incorporate the harmonised requirements for traveller data collected.

6. Aim for a single application and a single fee. Many countries currently collect country-specific applications, with varying information requirements and separate application fees for travel security programmes. For multi-country implementation, there should be a single application to electronic travel systems with harmonised security requirements and a single cost-based fee with appropriate revenue sharing between participating governments.

7. Move to a digital process. Over time, the entire process of border management used by most travellers could be a wholly automated, electronic platform, built on verified biometric data. Evidence is clear that e-visas do not undermine security; they facilitate border crossings for many travellers, reduce paperwork and allow public safety officials to direct more attention and resources to threat identification.

For multi-country implementation, there should be a single application to electronic travel systems with harmonised security requirements and a single cost-based fee with appropriate revenue sharing between participating governments



Chronic stress is linked to obesity

People who suffer long-term stress may also be more prone to obesity, a new study has warned

People who suffer long-term stress may also be more prone to obesity, a new study has warned. Researchers at University College London (UCL) in the UK examined hair samples for levels of cortisol, a hormone which regulates the body's response to stress. The study showed that exposure to higher levels of cortisol over several months is associated with people being more heavily, and more persistently, overweight. Chronic stress has long been hypothesised to be implicated in obesity – people tend to report overeating and 'comfort eating' foods high in fat, sugar and calories in times of stress, and the stress hormone cortisol plays an important role in metabolism and determining where fat is stored.

The research involved 2,527 men and women aged 54 and older taking part in the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, taking data over a four-year period. In the research, the scientists took a lock of hair 2cm long from each participant which was cut as close possible to a person's

scalp – this represented about two months' hair growth with associated accumulated levels of cortisol. They also examined the participants' weight, body mass index and waist circumference and how hair cortisol related to the persistence of obesity over time. They found that people who had higher levels of cortisol present in their hair tended to have larger waist circumference

Chronic stress has long been hypothesised to be implicated in obesity – people tend to report overeating and 'comfort eating' foods high in fat, sugar and calories in times of stress, and the stress hormone cortisol plays an important role in metabolism

measurements, were heavier and had a higher body mass index (BMI). Individuals classified as obese on the basis of their BMI (30) or waist circumference (102 cm in men, 88 cm in women) had particularly high levels of hair cortisol. "These results provide consistent evidence that chronic stress is associated with higher levels of obesity," said Dr Sarah Jackson, who led the research.

"People who had higher hair cortisol levels also tended to have larger waist measurements, which is important because carrying excess fat around the abdomen is a risk factor for heart disease, diabetes, and premature death," said Jackson. "Hair cortisol is a relatively new measure which offers a suitable and easily obtainable method for assessing chronically high levels of cortisol concentrations in weight research and may therefore aid in further advancing understanding in this area," she added. The research was published in the journal Obesity. (PTI)

How Instagram is helping people cope with depression

Some Instagram users are using pictures to help explain the feelings and experiences that are often too painful or complicated to put into words, according to research

While the fear of being stigmatised prevents many of us from making sensitive self-disclosures, one way people in pain are overcoming silence is by using the photo-sharing app Instagram, a study says. “We wanted to see how people might behave differently on a more image-centric platform, rather than one that is driven solely by textual posts and comments,” said Nazanin Andalibi, a researcher from Drexel University in Philadelphia, US. “Physical or mental health and body image concerns are stigmatised, rarely disclosed and frequently elicit negative responses when shared with others,” the study authors said.

“We found that these disclosures, in addition to deep and detailed stories of one’s difficult experiences, attract positive social support on Instagram,” the study said. The researchers examined the responses to a sample of 800 Instagram posts pulled from more than 95,000 photos tagged with “#depression” that were posted by 24,920 unique users over the course of a month.

The findings showed that not only are people using Instagram to make sensitive disclosures, but they are also getting mostly positive support from the people who respond to the posts, and little in the way of negative or aggressive comments. Some users view Instagram as a safe medium for sharing sensitive information about themselves and reaching out for help, the study said.

The findings were presented at the Association for Computing Machinery’s



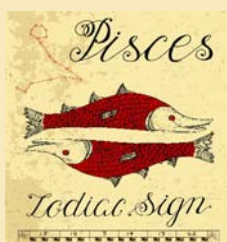
International Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing held in Portland, Oregon, US. Perhaps in a nod of acknowledgement to the fact that this community exists on the site, Instagram

recently rolled out a suicide prevention tool that allows users to alert operators when they think someone might be in serious trouble. The operators are able to provide help or connect users with the information they need to find it.

While this is a step in the right direction, according to Andalibi, it is only the first of many that need to be taken to truly reach these communities of users. “Social media platforms like Instagram, that people have adopted to connect with ‘similar others’ to share their difficult experiences, and seek and provide support, should explore ways to facilitate safe and supportive connections,” Andalibi stated. (ANI)



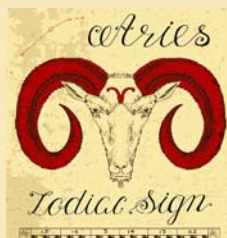
Trust your intuition and serve others, the universe will return your favours manifold, is the message from Angel Tarot and Oracle Cards for April and May 2017. By Sudipta Dev



PISCES

The near future will see you standing up to your beliefs. You know what is right and this is your greatest strength. Those mourning a broken relationship should release the past and look ahead with optimism.

Exercise or do yoga, and if possible consult a nutritionist. You have a strong connect with nature and your life purpose involves protecting Mother Earth.



ARIES

Your ego has withheld you in the past from happiness. Things are changing for the better as you focus on your creativity and get rewarded for hard work. Pray for your health, you might witness miraculous recover. Trust

your instincts – you have met your soulmate. Nurture your intuition for spiritual growth.



TAURUS

This might be the best time for your emotional side of life. You could get a wedding proposal or fall in love. However be pragmatic about balancing your emotions. Those who are married should let go of

control issues. If you have made organic food your choice, this is the right way to go.



GEMINI

Believe in your self and your innate self confidence, and do not hesitate to take initiatives that you feel is the right thing for you to do. The feeling of entrapment that you are feeling now is an illusion. In your

romantic life someone is not being his / her true self – either your partner or you. Be more open. For optimal health take precautions against allergens. Attending workshops and seminars on spiritual subjects will guide you to your life purpose.



CANCER

There is a celebration in the family – it could be a wedding, a promotion, admission in a coveted university or a birth. Go a bit easy on life, lighten your attitude towards people. Emotionally you might be

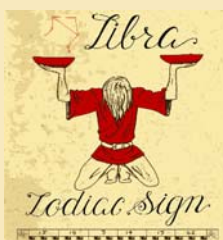
attracted to someone, it might be a magnetic attraction. You might take an interest in alternative medicines including energy healing. Any emotional scars you have related to your parents can be healed with forgiveness.



LEO

You have received or are about to receive an important contract, document or wealth from an investment as a gift. Accept this with gratitude. Your love life will get sorted soon. In terms of health issue

expect a sudden recovery. Pray to God to protect yourself from fear-based energies. Shield yourself by envisioning you are covered in white light.



LIBRA

Your inability to take decisions easily might be a handicap in this phase of your life. Please do not shove your problems under the carpet, it has to be dealt with firmly. You might have faced unrequited love in the

past, but now be optimistic about the future, and think positively. Go to a naturopathy centre or an Ayurvedic resort and try a detoxification diet. Be open to messages you receive repeatedly from different sources, it is the guidance from your higher self.



VIRGO

A lot of things are happening in your life rather quickly. Take a grip with creative solutions to tackle the changes to ensure your success in every aspect of life. In love it is time to take control of

your life – the romance angels tell you. You have received all the information you need for your health and wellness, accept it with gratitude. You can manifest desired outcome through your spiritual focus.



SCORPIO

You are highly intuitive. Listen to your intuition before taking any decision in your career or personal life. In matters of love / marriage do not hesitate to seek help from your friends. Pray to reduce your craving

for unhealthy substances. You need to tackle your addictions which are blocking you from getting desired outcomes.



CAPRICORN

Be ready for good news regarding money. You might want to take a new course to learn new skills. Be more independent in your married / love life, do not give in to a controlling partner/situation. Forgive

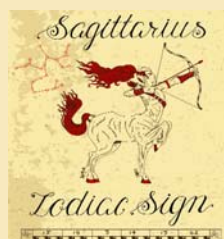
those who you feel have hurt you, this will bring you healing and peace. Adopt a vegan/vegetarian diet for elevating your spiritual life.



AQUARIUS

Be careful about money matters – ensure that neither are you spending too much nor being stingy. Balance your give and take equation for karmic equilibrium. Donate to the needy. Forgive any

unwanted pain in matters of the heart. Your emotional sensitive nature is an asset in your spiritual life.



SAGITTARIUS

You will get recognition for your high quality of work. However, it is important for you to be a team player. Forgive the past to become rooted in the happiness of your present life. Your health will be fine, so let go

of any concerns. God and the angels ask you to continue speaking the truth that you always have, with love.



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Benefits of TAAI Membership

- Your company is no more a stand-alone one in our endeavour to strengthen Principal-Agency relationship.

- IATA matters – TAAI is on board of APJC and actively deliberates on behalf of travel agencies on all policy matters concerning day-to-day business activity. TAAI is in active relationship with IATA and helps formulate industry policies including training, settlement matters, accreditation policies, joint bank guarantee towards financial security, etc.

- TAAI is actively involved with United Federation of Travel Agents Associations (UFTAA). UFTAA is represented on PAPGJC (Passenger Agency Program Global Joint Council) where association matters pertaining to governing resolutions by IATA are taken forward.

- Through its programs TAAI helps promote highest standard of professionalism and ethics among

members in their dealing with the public and among each other.

- TAAI offers numerous opportunities in training, skill development and tourism certification including destination education – for owners, managers, frontline staff and all those who have chosen travel and tourism as their career.

- TAAI is active in updating members on evolving visa formalities and maintains a closer connect with embassies, high commissions & consulates in fostering learning.

- TAAI offers B2B opportunities through jointly held road shows and familiarisation trips in cooperation with Tourism Boards and National Tourism Organisations, through active networking at Conventions and through several events including active partnership and support status with trade exhibition organisers.

- TAAI's annual convention, popular as 'The Indian Travel Congress' is an excellent opportunity for members to take home updates and learning through our business sessions, strong networking, interaction opportunities with overseas Destination Management Companies and invaluable connectivity that supports greater success in business.

- TAAI works closely with Government of India Tourism Offices and State Tourism Boards and is active in events/meetings organised to further the promotion of Indian tourism globally. TAAI is invited for 'Hotel Classification' and 'Airport Advisory'. TAAI also endeavours to closely work with Ministry of Civil Aviation, on aviation matters.

- There are more areas through which any industry stakeholder can immensely benefit by becoming a member of TAAI and join this most prestigious forum.

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Over 4,000 copies of TAAI's NAMASTAAI will be sent to key leaders of our Travel and Tourism industry, besides TAAI members.

Our reach includes Travel Agencies, Tour Operators (Domestic, Inbound & Outbound), National Tourism Boards, Airlines, Hotels, Excursion Agencies, Government Tourist Offices, GDS companies, Travel & Tourism Educational Institutes, Industry leaders in Government and Media.

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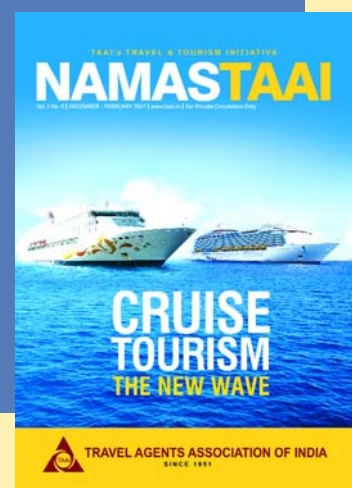
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Also attach your recent photograph, name, designation and company.

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