

Indian weddings mean serious business



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editorial

Dear Reader,

Globally, the Indian wedding industry is already pegged at ₹3000-5000 crore, growing at a pace of over 40 per cent annually. Whether it's an elite and exclusive wedding or the big fat Indian wedding, this segment only speaks big business. The wedding industry of India is a recession-proof and resilient industry, with organisers continuously innovating to leave guests awestruck. In our cover story, we zero-in on the latest trends in the wedding business from wedding planners, MICE agents, hoteliers, and vendors. Also, in our guest column, Birju C Gariba, CEO and Executive Director, Platinum World Group, elaborates on the nuances of planning weddings at a grand scale, while making them special for the bride and groom.

Another segment that is making waves is that of weddings on cruise ships. While the idea of cruising itself is still struggling to get the Indian holidaymaker's attention, history has shown that the people of the country are keen on more adventurous setups when it comes to weddings. Purely based on this quirkiness, perhaps weddings on cruise liners may just bode well with the Indian market. Also, cruise weddings offer better profits for agents while providing to be a novel experience for guests and the couple alike.

The UN World Economic Situation and Prospects' revised report for mid-2017 projects a downward revision of growth for India from 7.7 per cent to 7.3 per cent. In our mid-year review, MICE agents tell us how the first half of 2017 has been for them. With a magical 'brag factor' and aspirational value, international MICE trips continue to be a great motivator for employees and dealers. The most popular destinations among Indians still seem to be Dubai and the Far East mainly Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore.

In an interview, Sabbas Joseph, President, Event and Entertainment Management Association of India (EEMA), talks about the evolution of the events industry and how it relies a great deal on technology. With use of technology gaining momentum, interactive sessions have become imperative, and 3D experiences have also now gone beyond touch and feel. Finally, our counsellor Shivani Misri Sadhoo shares tips on how today's business era is initiating CSR and winning the hearts of employees while gaining the status of being the best workplace for them.

Keep reading and giving your feedback to us at: micetalk@ddppl.com



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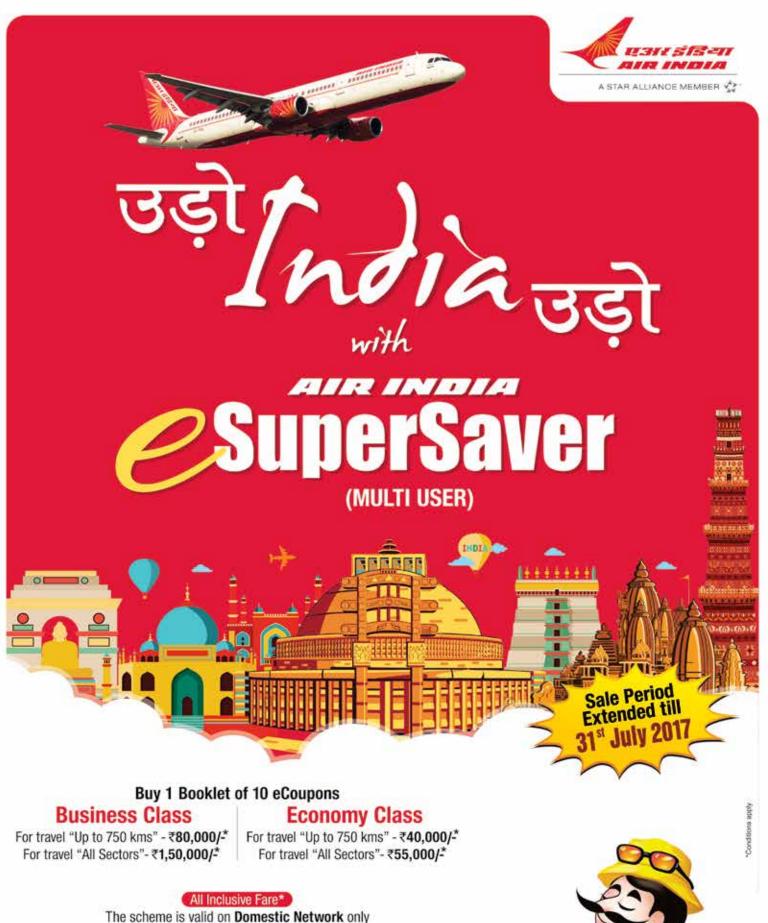


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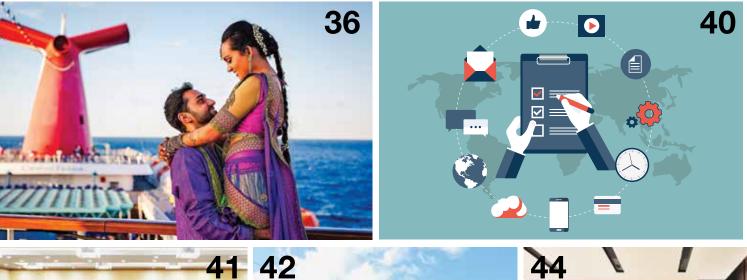
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EXPERT

Our counsellor, Shivani Misri Sadhoo, on how today's **48** business era is initiating CSR and winning the hearts of employees





Cover by: Raashi Ajmani Girdhar

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33% growth in Indian arrivals to Canada

Canada saw a growth of 33 per cent in Indian arrivals for the month of March this year. The remarkable number of Indian tourists who sojourned in Canada has reiterated that the country is an all-year-round destination and the 150th year celebrations will continue to lure Indians through the year. Pooja Sabharwal, Account Director, Destination Canada – India, said, "This manifold rise in arrival figures shows that all the diverse offerings of Canada are being extensively explored by Indian travellers. There has been a sharp increase in leisure trips to Canada from India owing to the increased disposable income amongst middle and affluent-class travellers."

SOUTHEASTASIA Thailand ranks 24th for MICE: ICCA

The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) has put Thailand on the 24th position in the world's association meeting destination list, up from the 27th of last year. Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya, Acting President, TCEB, said, "There are some exceptionally large events coming to Thailand such as THAIFEX - World of Food Asia that is expected to draw 70,000 people in early June. Last month, Thailand was host to Intermatch for 31,000 people and Infinitus for 8000 people." An initial survey indicates that during the period from June to December, about 360 events are being organised in Thailand.



ASIA-PACIFIC

PATA Travel Mart 2018 in Langkawi

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Langkawi is the venue for PATA Travel Mart 2018 (PTM 2018). The signature Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) event is being hosted by Tourism Malaysia and Langkawi Development Authority. The announcement was made by the Association's CEO, Dr. Mario Hardy, during the PATA Annual Summit in Negombo, Sri Lanka, on May 21. Dr. Hardy said, "Tourism Malaysia and Langkawi Development Authority have been valuable PATA members and partners since 1959 and 2017, respectively, and we look forward to the opportunity of showcasing the culture, heritage, and beauty of Langkawi. Delegates to PTM 2018 will experience one of Asia's most remarkable and attractive destinations."





ASIA-PACIFIC World MICE Day 2017 from Oct 25–27 in China

■ World MICE Day 2017 will be held during October 25-27, 2017, in Qingdao, China. The event is an initiative of the Qingdao government and CCPIT-Qingdao Sub Council, BIT Congress. The theme chosen for the maiden edition is 'Boosting Silk Road Meeting Industry'. At the three-day extravaganza, 400 domestic and overseas hosted buyers and over 2000 visitors are expected to check-in, with 150-200 sellers and exhibitors.



NORTH INDIA

Aero Expo India 2017 from November 2-5

PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry's second edition of the Aviation exposition - Aero Expo India 2017 will be held from November 2-5 in New Delhi. The first Aero exposition was organised last year at Indira Gandhi International Airport with the patronage of the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The four-day event is also going to witness India's first 'Heli-Expo' at the Pawan Hans Heliport in Rohini, New Delhi, on November 4-5. KN Rao, Chairman, Civil Aviation Committee, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said, "Aero Expo has no doubt helped boost regional air connectivity in line with the PM's recently announced UDAN scheme."





More Indian arrivals in Munich

Munich has seen strong gains in the number of Indian arrivals in February, 2017, recording an increase of 40 per cent in comparison to last year. Additionally, there has also been an increase in the bed nights, which has grown to 31.46 per cent. "This huge rise in the Indian arrival figures to Munich shows that India has successfully maintained a position of one of the top source markets for the Bavarian capital," said Minoti Gupta, Manager–Sales, Destination Munich.



Air India to consider Guwahati-Bangkok direct flight: Lohani

Ashwani Lohani, Chairman and Managing Director, Air India, informed that while some sectors were not profitable in the North East, overall, operations remained gainful as they got a viability gap funding from North Eastern Council (NEC). He also said that Air India is considering operating a direct flight between Guwahati and Bangkok or between Guwahati and Kunming, thrice a week. Air India has a market share of 17 per cent in the North East, which seemingly is a profitable sector for the airline.

UAE

Dubai Airport launches smart scheme to reduce clearance time

Dubai International Airport has launched a smart scheme enabling travellers to use their smartphones instead of their passport or express gate cards at the airport to reduce travel clearance procedures to the minimum. Dubbed 'Emirates Smart Wallet', the scheme is meant to further streamline travel movement across the airport and is considered the first of its kind in the world.







EUROPE & MEXICO

Jet, Aeromexico sign codeshare MoU

■ Jet Airways and Aeromexico, the flag carrier airline of Mexico have signed an MoU that outlines co-operation in the areas of enabling codeshare flights and frequent-flyer programmes. The MoU was signed by Jet Airways' Chairman Naresh Goyal and Aeromexico's CEO Andrés Conesa, on the sidelines of the IATA's AGM in Cancun, Mexico. As part of the arrangement, both carriers will code on each other's services between India and Mexico via common gates in Europe. To begin with, Jet Airways will place its marketing code '9W' on Aeromexico flights from London Heathrow to Mexico City. In turn, Aeromexico will place its marketing code on Jet Airways' direct services from London Heathrow to Mumbai and Delhi.



Marriott launches SPG mobile check-in

USA

Starwood Preferred Guest, a loyalty programme of Marriott International, is launching SPG mobile check-in for members at 22 hotels in the United States. More hotels will begin offering this feature exclusively on the SPG mobile application with the global rollout completed by the end of 2017. "Mobile check-in is incredibly popular among our Marriott Rewards members with more than 200,000 check-ins occurring each week," said David Flueck, Senior Vice President for Global Loyalty, Marriott International. With this, members can also 'Make A Green Choice' and request early check-in as well. Elite and Platinum members already enjoy many such conveniences.



ASIA-PACIFIC

CWT's virtual payment solution accessible in Asia Pacific

Carlson Wagonlit Travel's (CWT) virtual payment solution, powered by Conferma, is now available for companies in Asia Pacific. Initially, the solution will be used to pay for hotels and low-cost carriers, and for other content in the future. With this solution, when a traveller makes a booking, CWT provides the hotel or low-cost carrier a unique, 16-digit Virtual Card Number (VCN), 3-digit security number, and expiry date. This approach has numerous benefits for companies and their travellers.



PAN INDIA

GPS embraces Tier-II and Tier-III cities



■ India's premier B2B tourism interaction, Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) for Tier-II and III cities has set stage for its fifth edition this year. The event will be held in Ahmedabad from July 13-15, at Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad. GPS is a business meeting point for tourism professionals and the leading tourism service providers for India and overseas. In 2016, GPS saw over 120 exhibitors as it took wings and added Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Kolkata, and Coimbatore to its format.



Sofitel Dubai Wafi offers 1115 sqm ballroom for meetings, events

UAE

Sofitel has announced the largest Sofitel property in the Middle East with development partner MKM Commercial Holdings. Expected to open in early 2019, business travellers will have access to 10 meeting rooms in addition to a 1115 sqm ballroom. Sami Nasser, Chief Operating Officer, Luxury Brands, AccorHotels Middle East, commented, "Within the UAE, we've established a strong presence with four operational hotels across landmark locations."



41st edition of Rendez-vous Canada

■ The 41st edition of Rendez-vous Canada (RVC), Canada's premier tourism marketplace, was held at the BMO Centre from May 9-12, 2017, in Calgary, Alberta. Taking its all-timehigh attendance record to a new pinnacle, the four-day long annual conference saw close to 29,000 face-to-face business appointments between Canadian sellers and tourism buyers from across the globe. Hosted by Tourism Calgary, this year's event featured around 1840 buyers from 28 international markets.

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Birju C Gariba

Birju C Gariba, CEO and Executive Director, Platinum World Group, elaborates on the nuances of planning a wedding at a grand scale, while making it special for the bride and groom

ith the borders melting, India has been witnessing unprecedented an growth in international destination weddings and events. Planning such grand jamborees however is not a walk in the park and requires enormous amount of planning, madness, creativity, a great eye for detail and an impeccable sense of execution which sounds like a new army of wedding planners. Let's just run by the requirements that a destination wedding demands and things that have to be planned to make a wedding that the young couple dreams of.

SHORTLIST THEM

It all starts with creating a shortlist, which means mapping the know-how about the destinations across the world, the weather conditions during the month of the wedding, flight connections for the guests from different locations, sometimes across the world, and the safety that the destination offers. Once the stage is cleared of these basic details, comes the task of dwelling into the domain of hotels, room counts, distance from airport, gala dinner venues, unique destination offerings, banqueting sizes known to host about 200-250 guests on an average at international weddings and the big fat ones are in the vicinity of about 400-500 guests which means it's never easy to book all the rooms in a single hotel, easily. The biggest reason also is that our market runs on a short leadtime as compared to the rest of the world. And while the recommended time for such scales is at least one year in advance, we see cases sprawling from a timeline of six months to as low as one month before the wedding.

GEARED UP FOR ANY DEMAND

Once you come across the potential solution of rooms you have to also hope the airline is not full on the given set of dates as only limited destinations offer a direct access. There is obviously an option of chartering a flight for uber fancy weddings, but those are much smaller in percentage. While I write this, I am reminded about our first event in Tokyo in 2015, where our clients had given us a lead time of of various offerings and exceptional experiences that guests will locally witness during the wedding/event. All of these are usually done in about 48-72 hours and put in a nice presentation that helps the families visualise each destination as well as offerings with pricing, of course.

The process then goes down to taking site inspections and finalising the destination and hotel therein. Then starts the creative grill of giving out-ofthe-box ideas for each of the function individually that would include thematic décor ideas, entertainment, both local and global, styling, and with growing demand in destination weddings, paying heed to the request of 'How can my wedding be different than others?' The differentiation comes from cuisine, décor, and entertainment, which in itself is a separate industry. The talent in weddings has seen a huge spectrum across the globe, maintaining a roster of talents across the globe and recommending the

Having now done events in over 72 countries, we are geared up to be able to handle any demand **J**



and layouts, ease of availability of Indian food or setting up of a satellite kitchen and of course some idea about the budget at these destinations. It may not sound big but I imagine the list of potential knowledge domain that one has to possess would be large enough to create a 'best wedding places' directory. The shortlists are itself sometimes as large as 8-10 destinations and then starts the process of prospecting individual destinations with inquiring about hotel availabilities and venue availabilities, given that these are the primary needs for any wedding. Indian weddings are 25 days and the date of the event was October 22-24 for which we had a brief in September. When we wrote to our partners seeking their support towards execution, most rejected and the ones who were positive about it, responded with a probable error-of-year mention assuming it was for 2016 and not 2015. It took us a while to finally find the right partners and hence, the right solution for our hugely successful event. Having now done events in over 72 countries, we are geared up to be able to handle any demand at any unusual lead times. The process continues with detailing right one for each wedding. We have seen how acts by Cirque Du Soliel and Elton John feature in weddings.

QUEST FOR UNIQUENESS

Uniqueness and exclusivity took us to the shores of Mongolia recently to organise an event and it was a completely new terrain for Indians as well as for Mongols to welcome us Indians.

We believe this trend is still nascent and the millennials will be even more explorative in their search for uniqueness.



G The International Story

MICEtalk gets in touch with wedding planners, MICE agents, hoteliers, and vendors to zero-in on the latest trends in the wedding business

Kanchan Nath

Photograph by Mahima Bhatia Photography

cover story MICEtalk





Bhavnesh Sawhney Director Wedniksha Wedding Planners

UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

Every couple wants their wedding to be more grand and unique than the other. Five-star cruise liners are being chartered for wedding celebrations, and European destinations like Greece, Monaco, Tuscany, and Barcelona are trending. Couples are opting for destinations that offer a unique experience to their guests. Contemporary or special acts are also being created for guests as per their profile.

COLLABORATING WITH DMCs

Our company has been rather well-connected with the DMCs of Turkey and Spain to name a few. We choose our suppliers and vendors based on their past work and recommendations. DMCs do help in acquiring the best venues and even connecting us to the right people, getting better rates, and more exciting experiences.

VIBRANT DECORATIONS

The wedding décor trend of colours is making a comeback. Different colours help relate to different seasons. For instance, the current summer colour palette consists of kale green, sage, copper, and flowers white. International are being imported and used for décor, designs, unique and fancy sets that are larger than life are also being created.



EXCLUSIVE VENUES OVER HOTELS

The unorganised segment has been gaining favour over hotels. While picking out a venue, we ensure that the location can easily be accessed by guests and that the food and service at the location are top-class. Capacity of venues and restrictions imposed by law are also made note of.

DRONES FOR SHOOTS

Couples always want a unique pre-wedding shoot at a location which is beautiful and untapped. Some pet-lovers want their dogs in their shoot, some high-school lovers want the shoot in their school where they first met, while some others want them at palaces and beaches. Drone cameras have also become very popular.

DID YOU KNOW? In Greek weddings, the bride may walk down the aisle with a gold coin in her shoe to bring prosperity Kunal Rai Head - Weddings and Events Tamarind Global

OFFBEAT LOCALES ON THE RISE

Destination weddings are getting more innovative as families are trying to provide a unique experience to their well-travelled guests. Destinations have evolved from Bangkok and Phuket to the Middle East, with Ras Al Khaimah and Abu Dhabi trending. Other exotic European destinations of Vienna, Malta, and Monte Carlo are also fast becoming desirable markets. Offbeat locales of Antalya, Baku, and Bali are also on the list of trending destinations. A few untouched destinations that we have done weddings at include Bahrain and Kota Kinabalu. Other aspects such as performances by international artists, fusion food, eclectic themes and décor, all make an appearance in typical wedding functions.

COMBINATION OF LOGISTICS

Different weddings and destinations have different requirements. For flights, guests may book their own or in some cases where the destination does not have too many scheduled flights per day, we look at charter options or ties with the airline and take complete charge of the tickets. Most of what can be procured locally is sourced in the destination country. Other décor, production equipment, and food items are declared and shipped, hand-carried or air-freighted.

POLICY AMENDS AND WEDDINGS

APPENDE AND A

PRIMI

There was an initial reaction post demonetisation, however, the Indian economy has strengthened and the demand for



destination weddings is back. The impact of GST is not yet known but the wedding industry is a fairly recession-proof and resilient industry and we do not foresee too much slackening of demand.

DESTINATION DEFINES CHALLENGES

Challenges depend completely on the destination and hotel chosen. In completely new destinations that have never dealt with Indian weddings, the challenges could be in the form of customs and immigration support, infrastructure to handle the movement of a large number of people, availability of quality vendors, hotel flexibility, and capabilities on various fronts such as food, laundry handling, hospitality, and venues. This is where the role of a planner and local ground partner is essential.

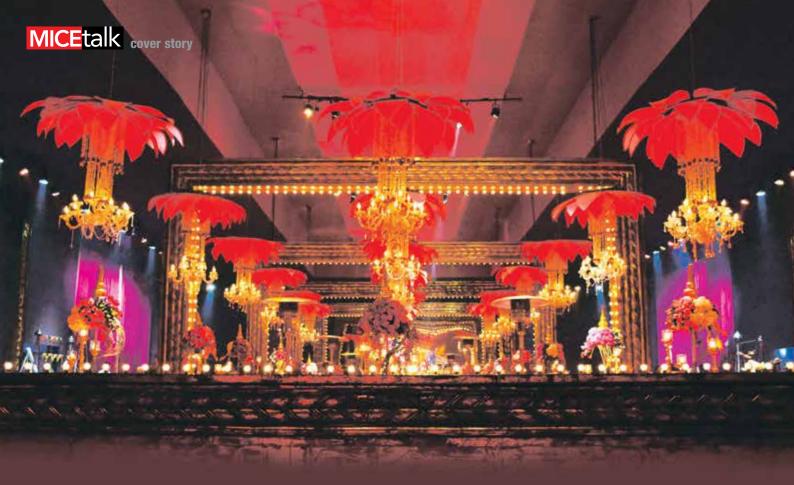
WEDDINGS IN BAHRAIN

The most recent wedding that Tamarind organised in Bahrain was held in the month of April and catered to 1000 guests. This was as challenging as it was rewarding. There was a lot that was accomplished in the four months of planning from building the infrastructure in a country that had never seen an Indian wedding of this size to working with customs and immigration officials, the airport authority, the hotels involved, and the DMCs.



DID YOU KNOW?

In Jamaica, everyone in the village takes to the street to look at the bride and she better look her best or is scorned!





Vijay Arora Director Touchwood Entertainment

HIS AND HERS

The year has been flooded with trends for destination weddings. Wedding teasers have been quite popular, giving clients a perfect three-minute short film to relive the highlights; custom hashtags are another popular trend; and wear-your-side-IDs is another trend that more and more clients and their guests are adopting.

CAPABLE VENDORS

We prefer to work with vendors and those who can provide us with the best deliverables, offer detailed destination knowledge, and be capable of taking care of all ground services that include transfers, accommodation, restaurants, venues, logistics, and activities.

WEDDING DÉCOF

Clients are always on the lookout for something new at their wedding. When we talk about weddings in India, traditional décor for the *mehendi* ceremony used to be quite the trend, but now people are opting for new ideas like origami/paper décor, decorating the venue with quirky daily-use household products, lanterns, and rustic and vintage décor.

LAST-MINUTE REQUEST

Though we, as wedding planners, are habitual of handling last-minute requests, we are also often faced with challenges that we do overcome. Among all the requests that we have received, there was one where we had to organise an Indian wedding ritual for 70-80 people within the span of half an hour for which neither we nor the caterer was prepared. We did somehow manage it in the end.



PRE-WEDDING SHOOTS

Wedding photography has taken a completely new dimension in the last few years. Pre-wedding short films that can be used as wedding invites on social media or be played during other ceremonies have become popular.

These videos use all forms of shooting techniques like aerial, under water, stop motion, time lapse, etc.

DID YOU KNOW?

is considered bad luck for the groom to see the bride's dress before the wedding

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Vikaas Gutgutia Founder & MD Ferns N Petals

FLOWER DÉCOR

Décor is the most crucial aspect of weddings. We believe flowers are irreplaceable and are the evergreen jewels of a wedding décor. In terms of floral décor, the trends change from season to season. This season, we are using a lot of English cut flowers and French garden conservatory looks involving a lot of organic materials, dried flowers and roots, and different kinds of green, fresh leaves and berries in our setups. Another trend this year is tone-on-tone colours like beige on beige, etc. For the cocktail function, people prefer exotic cut flowers.

GOING BEYOND HOTELS

Holding a wedding at a hotel is not so charming anymore. Extravagant venues are the demand of the day. To meet this demand, Ferns N Petals has a chain of luxury wedding venues in Delhi-NCR that include The Ritz, The Riviera, Udman, Vilasa, Shagun Farms, The Kundan, and Brij Greens.

LOCAL MEETS GLOBAL

Destination weddings often entail a lot of planning and ground work. Usually, a local flavour is maintained in one of the functions to bring in a nostalgic factor in



weddings that are held overseas. For cocktails or reception, people love to do English, Caribbean, Florence-themed settings to retain the elegance of the foreign locale.

CHALLENGING REQUESTS

At a recent wedding function, FNP Weddings & Events recreated the grandeur of Buckingham Palace through the craftsmanship and hard work of more than 500 people who worked for about 45 days in an area of 1.5 lakh sqft, for a function that was to cater to 3000 guests. This enormous space was the largest that we have ever worked in.

We once had a client who wanted a floral dome of pink rose buds for the wedding. To import 7000 bundles of roses (each bundle has 100 pieces) of the same colour and size was a huge challenge.

DID YOU KNOW? Roses are the

most popular wedding flowers in the world and Peonies are the costliest wedding flowers in the world



Navneet Kumar Director Fotobubbles Tech

CANDID CLICKS

Clients are now moving away from traditional group pictures taken on the stage to candid photography. They want us to tell a story through photo-documenting the wedding. They seem more willing to spend on creativity and quality.

The client's involvement today is far more participative and the level of encouragement we receive for creativity in our work is more than it used to be.

PRE-WEDDING SHOOTS

Pre-wedding shoots have become popular. They have moved on from being only about clicking a few nice pictures of the couple together in an informal setup to being one that tells a story of their journey.

These shoots have become an essential aspect of any wedding. People today don't mind travelling to an exotic destination or a grand setting to get their pre-wedding shoots done.

Today, couples want grand and ambitious themes, backgrounds, and settings. We, at FotoShaadi, take three weeks to prepare for a pre-wedding shoot, given that it is now more of a short film that we must be well-prepared for.

We have a couple of discussions with the bride and groom and sometimes even with friends and family to arrive at a story and then go ahead and plan a shoot schedule to capture the entire story with the couple being the heart and soul of it. Every minute detail from concept of the shoot and the attire to the location and the props is planned.

VIDEO STORYTELLING

When it comes to videos, the need for short crisp videos has sky rocketed. Earlier, people wanted every moment and every aspect of their event to be captured. Now, the demand for a very short video with an emotional angle is given more importance than the regular full-length video.







Photographs by FotoSHAADI

Everyone wants their wedding to be captured in a cinematic fashion and not merely a video recording of the event. People love the beauty shots that are taken while the bride is getting ready. Every couple wants their story to be told in a short, concise video. They want moments with a lot of emotions, friends and family opinions about them, and how the husband and wife feel about each other to come through in the videos. KNOW

The average wedding photographer is booked for nearly 25 weddings in a year



Photograph by Rimi Sen Photography



Vicky Soin Head - Market Development (MICE) International Travel House

DESTINATION INFLUENCED THEMES

Destination weddings started from far east destinations, but now the eastern European region is also becoming more popular due to price and flexibility. Clients demand to do the wedding in the local traditions of the destination, besides their own. Normally, the wedding functions carry on for two nights or three, depending on logistics and the destination. Themed functions are definitely conducted to make the wedding experience an out-of-the-box one.

LOGISTICS

We have a list of DMCs who specialise in this segment and support us in perfectly planning out business to exceed the expectations of clients. Specialising in all aspects, ITH is able to manage all logistics smoothly. We speak to airlines in advance for equipment facility to be carried and negotiate on the cost.

POLICIES AND WEDDINGS

Every change has a short-term or longterm impact and the recent policy amends of demonetisation, GST, liquor ban, etc., have definitely impacted the industry with things moving towards no-cash transactions. It will take a bit of time to recover as people are used to spending in a certain way.

UNFORESEEN CHALLENGES

Planning and timelines are the most difficult part of weddings besides the logistics involved. Every guest is important and every guest can have different requirements.

We need to follow timelines and manage well to have complete control of situations and execute the functions as planned.

INFLUENCE OF FILMS

Weddings are, to quite an extent, influenced by the film industry of India and abroad. The designer clothes that the guests and the bride and groom wear are very similar to those shown in films.

The whole sequence is often built around performances by relatives or the couple itself. This is a big change from earlier times and gives the family and guests a chance to be extrovert.

The maximum number of people that are invited for destination weddings does not usually go beyond 200

DID YOU

Bhuvanbhaskar Taneja

Owner TJ Wedding Solutions

STAFF DEFINES VENUES

Venue is the most important aspect of a wedding. The choice of venue entirely depends on the scale of the wedding and the client's requirements. Before showing possible sites to clients, we inquire about the money they are willing to spend and the expected number of guests. A small gathering of people in a huge hall can make the venue look empty; similarly, a large gathering at a small venue can make guests feel suffocated. There are various factors that must be taken into account while choosing a venue, no matter how beautiful it may be. A property is often defined by its staff. Good and friendly staff can help a small property in becoming a popular brand.

THE IMPACT OF REGULATIONS

There has been a huge impact of demonetisation on almost all industries. Clients were already stressed because of their functions and demonetisation added to their woes with transactions not taking place on time. Gradually, however, things settled down.

The ban on sale of liquor along highways hasn't affected us much. GST, on the other hand, is going to affect big weddings. Now, the client will have to spend more for the venue. That said, the coming in of GST is an indicator of growth for our economy and the impact we are talking about



will have a negative impact in the short-term and a more positive one in the long haul.

VENUES FOR WEDDINGS

Earlier, weddings had a gathering of about 1000 guests but now the same has reduced to 400-600 guests on an average. Lawns are been replaced by banquets. Clients are increasingly moving towards hotels. The need for a good property is rising and new properties are also coming with unique and creative ideas.

IMPACTED BY FILMS

The Indian film industry has been the biggest influencer when it comes to Indian weddings. Now, clients come up with various demands that they see in movies. One such popular demand is that of synchronised dance performances in the functions. This has added a fresh task to our list - arranging a good choreographer. Overall, the industry has had a positive impact.





KNOW? Kenyan brides are spit-on

by their father to avoid jinxing good fortune









Joshua Alvaro Antao and Ayesha Kirti Gurung ^{Owners}

Pataka Events

WEDDINGS IN GOA

Being in the industry for many years, we share a very good relationship with 5-star properties all across Goa. We have good relations with vendors and suppliers so we know how and where to source products and execute whatever is required for a successful wedding in Goa. There is no such thing as an average amount spent because different clients have different budgets and we customise the entire wedding based on the client's budget. Hotels and resorts are gaining more traction with people looking for stay, venue, food and drinks, all under one roof. It becomes more feasible to get an all-inclusive package, especially because 90 per cent of Goa's business runs on destination weddings.

PICKING OUT THE VENUE

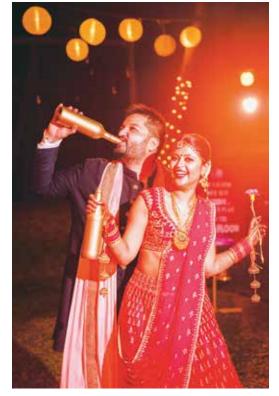
We first look at what the client wants to achieve in terms of décor and detailing and the type of venue setting. We then take into account the number of guests the client is wishing to invite. We believe that the venue should be appropriate for the number of guests being invited and not look too empty. The right amount of people at the venue creates a good vibe.

DIY DÉCOR

These days, clients are going in for very DIY (doit-yourself) décor that is more interactive with the guests. They look at more personalised and practical décor rather than larger-thanlife structures. Rustic and minimalistic designs are also in. Couples are opting out of reception stages and going in for more table-to-table greetings.

VENDOR SELECTION

Vendors are chosen based on certain parameters such as quality, timelines, and scale of work undertaken in the past Photograph by Pankaj Anand



as well as references of current planners and their experience working with them. Company profiles and artist profiles are a pre-requisite for shortlisting a vendor before suggesting them to a client.

CHALLENGES

We once received a request for a wedding lunch reception where the client realised that it would be hot and after warning the client wellin-advance, his last-minute request had to be accepted, with an air-conditioned venue being set up in less than 32 hours.

PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORIES

Wedding videos and photography help create a good wedding story, making the entire plot for the wedding fun for the couple and the guests. Drones are now a very important part of wedding videography, giving a lot of dimension to cinematography.

DID YOU KNOW? Goan Catholics have many Indian customs and traditions when it comes to weddings

Indian Weddings are the world's biggest events

To make these weddings larger than life



Meet: The top wedding planners The top travel agents for weddings

At



punam@travelshow.world, +91 98111 58785 sarika@travelshow.world +91 98101 91852



Hospitality Associate:



Media Partner:







Hemant Tenneti Senior Area Director of Operations – South Asia Marriott International

LURING THE INDIAN WEDDING BUSINESS

The social segment is different from the corporate segment, as it requires customisation and not a standard format. The corporate segment works on a plus or minus 20 per cent variant standard format, whereas in the social segment, the requirements have to be customised because of diverse cultures and rituals. Even though it is a lucrative segment, the challenge is in understanding the needs and being able to offer solutions pertaining to them.

SHAADI BY MARRIOTT

We have rolled out a pan India campaign called Shaadi by Marriott, for which a video was launched about 8-10 months ago. The video has organically grown into being sub-personal. We are activating the brand with each of our hotels in terms of collaterals, execution, special menus, and everything associated with it. We have also launched the Honeymoon by Marriott campaign, where we give options to the guest based on the tier or the budget for expenditure, and a destination of their choice. We are going to launch a few more campaigns over the next six months.

FILMY DÉCOR

Décor and themes are largely influenced by the Indian films industry. Any latest movie or a popular song, apparels, etc., that are in trend act as influencers. The rituals are traditional, but the execution of the rituals does change as people are looking at innovative ways to stand out. This has made destination weddings a huge trend. People are now taking small gatherings to a destination for two to three nights, rather





than spending money on 500-600 people that they barely know.

COME WHAT MAY, WE WILL ADAPT

The demonetisation impact was temporary, but we did witness a slow pace. People will spend on their wedding notwithstanding the economical hiccup. The trend now is to reduce the attendance of people. Demonetisation has had no impact. With GST, the ripple effect is yet to be seen until the next quarter. Whether the increase in tax by 75 per cent is going to predominantly affect someone to spend less, is too early to determine. Liquor ban has definitely seen some effect with customers preferring to serve liquor on limited events.

DID YOU KNOW? In the Philippines, it is considered disastrous if the outfit is tried on the day before the wedding

cover story MICEtalk

Srijan Vadhera General Manager Fairmont Jaipur

HUMANISING ELEMENT

Fairmont Jaipur has found its much-coveted place on the list of the most preferred choices for destination weddings for people throughout the globe. While our clients hail from different countries with varied demands and expectations, one element remains constant - the decisions within this category are more emotionally driven as compared to other segments within the MICE category. We have to engage with our clients and treat them like a part of our extended families to help them curate one of their most celebrated milestones. Meetings are held time and again to reaffirm their decisions.

WEDDING DÉCOR

The big fat Indian wedding is getting bigger by the day. Usually, one would think of the basic functions - the engagement, a sangeet, the *mehendi* ceremony and the wedding followed by a reception. But now, modern-day brides are delving deeper into traditional auspicious practices and bringing them back to life. Thus, the number of functions and the varied list of formalities keep growing as do the costs and themes for décor options.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Business has continued as usual despite the impending issues of GST, liquor ban, and

demonitisation. While weddings are a committed spend, even bookings from our other MICE segments come from some of the most reputed business and corporate houses from across the globe.

IMITATING FILMS

The movies, the stars, and the glitz and glamour that comes with them is an essential element of a dream wedding. We have had countless weddings in which the list of celebrities has been endless from India and across the globe. Simultaneously, couples want to emulate weddings and themes drawing inspiration from their favourite silver screen weddings.

THE HICCUPS

Lots of Indian families are getting into destination weddings without realising the Herculean task that they have set out to accomplish. Despite having an army of wedding planners and professionals to take care of the many elements, Indian weddings require a lot of involvement personally from the core family members and even the bride and groom. As time progresses, the wedding segment is only going to witness a boom. Destination weddings will share a healthy portion of this projected growth.



KNOW?

Scottish tradition sees the happy couple covered in alcohol, treacle, ash, feathers, and flour to ward off evil spirits



Photograph by Mahima Bhatia Photography



DID YOU KNOW? In many western countries, it is considered bad luck if it rains on the wedding day

Debarati Bose Director of Sales and Marketing JW Marriott Hotel Pune

LESS IS MORE

In weddings today, less is more in terms of themes and décor. Couples prefer to have quaint destination weddings with their closest friends and family. People opt for chic over loud. Traditional Indian experiences with a *pangatstyle* seating and *thalis* are increasingly gaining popularity. Generally, the duration of the stay during weddings is about two nights/three days.

ROLE OF DMCs

We work with key DMCs such as Horizon WIE and Vivah. At JW Marriott Pune, utmost importance lies on quality. On case-tocase basis, we are open to the vendor/ suppliers that bring the finest quality of work to the table and do not stick to anyone in particular.

PLANNING THE BUDGET

When it comes to wedding planning, people like to spend lavishly and do

not compromise on grandeur and festivity. The average residential wedding would cost somewhere around ₹70 lakh.

EXPERIMENTING WITH THEMES

The wedding trends we see today are of colourthemed weddings; a lot of discerning couples also plan their wedding with eco-friendly décor as their share to preserve the environment. In terms of meals, people experiment with diverse cuisines and bite-sized meal portions and offbeat entertainment at the wedding.

While one part is open to experimentation and opts for quirky and unique weddings, the trend of going traditional will never fade. As they say, old is gold, the traditional wedding with a *pangat thali*



is one of the most sought-after wedding themes we do. People have moved on from the older options of having weddings in a wedding hall and prefer having their weddings in hotels as it is more convenient and hassle free.

You get top-notch quality of stay, food, and other amenities. People also pick offbeat destinations for their weddings.

NOT AFFECTED BY THE BAN

Fortunately, we are one of the few hotels that have not been affected by the liquor ban.

Demonetisation to some extent worked in our favour as large-scale weddings (over 3000 pax), which we were unable to accommodate, were being reduced to smaller sizes like 500-1000 pax, which we could execute.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX REQUESTS

One time, on the wedding day, the groom's father had misplaced his outfit that he was supposed to wear during the wedding ceremony. The hotel helped him purchase a new outfit immediately.

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Rneakin





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Veronica See

Director of Sales & Business Development Meritus Pelangi Beach Resort & Spa, Langkawi

LOOKING TO GROW

Our resort is still in the infancy stage as a destination wedding venue for Indian weddings as compared to other brands and chains of hotels. Visibility and awareness of our resort as a wedding venue is still lacking. This is a challenge we are currently trying to remedy.

RIGHT MARKETING

We have reached out to wedding planners in India to create more visibility for Meritus Pelangi as a wedding destination for the Indian market. Targeted advertising has also been placed to create awareness of the product. This also includes an online platform such as the resort's social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and popular wedding portals. Participating at wedding fairs has created a presence but nothing speaks like experience. Hence, we often invite bloggers

to experience weddings at Meritus Pelangi.

PERSONAL STYLE

These days, everything is about style; from bridal outfits to colour themes and table arrangements, everything speaks of the couple's style and likings. Wedding couples are moving towards more contemporary, tasteful elegance in place of excessive boldness, whilst maintaining the traditional elements of their ceremonies and



steering away from purely fresh floral displays to statement props that create a 'wow' factor.

VENDORS

Our weddings are tailored to the needs of couples. Hence, we have an array of vendors that we engage to create the dream wedding that guests demand. Wherever possible, we engage local vendors on the island, and where specialists are required, we engage vendors from around Malaysia.

MAIN CHALLENGES

One of the main challenges of planning a successful Indian wedding is definitely logistics. Logistics of bringing outsourced items at the last minute, planning, and detailed organisation are crucial to a destination wedding.

UNIQUE REQUESTS

We have had to co-ordinate a unique Bollywood entrance to the ceremony where the groom wanted to enter the function by jet-ski and a helicopter landing on the beach for the bride with minimum sand flying over the bride. This was tough but we managed to get it done.

DID YOU KNOW?

Italian couples must face a series of challenges en route to the ceremony to put their marriage skills to the test



Alok Kaul Director of Operations JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity

UNIQUE ENTRY CONCEPTS

In terms of trends, people are requesting new décor concepts and unique concepts for the bride and groom entry. Flowers are slowly being replaced by LED lights. Stage seating is becoming more grand, while eating tables are fast fading away.

BASIC CHALLENGES

Two out of 10 weddings are residential weddings. Thus, filling up banquet spaces with nonresidential weddings becomes a challenge to fill rooms in hotels of higher inventory. Music and bar timings are also challenging at times as some weddings start late, leaving only two hours of music or bar at the event.

Indian weddings are growing in terms of number of events, which includes both pre-wedding and post-wedding functions. Lack of venue options is also a challenge at times.



DEMONETISATION AND THE INDUSTRY

Demonetisation has definitely affected the wedding market; weddings are now being downsized. Liquor ban and GST, however, have not had much affect.

OUR VENDORS

We work with Q Events by Geeta Samuel, E Factor, Karsun Events, and Aura to name a few. Katalyst is our partner for entertainment and artist management.

RITUALS FOR REGIONAL WEDDINGS

There are a number of rituals in Indian weddings that surround the main function. Some of them are:-

Godh Tikka: It is a pre-wedding function that can be termed as an engagement ceremony. **Family Sangeet:** An evening for family performances and cocktails.

Mehendi: Afternoon brunch where the bride's arms are being tattooed with *mehendi*.

Ghurchari: A ceremony where the groom gets ready for the wedding and the wedding entourage departs for the venue.

Vidai: The ceremony where the bride is bid farewell.

Reception: A dinner for family and friends of the groom.



D YOU

KNOW?

In Italy, Sunday

is believed to

be the luckiest

to be betrothed

day on which





In Romania, the

kidnap her, and

the groom must

through romantic

win her back

gestures

bride's family

pretends to

Alok Chakravarty Director of Sales and Marketing Shangri-La's - Eros Hotel, New Delhi

DIVIDED SEGMENTS

There exists a very significant divide amongst the public with a growing proportion opting for destination weddings, moving away from wedding halls and banquets. However, consumers of the classic setup account for a major proportion of the market. In that, Shangri-La's -Eros Hotel, New Delhi, is one of the most soughtafter properties with its exquisite interiors and top-notch arrangements and catering. The opulence of our Grand Ballroom with an attached garden terrace adds to the elegance.

UTILISING THE DATABASE

The team at Shangri-La aims to tap the wedding market through dedicated efforts in the direction. The team has an extensive database of potential clientele, does extensive market research on the needs of the consumers and the changing trends in the industry, and plans accordingly in keeping with the specific tastes of the patrons. In addition to this, digital marketing and partnering with wedding portals is also

partnering with wedding portals is also very essential.

GLOBAL TASTES

With frequent travel abroad, the wedding preferences of Indians are gaining new and premium tastes. Guests who come to these weddings are now better travelled, exposed to a variety of exotic world cuisine, and have developed much more evolved palates. This makes it imperative to design an avant-garde and well-thought-out menu. A new line of thinking is in vogue that attempts to bring a small selection of dishes cooked fresh and healthy, instantly appealing to the modern palate. Favourite dishes shrunk down to bite sizes delight guests. At the same time, couples want to integrate their regional heritage, culinary and otherwise, into the wedding theme. The concept of brunching at weddings is winning over other options as this menu offers mind boggling variety. Global trends are consistently being looked at for inspiration. A significant proportion of the market is getting away from traditional themes and going for corporate-style weddings. People are going for personalisation, decreasing the number of guests but increasing their per-person spend, and incorporating their personal stories and interests in everything from décor to food. Modernisation is also hitting the industry with the revamping of retro drapes, minimalist silhouettes, and bold colours. There is also a growing demand for new cuisines at weddings in order to stand out from the crowd.

CHALLENGES AND MORE

The most fundamental challenges of planning a wedding stem from the fact that for Indians, their wedding day is the most important day of their lives. The hotel, when entrusted with the responsibility and honour of serving this day, goes above and beyond to ensure that everything goes perfectly. The bride, for one, is needed to be looked after in this anxious time. Sometimes, unreasonable expectations pertaining to the arrangements are put on the organisers, ending up in a significant mismatch with the decided budget.



Perkin Rocha Area Director, Haryana Lemon Tree Hotels

TARGETING THE WEDDING BUSINESS

Lemon Tree Hotels is primarily a chain of upscale and midscale business hotels. Today, customers have umpteen options and are spoiled for choice. Competition from leisure hotels is our greatest challenge. Also, from a product offering perspective, we are foraying into destination hotels and conventions.

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES

There is a growing focus on MICE at Lemon Tree Hotels. The newly opened Lemon Tree Hotel and Red Fox Hotel at Sector 60, Gurugram, and its 20,000 sqft modern convention centre come across as a great option to host weddings. At present, we are also appointing catering sales specialists and are closely working with event management teams and wedding planners. Besides this, Lemon Tree Hotel, Tarudhan Valley, Haryana, presents an ideal option for destination weddings. Moreover, the Lemon Tree Hotel, East Delhi Mall, is another alternative to cater to MICE business including pre and post wedding functions.

WELCOME CHANGE

Lemon Tree Hotels has welcomed the cashless move by the government. We are urging customers to choose from various cashless options to make bookings such as credit cards, wire transfers, and Lemon Tree Smiles points. Mobile or e-wallets will soon be accepted at our select hotels. The business at large has not been affected by the liquor ban as our hotels are more than 500 metres away from the highways.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

A major influence that the film industry of India has had on the wedding market is the concept of destination weddings and fashion. We saw an increase in the number of pre and post wedding functions.

Functions like *sangeet* and *mehendi* are also increasingly being held with more guests getting invited, quite unlike how such functions were more of a private affair earlier. Hiring of celebrity choreographers for dance performances, skits, etc., is also becoming popular.

CHALLENGES OF AN INDIAN WEDDING

At Lemon Tree Hotels, the main planning of the wedding starts after the booking of the venue. The wedding segment is a sensitive one since people are emotionally connected to it, right from guests to the bride and groom. There is no space for an apology or compensation in case of any mistake or omission at our end.

Growth in this segment is huge because everyone just spends and does not think of returns. Three decades ago, people hardly thought about a lavish wedding function that has now become a trend and a general expectation. A person in India spends one-fifth of the wealth accumulated in a lifetime on a wedding ceremony. That means a tremendous opportunity for retailers to capitalise on.



IIN YNII

Queen Victoria was one of the

first to have pure

white icing on her

wedding cake





SM Azmat President Sales & Marketing Jaypee Hotels and Resorts

OPTIONS GALORE

The challenges of getting the wedding business are not any different from the challenges of getting the conference business. The guest has ample choice, from wedding banquet venues, to farm houses, to 4 and 5-star hotels, all contenders for the same social business. The challenge is to differentiate in terms of venue, choices in the menu, ambience, location, luxury offerings, accommodation offerings, and finally, distribution - the ability to reach out to the customer first.

PLETHORA OF STRATEGIES

Innovative marketing strategies are adopted to reach out to the customer. From the conventional telephone listings; print ads in newspapers; general interest, women-oriented, and wedding magazines to digital marketing including Google-enabled outreach via SEO and SEM; social media marketing; brand website; wedding -focused websites, and high-traffic generating B2C websites, all avenues of exposure of the hotel are explored. The offline as well as the online wedding customer's purchase journey is tracked and mapped and an integrated marketing approach is adopted and implemented for maximum benefit.

INCLUSION OF INNOVATION

Weddings today are becoming more and more innovative in terms of décor and ambience. With high costs not being a deterrent, wedding venues and planners today are experimenting with a lot of props and locations. Destination weddings are the new rage as they offer new settings for the grand event. The 5-star luxury chain, Jaypee Hotels, offers five excellent destinations, in New Delhi and others in fabulous destinations like Agra and Mussoorie.

NO EFFECT OF THE BAN

The demonetisation impact on the big Indian wedding was for a brief period of 2-3 months post launch of the move. Things have since normalised and it is business as usual. In fact, the segment is recording excellent growth figures. Jaypee Hotels has not been adversely affected by the liquor ban. The upcoming GST roll-out is yet to be experienced. The segment we are in is levied with 28 per cent GST, which is a deterrent.

THE HICCUPS

Understanding the requirements and philosophy in the initial meeting with the parents of the bride/groom helps set the tone and benchmarks for the overall final offering. Challenges in organising the big social event are handled deftly initially by the sales team at customer location, then by the experienced operations team on site. The social segment is the growth engine for hotels in general and Jaypee Hotels is no exception.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX REQUESTS

Wacky last-minute requests come from wedding planners and customers. Due to the no space constraints and lots-to-do destinations, we are always able to accommodate out-ofthe-box requests and ideas.

KNOW? German

newlyweds 'saw' a log in half in front of their guests in a ceremony known as Baumstamm Sägen



Ipsita Ganguli Director of Sales & Marketing JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata

INNOVATIVE MARKETING

There are various marketing strategies that are being carried out at the property and pan India levels through Shaadi by Marriott. These include our 'Honeymoon on Us' campaign, wedding features in various magazines as well as online and social media promotions. Also, word-ofmouth publicity acts as the most important source, therefore, we believe in top-class customer satisfaction.

LIVE COUNTERS

In the recent past, floral themes have been quite in demand and also guests prefer original flowers over artificial, as per the season. For entertainment, most guests like to hire women or men dressed up in clothes that are in sync with the theme, welcoming the guests or even performing on stage.

Guests nowadays prefer cabanas or sofa arrangements over traditional chairs and tables. Also, the arrangement should have room for movement and interaction with a lot of open spaces. For food, most guests have a preference for international cuisines apart from traditional spreads.

The guest's demands also include international exotic fruits for the health conscious and use of

exotic vegetables in the menu. The maximum footfall is in the 'live' counters. As a result, while in the past there were fewer live stations, the number of counters has significantly gone up.

OUR PARTNERS

The vendors we engage are mainly chosen by the guests. As a hotel, we do associate with all the vendors present in the city, in case the guests want us to suggest or arrange for anything.

EXTRAVAGANCE APLENTY

Most weddings demand a lot of glamour, extravagance, exquisite exhibits, and international cuisines. Wedding planners have risen to the demands and hotels have been very able partners in hosting such magnificent grand shows.

It is an opportunity to highlight both the hotel as well as wedding-related experts to the select community in the city.

IN THE NICK OF TIME

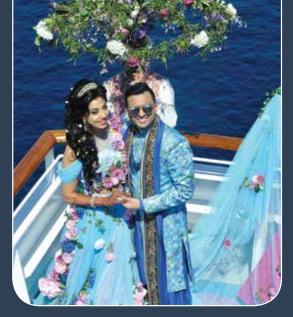
We once had a last-minute demand for an international specialty chef. Being an international chain, we were successfully able to fly in chefs from other Marriott hotels around the world.



DID YOU KNOW? In China, the day

after the wedding, the bride is to have all but one lock of her hair shaved off to symbolise cleanliness





NARRAAGES are made at sea

Not only are cruise weddings still a huge novelty in India, they also allow agents to have wider margins while making it easier for the family to organise the once-in-a-lifetime event

Hazel Jain

2 II I III II



L. BUUS



ove over destination weddings, nuptials onboard a cruise liner is the way to go now. While the idea of cruising itself is still struggling to get the Indian holidaymaker's attention as an option to holiday, history has shown that we like to get way more adventurous when it comes to weddings! Purely based on this quirkiness, perhaps weddings on cruise liners may just take off in the Indian market.

Paving the way to make this a possibility are multiple international cruise liners who have already connected the dots and are equating the idea of cruising with 'life events' of which wedding is a huge part. Take for example MSC Cruises. Promoted by Sharaf Travels in India, MSC Cruises has special packages for weddings. Kunal Sampat, General Manager -India, MSC Cruises, explains, "Indian weddings as compared to others are enormous spectacles. At MSC Cruises, we ensure the client can live out their romantic dream. Be it a symbolic ceremony on-board or renewal of vows, we have packages designed for different occasions. Our events team co-ordinates with the planner to gather all the requirements. Once the same is provided, we shortlist the best possible venues onboard. We can also support by providing extra services to enhance the ceremony which include culinary delights, video and photo packages, live ceremonial music and more. Once the ceremonies are complete, we can even offer 'Him & Her' deluxe packages."

MSC Cruises' ships can accommodate anything between 2200-4500 passengers. The clincher it seems is how early the client books. "We have various venues available onboard that can be allocated to the group based on the size. We could have ceremonies in the lounges, on the open deck, in the Royal theatre, etc. We can also provide customised menus along with beverages, specially print personal motif on our daily programme sheets, dedicate a TV channel displaying their

GENTING DREAM 古顶萼号

programme for the day, have dedicated hospitality desks, dedicated check-in/check-out counters and more," Sampat adds. However, while fire is an essential element for a Hindu wedding, it is not allowed on-board due to safety reasons. The company will now be promoting its new next-generation ship, MSC Meraviglia, for weddings and promises to offer more value for wedding planners.

STAR OF THE SHOW

Meanwhile, Star Cruises and Dream Cruises ships are also equipped to host Indian weddings and offer a variety of packages. The 'Wedding At Sea' package includes everything that a couple needs to celebrate their nuptials, including beautiful venues, Champagne toast, wedding cake, and Indian vegetarian or international cuisine. Besides, an experienced wedding co-ordinator is also available to assist them in the planning process.

Naresh Rawal, VP Sales – India, Genting Cruise Lines, adds, "Elaborate Indian ceremonies can be accomplished with all the marriage rituals to commemorate the most important day of their life as they've always imagined it. The couple and their families can also avail of spa and beauty treatments, flowers (including custom orders), professional photography and videography, transportation to and from the ship or wedding location, priority check-in, and a variety of wedding reception options. We can even arrange for the sangeet and mehendi ceremonies, ranging from an elegant cocktail reception with gourmet selections and open bar to a four-course sit-down lunch on with wine service."

For couples who wish to re-confirm their love at sea can also choose their 'Vow Renewal' package which offers married couples the opportunity to celebrate their love all over again with a private vow renewal ceremony performed by one of the ship's officers. The package includes ceremony music, a

TOP WEDDING CRUISE LINERS

The top two cruise liners for weddings for CruiseClub Vacations are: Lueftner Cruises, that is popular for weddings on river cruises in Europe, and Star Cruises for Indian weddings in Singapore.

> Elaborate Indian ceremonies can be accomplished with all the rituals that they've imagined



India is a last-minute market and group bookings on cruises can get very tricky during peak season

romantic single red rose, Champagne toast, a celebration cake for two, a commemorative vow renewal certificate, sparkling wine, canapes, and chocolate-covered strawberries delivered to their stateroom at the end of the ceremony. Star Cruises and Dream Cruises offer Indian, international, vegetarian and even Jain meals. The menu can be upgraded for wedding groups and decided in consultation with the family and chef on board. "It means any community from India can organise a wedding on a Star Cruises ship," Rawal adds.

CHARTERS FOR WEDDINGS

Meanwhile, Costa Cruises recently hosted a lavish wedding of Adel Sajan, son of the UAEbased Indian business tycoon, with Sana Khan, on-board the Costa Fascinosa cruise that sailed the Mediterranean. Nalini Gupta, MD, Lotus Destinations, GSA Costa Cruise India, says, "This was the first time that such a big cruise ship was booked for a wedding. Over 1000 guests sailed on-board the 3800-passenger capacity ship from Barcelona to Marseille, and then to Cannes before finally stopping at Savona." She thinks that Indian weddings and a cruise have a perfect fit, enabling the bride and groom to actually enjoy their wedding. This was seen at the recent wedding of Sana and Adel where guests didn't have to worry about travelling to different venues for ceremonies.

A poolside party closed the event with the cutting of the wedding cake, prepared by the Costa's corporate chef – an extraordinary 12-level dessert weighing 140 kilos, almost three metres high.

Speaking about allowing fire ceremonies on board, Gupta says, "We may now be willing to explore that possibility with our Safety Officer supervising it. We have been very keen on having Indian weddings on-board Costa ships, but due to safety guidelines of the fire ceremony, we were unable to explore this segment." Costa will create wedding brochures with specific itineraries for the Indian market. The guest has to just buy the cabins, and everything from food, entertainment, and venue is taken care of. Only alcohol and excursions are chargeable over and above the cabin price. "Even for that, we have lots of deals, like an unlimited alcohol package, which is charged at USD 35 per person, per day, covering a large variety of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Our ships can accommodate 1500-5000 guests depending upon the ship," Gupta adds. Two things that Costa doesn't allow, however, is any décor that interferes with the physical structure of the ship and alcohol bottles from outside.

CHARMING RIVER CRUISES

That may be a huge dampener for Indian families to opt for an ocean cruise. But what





ACCOMMODATION AND SERVICES

While Star Cruises offers a more contemporary style of cruising, Dream Cruises' Genting Dream is known as the first Asian luxury cruise with 18 decks, 35 restaurant and bar concepts, features firework at sea, and the iconic Singapore nightclub, Zouk At Sea. Accommodations reflect both size and choice for travellers with over 70 per cent of staterooms featuring private balconies and 100 connecting rooms catering to groups. Two floors of lavish suites in the exclusive Dream Mansion feature European butler service and special guest privileges depending on the number of guests. The ship can cater to anything from 20 pax to a full charter cruise.

about river cruises? Kiran Bhandari, Co-founder, CruiseClub Vacations based in Pune, feels that the latest trend is weddings on river cruises. "This is quite a charming experience, as it is basically a floating hotel taking you through the beautiful European countryside landscapes, and then stopping right in the heart of cities. These are suitable for compact groups, with most ships with a capacity of 150-180 passengers. But the advantage is that you can charter the entire ship, and for any duration, which is nearly impossible on large ocean cruises in Europe," he adds.

Cost-wise, this turns out to be a lot more affordable as compared to any other cruise experience, and sometimes even land-based weddings. Since the ship is entirely allocated to the group, it is a completely private experience. As such, food and alcohol can be customised exactly as per the needs of the group. Bhandari gets a lot of wedding groups for this from cities like Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Kolkata, and they are usually Marwari and Gujarati weddings.

THE LATE MARKET

Unfortunately, India is a last-minute market and group bookings on cruises can get very tricky, specially during peak season. Cruise Professionals does get a lot of wedding group requests each year, but they have not had a chance to host an Indian wedding since these requests have generally come only five or six months prior to the sail date. **Nishith Saxena**, Founder & Director, Cruise Professionals, says, "This segment shall grow only when the wedding planners start seriously considering cruises as a unique option and work according to the cruise schedule rather than running a parallel operation, which sometimes disturbs the operational efficiency of the ship."

Also, since Indian weddings require a high level of customisation, offering exclusive areas for ceremonies may become a challenge, specially on a high-end ships, unless the requirements have been provided in advance.

"The whole idea of a cruise is an all-inclusive price but when we start working on customisations for weddings, the costs start spiraling. On Princess Cruises ships, we have a wedding chapel where we can actually create and do almost anything within reasonable deviations for Indian weddings. What we do not allow is the Indian-style 'pheras' as this is a safety hazard," Saxena clarifies.

Such elemental problems might put a spoke in the wheels of cruising as an option for Indian weddings, but Indians are resilient creatures and their desire to be different may just finally win the battle with tradition.



Tech bent for events

Sabbas Joseph, President, Event and Entertainment Management Association of India (EEMA), talks about the evolution of the events industry and how it relies a great deal on technology

Anupriya Bishnoi



Sabbas Joseph

What role does EEMA play in the industry? EEMA is an effort to bring together leaders of MICE, events, exhibitions, and the wedding industry on one platform to be able to learn from each other, to explore business opportunities, and to think together about the future. More than anything else, it's about bringing leaders together.

Social media gives a boost to events these days. What is your take?

Social media has become an important tool for promoting at a much larger scale. I can do an event for 50 people in a room or I can use a social media platform like Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc., and take the event to a much larger audience across the world. I can target different people, business influencers, the entire business community, and get them to listen to what is happening at a particular event. In some ways, I am dependent on media and in some I am dependent on social media to actually reach out to a gigantic group of people, something that was not possible before social media swept the digital market.

How has the events industry evolved in the past few years?

I think, the events industry has been in a constant state of evolution. Growth in the last few years has been centred around technology, creativity, digital forays, new ideas, new markets, etc. Also, the events industry of today is not just about the audience in the room but also about the audience outside.

Growth in the last few years has been centred around technology, creativity, digital forays, new ideas, new markets **55**

What can the events industry benefit from in the coming years?

I think it can benefit from multiple avenues. Firstly, thinking as one, functioning as one, and at the same time being an individual, each one understanding their strengths and building on those strengths, thereby building their own brand will be beneficial. Secondly, certain policy changes required at the government level can help boost the business of the events industry.

I think that licences need to be simplified and be available online. Multipurpose stadiums, football fields, and cricket stadiums should be made available for exhibitions, concerts, etc. This will be good for the entire industry. Once you have all of this, you will have a lot of global players coming into the country.

What exactly are you doing to engage audiences during events?

With use of technology gaining momentum, interactive sessions have become imperative; 3D experiences have also now gone beyond touch and feel. We aim to provide audiences with these experiences.

How are you providing seamless services to MICE clients?

Events are all about hospitality, delivery, having everything on your fingertips and your handhelds. A MICE developer has all the information and this can easily be made available to clients for a seamless experience and the smooth conduct of events.

This industry relies a great deal on technology. In my opinion, we aren't utilising that space well enough; there is a lot more that we can do.



MICE 'Inn' Kochi

Kunal Shanker, General Manager, Holiday Inn Cochin, talks about the MICE facilities at the hotel and the unique offerings the hotel provides at the events it hosts

Kindly tell us about the banqueting and conferencing space at the hotel.

Holiday Inn Cochin currently has a total conference and banqueting space of 8655 sqft including a large pre-function area. We have five halls that have the capacity to host events for 50-500 guests. The Grand Ballroom is the newest addition to the hotel and can seat upto 500 guests.

What is your USP for MICE?

- The USP for the hotel's MICE facilities would be:-
- Customised décor and diverse setups
- Flexible conference and meeting spaces
- Breakaway rooms
- Event management services
- Culinary finesse
- High-speed internet and Wi-Fi connectivity
- State-of-the-art technology

What kind of technical expertise can the hotel offer in its events space?

Actionable insights, designing and delivering exciting experiences for both MICE and weddings, a team of experts that can handle events of any capacity, and technical expertise from audio/visual to video conferencing are few of the many facilities that we offer to our clients.

Tell us about the specialised cuisines you offer at events.

We have five F&B outlets in the hotel and we have an eclectic culinary menu. We serve different cuisines from Italian, Chinese, and Continental

We have a total meeting space of 8655 sqft and five halls that have the capacity to host events for 50-500 guests **55**



to Indian and Arabic. We are also famous for serving authentic local cuisines from all parts of Kerala.

What kind of a booking window does the hotel require for larger MICE events?

Kerala, being a MICE destination and one that is sought for conducting large city-wide events and conferences, makes the booking window vary from a month to two years, depending on the type of event or conference. The city of Kochi still has limited inventory and if not booked well in advance, there could be chances of non-availability of rooms and meeting venues. The MICE segment is growing at more than

a double-digit pace and we expect that it will keep growing at a faster pace with the recent change in the state excise policy, prior to which the state had seen some diversion of clients.



Kunal Shanker





Ajay Seth Head, MICE (Outbound) Cox & Kings

Thailand and Dubai continue to be the most preferred short-haul destinations for corporates who want to take their dealers/ high-performing employees for incentive holidays. One of the advantages that these two destinations have is connectivity. From India, the connectivity is from Tier-I and Tier-II destinations and this helps corporates when finalising their incentive programmes. Another advantage is the sheer inventory of hotel rooms and availability of Indian cuisine that makes it attractive. Russia is the new destination that has emerged in the first half of this year due to weakness in currency and connectivity from key metros such as Mumbai and Delhi. For corporates with a limited budget, this is an ideal option. Destinations such as Moscow and St. Petersburg are the preferred choice. Finally, European destinations such as UK, France, and Switzerland continue to be alltime favourites. All the leading hospitality chains such as Marriott, Starwood, and Hilton have been the hotspot for MICE this year.

mid-

The UN World Economic Situation and Prospects' revised report for mid-2017 projects a downward revision of growth for India from 7.7 per cent to 7.3 per cent. **MICEtalk** finds out from leading agents how the first half of 2017 has been for them



Meera Charnalia Senior Vice President and Head - MICE Thomas Cook India

Our MICE segment at Thomas Cook India has shown tremendous potential and it is a sector that we have strongly and actively been focusing on. With a magical 'brag factor' and aspirational value, international MICE trips have always been a great motivator for employees and dealers. 2017 has been a promising year so far, for us at Thomas Cook India. While London, Paris, Rome, and Singapore are all-time favourites, we have witnessed a strong demand for longhaul destinations such as Australia. Eastern Europe and New Zealand have emerged as the top selling destinations, courtesy their diversity of spectacular scenic beauty and engaging adventure and outdoor experiences that appeal to our discerning MICE market.

The Marriott and Hilton groups have been our major focus for MICE this year, thanks to their in-depth understanding of the Indian MICE market and our unique and specific requirements. Our strong relationship and defined processes (from exclusive check-ins, cuisine elements, Indian chefs, adequate space for conventions and gala events, etc.) ensures seamless execution and customer delight.





Zelam Chaubal Director Kesari MICE

Destinations like Hong Kong, South Africa, Dubai, Thailand, Bali, Singapore, Amsterdam, Prague, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Tashkent have been popular for outbound MICE so far in 2017.

In terms of hotel chains, international brands of Marriott, Hilton, Four Seasons, Swissôtel, and Sheraton have been popular. A few local brands have also been a hotspot for MICE this year.



-vear

Kanchan Nath

Nitin Hardi Managing Director – India ATPI

The most popular destinations among Indians still seem to be the far east, mainly Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore. Dubai also remains one of the most frequently visited destinations. Marriott Hotels along with AccorHotels, IHG, and indigenous hospitality chains of Taj, Oberoi, and Sarovar Hotels are among the hotels that are popular for MICE.



Manpreet Bindra Vice President – MICE FCM Travel Solutions, India

Dubai has always been an evergreen MICE destination owing to its easy visa policies, short-haul flights, and plenty of carrier options. With a plethora of world-class hotels to offer, Dubai was one of the most sought-after destinations in the first half of 2017, not just for leisure travel but equally prized for Indian MICE.

The list is never-ending when it comes to entertainment. The desert safari is the most popular along with upcoming attractions like IMG World of Adventure and Dubai Parks & Resorts that have seen a stunning demand of late. Worldclass restaurants and some of the world's best and biggest shopping malls are also a big draw, especially for incentive trips that include families.

At FCM, we think Singapore and Hong Kong are the next preferred destinations along with Abu Dhabi, which is also gaining popularity. Popular resorts for MICE in Dubai include Dubai JW Marquis and Grand Hyatt.



BELAGAVI on your itinerary, yet?

Pallav Singhal, Hotel Manager, Fairfield by Marriott Belagavi, throws light on the potential Belagavi holds as a MICE destination and how the hotel aims to tap this market

Tripti Mehta



Pallav Singhal

ndian travellers seek adventure and exploration wherever they go. Destinations within the country are as enticing as those abroad and Belagavi promises to be just that. Set along the Western Ghats, Belagavi is a city that remains largely unexplored. Its forts, temples, and waterfalls stand tall as travellers pass by, without including them in their must-visit list.

Why Belagavi for Marriott?

Belagavi is the commercial hub and divisional headquarters of North Karnataka, ranking second to Bengaluru in terms of automotive exports. As Belagavi grows as a business and leisure destination, there is a great demand for higher quality mid-range accommodation in the city.

Tell us about the events space at the hotel.

Our two meeting rooms have state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment, high speed wireless internet access, and multi-media conferencing facilities with 24-hour assistance and service that will take care of your business needs. The banqueting facilities at the hotel, both indoor and outdoor, are spread over an area of 1000 sqm. The beautifully appointed 240 sqm Crystal Ballroom features a column-free design and is adjoined by lush green lawns. There is a pre-function area with a separate entrance, making your function a private and exclusive affair.

What activities do you have in store for MICE groups?

Fairfield by Marriott Belagavi is the perfect hotel for MICE groups. In terms of activity within the hotel, we have huge gardens and grounds that are suitable for events of varied sizes. It is a nice terrain with natural hindrances. We have also tied up with local companies and agents that have group-building activities like paint ball. Hence, if MICE groups are looking for such activities, we have a number of options for them.

Belagavi is a medical education hub. All big medicine companies have one foot in the city and time and again conduct unorganised exhibitions in the city. We aim to provide them with organised and well-planned events that cater to all their needs. One category in which we are already popular is that of bikers groups.





Indian Scout, Harley, and Ducati are the ones we have already catered to. We need both leisure and business groups to come in on a regular basis.

What do you have on offer for weddings?

Belagavi is a price-sensitive market. We are trying to position ourselves to those customers who would like to do a destination wedding but, for whatever reason, cannot afford to go to Agra, Jaipur, Jaisalmer or Goa. We want to promote ourselves as a residential wedding destination and therefore, have launched attractive packages with key partners. One of the packages that we have launched for residential weddings costs ₹50,000 per room, per day, for two occupants. This includes room, all meals, hall, basic decoration, and basic entertainment. There is another package for the local market for ₹200,000 net. This would include a function of up to 200 people and entail food and beverage, hall, basic décor, and basic music. The package substantially boils down to ₹1,000 per head with everything included. We also have ample number of venues for various functions, starting from mehendi to sangeet, wedding to reception. In addition, we can provide local shopping experiences at preferential rates. We haven't received such a demand yet but, proactively, have already discussed this option with local vendors. We also offer to take guests out, if required, for a day to Goa or Kolhapur, just to take them out of the hotel. These are the plethora of options we are willing to provide for a residential wedding group at literally half the price. If need be, we can give up to 80 rooms for wedding accommodation.

What do you view as hindrances to progress? The only deterrent at this moment is air connectivity from other Indian cities, especially We have launched attractive packages with key partners for residential destination weddings

the northern ones. Connectivity via road is already super. We need to change the mindset of the people to travel to this destination. Belagavi hasn't traditionally been used by people as a destination they can stay at. More than the property, it is the destination that needs to be promoted.

You say it is important to promote the destination. Is that being done enough?

This is where we are in talks with the government to understand and see what they are doing to promote the destination. The city has never been promoted for anything. Otherwise, there is a lot of activity which is happening around here. This has been announced as one of the smart cities. We have launched packages of several kinds that are available on our website. There are six to seven locations of historical importance within the city. Additionally, a new airport is being constructed with the purpose of starting another airline to come here under the Prime Minister's UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik) scheme.

What makes this hotel different from others under the Fairfield brand?

We have changed so much about the Fairfield brand for this region. Pure business or corporate travel is not contribute going to to more than 40 per cent of the business; what is really going to drive growth is leisure that includes the weekend stays, the MICE groups, and the summer vacationists. We aim to position the hotel more as a leisure destination.

Getting to BELAGAVI

⅔ By Air Daily flights from Bengaluru and Mumbai

By TRAIN Regular trains from major cities

BY ROAD Driving distance from Goa: 130 kms Driving distance from Bengaluru: 505 kms



Visa Updates



No departure cards for Indian travellers from July 1

According to an order issued by the Union Home Ministry, from July 1, 2017, Indians flying abroad will not have to fill departure cards. This move will enable hassle-free movement of Indians going abroad. Indians are already not required to fill such cards on their arrival in India. With this step, the time taken to complete immigration formalities will reduce considerably.



Mumbai Port to get e-Visa facility from December

Mumbai Port will soon be among those Indian ports in the country that will be able to offer e-Visa facilities to international cruise passengers. NS Rathor, Chairman, Western Region and Regional Chapter Chairman, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), says, "I was part of the meeting between Sanjay Bhatia, Chairman, Mumbai Port Trust, and the Bureau of Immigration officials who have principally agreed to allow the port to offer e-Visa facilities by December, 2017. Currently, only Mangalore, Goa, and Kochi offer this." Talks are on to offer this service





US visa to include social media information

A new enforcement by the Trump administration includes an extreme visa screening process for foreign nationals, including those from India, under which applicants might be asked to share information regarding their social media accounts, e-mails, and telephone numbers. The State Department, which issues visas to foreign nationals through its diplomatic missions across the world, said that it started implementing this new change from May 25, but these additional questions would be asked only in extreme circumstances. The State Department took these measures after President Trump signed an executive order in this regard. "In accordance with the memorandum on enhancing the screening and vetting of applications for visas, the Department of State has begun collecting additional information from visa applicants worldwide when a consular officer determines that such information is required to confirm identity or conduct more rigorous national security vetting," said Will Cocks, a State Department spokesperson.





Indians can now apply online for Australian visa from July 1, 2017

The Australian High Commission and Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection have announced that all Indian nationals will be able to lodge visitor visa applications for Australia, online, from July 1, 2017. The Acting Australian High Commissioner to India, Chris Elstoft, said that eligible Indian nationals can now apply online for a visitor visa through the Department's ImmiAccount portal. Online application offers benefits such as 24/7 accessibility and electronic payment of the visa application charge.



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CSR: Building teamwork or plastic practice?



Shivani Misri Sadhoo Founder Saarthi Counselling Services



Counsellor **Shivani Misri Sadhoo** on how today's business era is initiating CSR and winning the hearts of employees

ompanies today are working ahead of time to maintain balance of performance management while enabling social engagement through CSR activities. Especially in IT companies that have identified it as a way to beat the competition and to stay ahead in their industry, hiring and retaining the best talent is essential. To make an organisation the best place to work and to optimise the performance of its employees, companies nowadays set goals for their team leaders and managers to encourage their team to practice strong team building activities. These activities offer excellent opportunities for employees to improve communication skills, morale, motivation, productivity, and encourage them to help and support other employees. They get to know each other better and learn about each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Apart from the above, team building exercises deliver the following:

- a. Team building activities improve personal relations and strengthen professional bonding.
- b. Team building activities reduce the chances of confusion and misunderstandings, in a way making communication more effective. The individual is very clear about his/her goals and objectives and what exactly is expected of him/her.
- c. These exercises also increase trust among the employees.
- d. Productivity increases when individuals work as a team. They tend to divide work amongst themselves

and hence, objectives are achieved at a much faster pace.

e. Individuals feel more positive and confident. Stress disappears and it reflects on their work. Chances of mistakes reduce and people stop cribbing and blaming others. There is positivity all around.

There are four main types of team building activities, which include communication activities, problemsolving and/or decision-making activities, adaptability and/or planning activities, and activities that focus on building trust. These team building activities can be learned and practised under a proper trainer's guidance or can also be taught to employees by organising Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities where employees get to work together for a common social cause that helps them gain a sense of participation and responsibility along with the opportunity to practise teamwork.Employees get to come out of their daily office-routine mindset and interact freely and work together without hesitation. They forget each other's ranks or positions, see each other in informal clothes and behaviour, and forget their sense of internal insecurity and competition, and talk, trust, and act with a sense of belonging to each other. CSR activities are definitely of worth to an organisation to uplift their employee's sense of team spirit and belonging. They bring a lot of positive PR and vibe.





ARABIAN TRAVEL AWARDS	Dubai	4
TRAVEL WEDDING SHOW	Jaipur	8-9
HAWAII LODGING, HOSPITALITY & FOODSERVICE EXPO	Honolulu	12-13
GLOBAL PANORAMA SHOWCASE (GPS)	Ahmedabad	13 -15
IITM	Chennai	15-17
GBTA CONVENTION	Boston, USA	15-19
GLOBAL PANORAMA SHOWCASE (GPS)	Chandigarh	20 - 22
ІІТМ	Bengaluru	21-23
INDIA TRAVEL AWARDS EAST	Guwahati	26
GLOBAL PANORAMA SHOWCASE (GPS)	Kolkata	27-29
SINGAPORE MICE FORUM 2017	Singapore	27-28

AUGUST 2017

INDONESIA B2B MEETING	Ahmedabad	1
INDONESIA B2B MEETING	Pune	3
GLOBAL PANORAMA SHOWCASE (GPS)	Kochi	3-5
AMAZING THAILAND ROADSHOW	Kochi	7
AMAZING THAILAND ROADSHOW	Bengaluru	8
AMAZING THAILAND ROADSHOW	Chandigarh	9
GLOBAL PANORAMA SHOWCASE (GPS)	Pune	10-12
AMAZING THAILAND ROADSHOW	Lucknow	11
ACTE CONFERENCE	Tokyo	22-23
CHINA CIBTM	Beijing	23-24
ICPB CONVENTION	Hyderabad	29-31
LACITA USA	Florida	29-31

SEPTEMBER 2017		
IATO CONVENTION	Bhubaneswar	7-10
OTOAI CONVENTION	Ras Al Khaimah	12-15
PATA TRAVEL MART	Macao SAR	13-15
FHRAI CONVENTION	Bengaluru	14-16



Travel Wedding Show in Jaipur from July 8-9

The second edition of Travel Wedding Show 2017, is scheduled to be held in Jaipur

The Travel Wedding Show, being held in Jaipur, Rajasthan, will be graced by Chief Guest Rajeev Jain, Director – Rashi Entertainment, and Guest of Honour Hema Hariramani, Director–National Sales India at Marriott International. More than 30 high-profile exhibitors including Le Méridien Dubai Hotel & Conference Centre; The Oberoi Hotels & Resorts; Taj Hotels & Resorts; Ras Al Khaimah Tourism; Destination Canada and others are expected to be present at the event. Organised by PLG and DDP Exhibitions, the event addresses the need for a face-to-face opportunity between the travel and wedding sectors.

ARABIAN TRAVEL AWARDS

Maya to enchant Dubai on July 4

Arabian Travel Awards is set to recognise industry players at JW Marriott Hotel Dubai

A rabian Travel Awards is a platform for the Middle East market to appreciate the efforts of those travel specialists owing to whom the travel and hospitality industry is booming as ever. These awards are supported by TravelTV.news, TravTalk Middle East and TravTalk India, who are premier media partners for extensive coverage. Convener of the Awards, Gunjan Sabikhi, shares, "Arabian Travel Awards will be instrumental in improving the relationship of the winners with the suppliers, help build credibility, and also guide them to break into new markets."



movements



Ailsa Brown Vice President Asia Pacific Travelport Digital

Travelport Digital has announced the appointment of Ailsa Brown as Vice President, Asia Pacific. Having previously led Travelport's sales and commercial strategy in the region for many years, Brown will play a key role in maximising new opportunities and evangelizing Travelport Digital's business-transforming mobile engagement solutions for travel brands across Asia Pacific. Travelport is a travel commerce platform focused on providing solutions to global travel partners.



Oliver Bonke President & COO Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts has announced the appointment of Oliver Bonke as President and Chief Operating Officer. Bonke will assume responsibilities from September this year and will be based at Shangri-La's headquarters in Hong Kong. In the new role, Bonke will oversee the group's Executive Vice Presidents based in Asia, mainland China, and the Middle East, as well as the operational division heads of F&B, sales, marketing, rooms, engineering, security, and quality improvement. Bonke has nearly 30 years of experience in the industry, most recently with Loews Hotels.



Mukesh Jain Chief Technology Officer VFS Global

VFS Global has appointed Mukesh Jain to a newly created role of Chief Technology Officer. In this role, Jain will lead the company's strategic thrust towards introducing advanced technology-driven projects that involve digital transformation, innovation, analytics, and interoperability of systems. Jain joins VFS Global's senior leadership team and reports directly to VFS Global Group CEO, Zubin Karkaria. He will be based out of the company's Mumbai office. Prior to joining VFS Global, Jain worked for Microsoft Corporation and for Reliance Jio, among other companies.



Vijay Jaiswal Sr. VP – Sales & Marketing Sarovar Hotels

Vijay Jaiswal has been appointed as Sr. Vice President – Sales & Marketing at Sarovar Hotels. An industry adept professional, Jaiswal brings with him over 29 years' experience in the hospitality industry. At Sarovar Hotels, he will be responsible for overseeing the planning and implementation of sales, marketing, and product development programmes for each brand targeted towards existing and new markets. Prior to joining Sarovar Hotels, Jaiswal was associated with ITC Hotels as Head of Sales & Marketing for Fortune Hotels.



Deep Vahi Director of Sales Courtyard by Marriott Mumbai International Airport

Deep Vahi joins Courtyard by Marriott Mumbai International Airport as Director of Sales. With an illustrious career in the hospitality industry, Vahi brings over 11 years of experience working with various international brands like The Oberoi Mumbai and Marriott International. He started his career in 2006 and joined the Marriott family in 2008 as a Sales Executive at JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu and slowly paved his way to being a Sales Centre Manager. In 2013, he decided to venture out to start his own business with Mint Hospitality – Café Royale.



Rakesh Bhandari Associate Director Sales India, SunLux Collection by Sun International

Outbound Marketing has appointed Rakesh Bhandari as Associate Director Sales, India, for SunLux Collection by Sun International. Bhandari has been with Outbound Marketing handling AccorHotels' sales distribution for four years. Bhandari is a dedicated sales person with a track record of achieving high sales targets. Outbound Marketing is a one-stop outsourced solution company that provides cost-effective distribution solutions.



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