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business in
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segment will
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the **INBOUND** business magazine
MICetalk
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PUBLISHER & EDITOR

Sanjeet

SENIOR CORRESPONDENT

Neha Rawat

DESK EDITOR

Smita Kulshreshtha

DESIGN

Raashi Ajmani Girdhar

ADVERTISING

Nikhil Jeet

Gaganpreet Kaur

Meetu Malhotra

Rakesh Kashyap

+91 9650399910

ADVERTISEMENT DESIGNERS

Vikas Mandotia

Nitin Kumar

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Anil Kharbanda

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Ashok Rana

MUMBAI: ADVERTISING

Harshal Ashar

Priyanshu Wankhade

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Tamarind Global



DDP Publications Private Limited

New Delhi:
72, Todarmal Road,
New Delhi 110001, India
Tel: +91 11 23234177,
E-mail: talk@ddpl.com

Mumbai:
504 Marine Chambers, 43 New Marine Lines, Mumbai
400 020, India

Tel: +91-22-22070129, 22070130
Fax: +91-22-22070131
E-mail: mumbai@ddpl.com

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NEWS



For the first time since the lockdown, govt has allowed foreign businessmen, healthcare professionals & engineers to visit India provided they obtain fresh visas.



Airports need to attract more non-stop, long-haul services: CAPA India

In its webinar, 'Reinventing the Airport Business Model in India', CAPA India said that the current crisis must force a re-think and re-invention of the airport business model over the next five years. Airports need to attract more non-stop, long-haul and wide-body services.



One has to keep the interest alive in foreign tourists. They prefer to relish the experience of tourism & India has a huge opportunity there, offering a plethora of products.

Meenakshi Sharma
Director General – Tourism



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NEWS



The Fern Hotels & Resorts is looking to partner with standalone hotels. Param Kannampilly, Chairman & MD, The Fern Hotels & Resorts, says, "The association will help individual hotels grow their corporate, M!CE & leisure business in these uncertain times."

GoAir offers GoFlyPrivate

In another first from GoAir, the airline introduced GoFlyPrivate wherein customers can book multiple rows and create their own private zone. GoFlyPrivate allows the customer to decide how many rows or seats he / she wants to block. Commenting on the innovation, **Jeh Wadia**, Managing Director, GoAir, said, "GoAir is the first airline in India to bring the confines of a charter flight to someone who can't afford it at the moment. GoFlyPrivate costs a fraction of a full-fledged private charter flight and it provides the same sense of privacy that the customer would otherwise feel in a private charter."



Rajasthan govt announces more relief for tourism & hospitality sector

Under Rajasthan Investment Promotion Scheme the govt announced relief for one extra year to units in tourism & hotel sector. The cabinet also decided to extend the period for reimbursement of SGST to hotel & tour operators by three months to one year.



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It's time to review policies

Speaking at the GMR group webinar, Ajay Singh, Chairman & Managing Director, SpiceJet said that it was time India's key cities for passenger traffic became hubs for global aviation

Nisha Verma

Ajay Singh said it is time that airports like Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad became global aviation hubs. "Airlines and countries across the world have used aviation as a strategic resource to increase the size and value of their hubs, to in turn increase tourism and business in their countries. Unfortunately, we have gone the other way. We have promoted foreign airlines in our country. Hence, this is our moment to ensure that we make India-centric policies and at least those policies are reciprocal



Ajay Singh




QUICK BYTE This is our moment to ensure that we make India-centric policies

in terms of passenger numbers," he stated.

Singh added, "India has a very liberal policy compared

to the policies of China or even the Middle East. This is a great opportunity if we just apply our minds. We know that we need to compete

with airlines that have got billions of dollars from their countries. Hence, if we don't have the luxury of being in a rich country to be supported financially, we should at least be supported by policy measures and we are hoping that with the PM's vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', some of this is going to happen."



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FEEL THE DIFFERENCE





Big-ticket business in India

The third session of TravTalk Digital Conclave presented an opportunity for India to shine as a MICE and wedding destination. More than 1,800 individuals were part of this session

Hazel Jain

The third edition of TravTalk Digital Conclave brought together three experts who deliberated on the topic titled 'Big-ticket business: When do we start looking at weddings, corporate and MICE travel?' There can be no simple answer to this, of course. The readiness of not only the corporates but also the service providers such as hotels and event planners is a process.

Opening the session on an energetic and powerful note was **Rajeev Jain**, Director, Rashi Entertainment. He said, "I don't know why there is such a hue and

cry about this pandemic. Those companies that have cash reserves shouldn't have any problem right now. Let me tell you that hoteliers, wedding planners and wedding management companies have made their money until February 2020, after which we saw several lockdowns.

The last wedding we did was in Udaipur on February 29, 2020. We are now in the off-

WORD FROM MOT

"We want travel to take centre stage with MICE tourism as its component. For this to happen, protocols and SOPs have to be in place and every stakeholder has to be informed about it. We have to position ourselves as a country that is safe for MICE" – Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, MOT

season, so there would have been no weddings in June anyway. By next year, the wedding industry will be up by 15-20 per cent. Anyway, nothing happens before November and December."

As per Jain's forecast, the wedding industry will bounce back between December 2020 and January 2021. He added, "It will return to normal by this time. Yes, I agree that the wedding size will get smaller with 100-200 guests as against the usual 1,000 guests. But from February 2021 things will be alright and business will be rocking as usual."

QUICK BYTE The wedding industry will bounce back between December 2020 and January 2021

RECOVERY WILL BE IN PHASES

Sharing his perspective from a tour operator's point of view keeping M!CE in mind, **Rajeev Kale**, President and Country Head – Holidays, MICE, Visa – Thomas Cook (India), said he would like to differ with Jain as far as this segment is concerned. "These are unprecedented times. But, whenever there is a disruption, there is also an opportunity. Those travel companies that can actually invest this interim time in re-imagining and re-inventing their business model will be able to survive this. Year 2020 is the time for companies to look at how their business will be in a post-COVID-19 scenario.

If we are hoping that things will go back to being as they were until March 2020, the answer is a big no! It is going to be a completely different business going forward. I recommend everyone to invest in technology systems, knowledge-building and sharing, and building relationships," Kale said.

He feels that the recovery will be in phases. "If we are thinking that M!CE will bounce back by July 2020, the answer is no. It will take time because today, the concern is about safety. There is fear in the minds of travellers. First, this fear needs to settle down and a vaccine needs to be in place," Kale stated.

WHAT DO CORPORATES SAY?

With 22 years of experience in the travel and corporate sector, **Rajdev Bhattacharya**, General Manager, Global Travel & Hospitality Services and Way2go, Digital Operations & Platforms for Wipro, feels that starting today, the industry needs to change the narrative of the crisis.



Rajeev Jain

The wedding size will get smaller with 100-200 guests



Rajeev Kale

Invest in technology & building relationships



Rajdev Bhattacharya

Corporates will pay a premium for brands focused on hygiene standards

"The mindset is important. We are going to look at 2020 and say that it made us more resilient and stronger. We must work with our circle of influence. The rest is not in our hands," he said.

WEDDINGS MUST TAKE PLACE IN INDIA

While weddings cannot stop taking place, Jain said that as an event planner, he wants to conduct every wedding in India this coming season. "As Indians, we have to ensure that all the revenue stays in India. We have to support our own hotels and destinations first. The expense is not a hurdle as people have money to spend on weddings. They start saving for this one event 20 years in advance. So, they have enough savings. The wedding industry is here to stay! First, we need to fill Indian hotels. Anyway, right now we are scared to travel. Yes, there will be new norms for weddings. But we will adapt. I am very optimistic about this. In fact, I'm sold out for November 2020!" claimed Jain.

DOMESTIC M!CE WILL PICK UP

Taking this thought forward, Kale believes that domestic luxury M!CE will bounce back first. "It will be affordable luxury as the hotels will be hungry for business due to low occupancies. The big chains such as Marriott will open first. And, by end of the year, short-distance M!CE destinations in India will be in demand. India will definitely be our focus and why not – it has everything to offer so why look elsewhere," he said.

TOP INDIAN DESTINATIONS FOR WEDDINGS

For Jain, India offers many options for destination weddings. "Rajasthan has

always been a popular destination for weddings. Jaipur takes the biggest share of the pie, followed by Udaipur. We are also trying to develop new spots in Rajasthan such as Pushkar, apart from Jodhpur which has huge potential. We are also looking at newer destinations in other states such as Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu. It promises to have a huge share in the wedding market. And, of course, Goa that has always been very popular," he said.

In terms of M!CE travel though, Kale feels that cities like Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata and Mahabalipuram will be great destinations that have good infrastructure. "In terms of exhibitions, our 'Make in India' programme and the 'Atma Nirbhar' scheme will give the sector a lot of opportunities for exhibitions within India. The government has also come up with certain policies for M!CE, one of them being extending monetary benefits to any exhibition organiser that has 20 per cent of foreign delegates. My view is that in the last quarter of 2020, we will see a lot of RFPs for exhibitions coming up and those who are armed to handle it well amidst COVID-19 will stand to win," he said.

In the end though, whichever city it is, the hotel brands that show huge emphasis on hygiene and sanitation will come back strongly as customers will choose them over others. Bhattacharya said, "There will be a willingness on the part of all corporates to pay a premium for brands which will showcase their high hygiene standards. This is the primary shift from the price point of view of corporates."

Customer is ready. Are you?

Wipro's webinar on building a resilient future for travel agencies focussed on how they should draw up a blueprint to bring about their digital transformation

Hazel Jain



Amit Madhan
President & Group Head (IT & eBusiness), Thomas Cook India

There is no behaviour change that is required in a customer. That has already happened. There is a lot of technology available but you have to be creative in using it. Just look around you; there is so much innovation happening in everyday life. In future, you will have many different solutions similar to what you have in the iOS environment. You will have apps that will be suitable for some travel agencies and not others. This isn't a time for optimisation but looking at a new way of doing things.



Jyoti Mayal
President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)

We work more on relationships in the travel industry in India. To transition from that to using technology will require time and effort. It's also a factor of cost and choosing the right product for the agent. To rebuild our businesses now, we will require technology. TAAI has been trying to educate its members on this and it is also why we are looking for a good technology partner who can guide our members. Virtual reality is also going to play a very big role in this industry going forward.



Rajdev Bhattacharya
Global Head Travel & Hospitality Services and Way2Go, Wipro

Technology doesn't mean the human touch will disappear. The customer is ready now and if you don't do it now, then when? The time is now. Now is the time to reset your business OTP – Operations, Technology and Process. Travel industry giants have already announced restructuring and are moving to the next phase of optimisation and serious technology investments. For many agents it is their last chance to act. We at Wipro Way2go are completely ready to be your technology partner.



Peyush Agarwal
MD Designit

Technology can be intimidating but it is totally worth it. One thing that agencies should look at is service design. Re-imagine how a service is rendered into the world and what is needed to interact with the customer as well as at the back-end. This pandemic has put into perspective how services need to run. It's no longer enough to give information. Agents need to ask what is the value proposition they bring to client? How can they use their professional relationship to connect a chain of service for clients so they realise what you bring to the table is unique.

Going Digital

‘Tech will see us through’

Sharon Neetal, GM – BD (Conferences), HITECH, discusses how they have reworked their capacity charts to meet the new norms and created SOPs for venue handovers

Neha Rawat

What are the guidelines for large as well as small format events?

Masks, temperature checks and hand sanitisation are mandatory; seating and networking areas will maintain the standard set; safe food dispensing and disposal will be followed; awareness sign boards on social hygiene and physical distancing will be strategically placed around the show venue.

Would your focus on technology now change?

Yes definitely, technology is what will see us



Sharon Neetal



M!CE FACILITIES 3 large halls of 3,500 sq mt; 5 meeting rooms; outdoor arena of 30,000 sq mt

through. Registrations with online payments; recorded temperature

checks; controlled entry – maintaining the prescribed number of people within a

closed venue with an option to book your entry time; virtually attending the show for those who can't travel; are some of the features we are exploring.

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Bringing the best of service

Vikas Ahluwalia, GM & National Head, Zone by THE Park Hotels shares how they are focusing on the health, well-being and wellness of their guests amidst the pandemic

Neha Rawat

How are you preparing for M!CE activities in the new normal?

In the new normal a drop for face-to-face meetings is anticipated with more demand for high-quality

integrated-hybrid-virtual-live streamed meetings as well as events.

We have put in place various protocols as advised by the relevant authorities



Vikas Ahluwalia

and incorporated it in SHIELD, an abbreviated form for S: Sanitisation, H: Hygiene, I: ISO Standard Equipment, E: Excellence, L: Luxury Redefined, and D: Distancing. This is an all-encompassing programme that brings the best of luxury, design, hygiene, safety and service excellence, all under one roof. As health-wellbeing-wellness

CHOICES We have stopped buffets at our hotels for now; in banquets we are offering various options

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has become a top priority for travellers we have incorporated the same in our menus and guest offerings

Do you have different rules/guidelines for large groups and small ones?

The guidelines are the same – strict precautionary safety and heightened hygiene and sanitation practices.

We have implemented measures at all our hotels along with steps to assuage the concerns of people

about busy public areas due to the nature of the virus.

Will you be continuing with buffets? What precautions will you take for food service?

We have stopped buffets at our hotels for now, but in banquets we are offering various options for our guests to choose from – interactive cooking station, meal on a plate, etc. However, if guests particularly require buffets then we have laid down SOPs for the same.

M!CE FACILITIES

- Zone by THE Park Kolkata has 5,000 sq ft of space in the hotel and is attached to Biswa Bangla Convention Centre Kolkata, one of the largest convention spaces in India
- Zone Palace by THE Park Jaipur has 1,10,000 sq ft of indoor and outdoor venues
- Zone by THE Park Raipur offers 9,500 sq ft of indoor banqueting spaces

What steps will you take if someone tests positive for corona in a M!CE group?

We have laid down SOPs, guidelines in our SHIELD

programme for someone who tests positive in our hotels. We work closely with local health authorities and take necessary steps as per the local guidelines.

Are you looking at the Indian wedding market as well? What is going to be different in the new normal?

Weddings are a critical part of our social space and will keep happening though with certain changes. We have hosted few small weddings as permitted by the administration across our hotels immediately after the restrictions were removed post the lockdown.

As of now, we are working with our partners and service providers to follow safety protocols and are also offering customised packages.



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Wedding segment will bounce back

A panel discussion conducted by 1524 Delhi recently brought some wedding planners together who shared their perspectives on how this segment is likely to unfold

Hazel Jain



Vandana Mohan
Founder, Wedding Design Company & Backstage Productions

Destination weddings will take a backseat this year and the segment will eventually see a V-shaped recovery. Indians are resilient and are risk-takers, and I'm sure that when the demand returns, it will be back with

a flood. For now, we are not encouraging our clients to travel much. If they do want to travel, we advise them to travel either to driving distances or do a charter for a group. Also, we convey to them that they must travel within

India, if possible. What hotels must look at meanwhile is to conduct virtual tours for planners and list down the specifications that are available for them to use during an event. This usually gets missed out.



Sushil Shamlal Wadhwa
Founder & CMD, Platinum World Group

Until we have a real cure in sight, weddings and celebrations will be small, intimate affairs of around 50-60 people. The hotels stand to gain in the first wave, but the wedding planner may not have a big role to play.

It may not be a viable proposition for us to put in that much effort for 50 people and not make that sort of revenue. So, hotels might be the bigger gainer. We will need to gear up with adequate resources and team members to

be ready to handle the V-shaped recovery where we might be struggling with resources. I think we will see the real upswing from October 2021. The year 2020 will just be about keeping ourselves relevant.



Dinaz Noria
Founder, 3D – Design & Décor by Dina

In the south of India where I live (Hyderabad), everything happens according to the *muhuratam*, which is the auspicious time and date for the ceremony. In fact, it is so important here that we have already started getting

inquiries for weddings in August and October. But due to the restrictions for events, a lot of these families are asking if they can do their weddings outside India. The big question however is, how and where. Charter flights

are one option, but sanitisation of the aircraft is a question and so is safety in hotels. That is where big brands come into the picture as they are the ones who can rebuild confidence among guests that their properties are safe.

Mahesh Shiroadkar

Managing Director, Tamarind Global

I have stopped making predictions; there is too much uncertainty. We are currently only engaging with HNI clients and vendors. Everything will be ruled by government mandates. There are weddings in November and December, but the window

of finalisation is going to be crunched. What could happen also is that wedding ceremonies might take place in India but couples may look at short-haul destinations in Southeast Asia and Middle East for post-wedding events. Flexibility in contracts

and shortage of time in terms of confirmation of contracts from hotels is going to be the order of the day. Hotels might gain by doing virtual tours for each client. They must also look at having a loyalty programme for wedding planners to incentivise them.



Karan Singh

Chairman & Co-Founder, 1524 Delhi

Encouraged by the feedback received from some of India's leading wedding planners, we are optimistic that the wedding industry will see a V-shaped recovery post the pandemic. Ultra-wealthy

clients will continue to favour destination weddings.

In the early part of the upcoming wedding season, we expect the demand to be largely for short-haul

destinations requiring no more than one flight, such as Dubai, Turkey, Bangkok, etc. Post February, clients are likely to venture further afield and explore destinations in Europe and beyond.



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Weddings amid COVID-19

Naresh Arora, Managing Director at Truly India Hotels & Resorts talks about measures for food sanitation, safety regulations and "lockdown destination wedding offers"

Neha Rawat

What precautions will you take for food service?

Food sanitation and safety regulations are paramount to ensure the health of consumers. We will adjust menus based on demand, avoid exotic/wild animal meat and limit options to globally accepted livestock, and include more organic and healthy items. Food displays and buffets need to be protected by food shields (sneeze guards), and proper equipment will be installed to keep the food temperature safe.



Naresh Arora



QUICK BYTE We have come up with "lockdown destination wedding offers" for 50 pax

Are you looking at the Indian wedding market?

We have come up with "lockdown destination

wedding offers" for 50 pax, charges for one-night are 2.99 lakhs and for two-nights, 4.99 lakhs. This

package includes all meals (decent menus); mineral water in rooms; tea coffee 24/7; 25 rooms on double occupancy; mandap set up (decent decoration); and DJ set up. Also, for an extra person sharing the same room, we charge ₹3,000 per person per day.



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‘Grand Weddings’ at Hyatt

Anish Kuttan, Director of Operations at Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty shares details on how weddings will be different in the new normal & their existing M!CE facilities

Neha Rawat

Are you looking at the Indian wedding market as well? What will be different in the new normal?

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Please give us details on your available M!CE facilities.

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Anish Kuttan



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features four villas with private access and plunge pools. Guests can host receptions and dinners on our Lulu Event Boat, on the backwaters of Vembanad lake. The leisure houseboat – Nattika – is apt for a team lunch on the backwaters.



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The show must go on

This pandemic has threatened our very existence and our best survival strategy is togetherness. If we are able to come together as ONE, we will have the strength of MANY.

Rajeev Jain



Rajeev Jain

I believe that it is the time of the small and medium enterprises like ourselves – who comprise the bulk of the industry – to make a difference. We are businessmen with our feet firmly planted on the ground. We are the most challenged at this time and need to look for solutions. The focus has to be on Action that will make a difference in these times. We need to look for Profit in everything we do & for everyone we work with.

can never go out of fashion. Ten thousand fans in a stadium can cheer the music of a popular artist, swinging with the beats – will you get the same experience in front of a screen with a fizzy drink and popcorn? Technology has its own place. It is a great value addition but it can never substitute the ‘real thing’. Don’t worry, keep the faith – the ‘REAL THING’ will be BACK. Yes, with safety measures in place. Yes, with some changes – but, THE

entrepreneurial solutions to usher in happiness. Our ‘Togetherness is Taakat’ – it is our strength. Our collaboration will help us draw upon each other’s strengths and negate our weaknesses. This will have to be gender and age agnostic simply because the focus on profit cannot afford to discriminate.

Future forward

I have spent more than two decades in this industry and what I have learnt is that ‘The Show Must Go On.’ There is no denying that the Indian experiential and wedding industry is currently suffering and agencies are struggling to stay afloat. But I believe our industry will enjoy a revival soon. New SOPs will emerge and with innovation and technology our industry will create new engagement models which will help us brave our way through the pandemic. Domestic destinations will be the most sought-after for large weddings as international markets will be shunned. This will provide event companies more opportunities and several corporate event companies will also begin to use their expertise for wedding design, planning and management. Of course, the profit margins will be reduced, but celebrations and weddings will sustain our industry till corporate spenders are back.

(Rajeev Jain is Director of Rashi Entertainment. The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author.)



QUICK BYTE Celebrations and weddings will sustain our industry till corporate spenders are back



New SOPs will emerge and with innovation & tech our industry will create new engagement models



Tech slowly taking over?

Technology, like it does for everything, will help here too. However, let us consider that the human being has five senses – sight, sound, smell, touch, taste – tell me, which of these is virtual? Humans like meeting other humans, they like the physical ‘experience’ – that’s why our business is called ‘experiential’ – that’s why it

REAL THING WILL BE BACK! Even if it is small in the beginning, we need to execute our events with maximum sanitisation & build confidence. With every passing day, the audience numbers will increase & the economy will open up slowly. I see us united to create a difference, beat these bad times, focused on profit and creating

Movements in India



Abinash Manghani
CEO
WelcomHeritage

WelcomHeritage has appointed Abinash Manghani as its Chief Executive Officer. In a career spanning three decades, Manghani has traversed his professional journey wearing several hats primarily in tourism, hospitality & real estate advisory services. His last position was Area Manager & Head – Travel Industry Sales for ITC Hotels where he was responsible for the leisure & luxury verticals for ITC Hotels on a national basis.



Puneet Dhawan
Senior VP Operations
Accor

Accor has announced the appointment of Puneet Dhawan as Senior VP Operations, India & South Asia. He will handle the group's operations and strategies to ensure Accor's continued growth momentum in India & South Asia. Dhawan has been with Accor for over two decades and has held key positions across countries such as Australia, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, UAE and The Philippines. His most recent role was General Manager at Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila.



Anjali Mehra
VP Marketing, The Leela
Palaces, Hotels & Resorts

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts has appointed Anjali Mehra as Vice President Marketing. Mehra brings with her over two decades of experience in hospitality Brand Marketing and Communications. She has worked in Dubai as Regional Director Communications, Africa, from 2015-2017. Prior to joining The Leela, Mehra was the Senior Director Communications Middle East and Africa, Marriott International.



Sudhanshu Kumar Singh
General Manager
Marriott Courtyard, Nashik

Sudhanshu Kumar Singh has been appointed as General Manager at Marriott Courtyard – Nashik. Earlier to the assignment, Singh was General Manager at Fairfield By Marriott – Visakhapatnam, Marriott Hotel & Convention Center – Hyderabad, Marriott Courtyard – Hyderabad, Fairfield By Marriott, Indore. During his two decades in the hospitality industry, he has been a recipient of the 'Athithi Devo Bhava' award from Govt. of India.



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Focus on weddings & M!CE



EXPERT TALK 12

Shital Kakkar Mehra
shares tips on
working effectively
from home

Picture on
the cover: Freepik

NEWS



WTM London is set to take place

between November 2-4, 2020

at ExCeL. WTM is also hosting 'WTM London

Virtual' on November 10-11.



PATA Travel Mart 2020 goes virtual; slated to be held late-September

PATA has announced that the upcoming PATA Travel Mart 2020, originally to be held in Leshan, Sichuan, China from September 3-6, will now be organised as a virtual event in late September this year. The event, held in conjunction with the Sichuan International Tourism Expo and with the support of the Leshan Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism Bureau, will include webinars, virtual exhibition space and one-on-one virtual meetings.



We are gearing up to resume events at DWTC shortly in this second half of the year. The M!CE sector is a key pillar of our economy.

HE Saeed Almarri
Director General, DWTC



'Let Us Take Care of You' campaign

Accor's 'Let Us Take Care of You' campaign invites travellers to explore the world at their doorstep. For the guest booking directly through Accor channels, they will avail 20% discount on BAR (Best Available Rate). The booking period is from July 15 to September 3, 2020 for stays starting from July 15 to October 31, 2020.

Radisson Blu Waterfront ready for international guests

SGS has validated the hotel's full compliance with all the health, safety, disinfection protocols as outlined in the Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol which includes a 20-step protocol and a 10-step protocol specifically defined for meetings & events. The hotel is ready for international guests.



Book meetings with confidence at Mandarin



Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group has introduced an exclusive 'Booking with Confidence' group meeting offer. Valid until January 31, 2021, Mandarin Oriental will waive any cancellation fees should government and travel guidelines give rise to event cancellation, provided that advance notice is received at least 30 days ahead of the event. Meeting planners can also enjoy a range of group concessions.

Osaka guidelines for M!CE

The Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau has released guidelines keeping in mind the need to create an environment where M!CE events can restart while mitigating infection risk

The Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau has released guidelines for organisers who may face many unforeseen challenges when holding events under these unprecedented circumstances.

They can use these guidelines to construct an event plan that ensures peace of mind for event attendees.

PRE-EVENT PREPARATIONS

- Ensure cleaning and disinfection of

communal facilities and ventilation inside the venue.

- There should be procedures in place for cancellations/postponement.
- Document the division of roles & areas of responsibility between organiser & venue.

PREPARATIONS DURING THE EVENT

- Create an emergency document database and involve associate companies in this process.
- Disinfectant dispensers should be there at all sites along with disposable



EVENT PLAN Organisers can use the guidelines to construct an event plan that ensures peace of mind

- masks. There should be minimal contact with devices and equipment.
- Reduction of queues at the registration section,

reception, etc. should be maintained.

- Request all participants to avoid being in close proximity with each other.



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Mr Divyam Singhania,
Director, MMCPL

“We had a lot of fun on this tour. (Harsh) sorted out a mess which was not of his own making but he did it professionally. So I'm very happy with the services.”

Re-starting business events in Singapore

Keith Tan,
Chief Executive,
STB talks about
resuming M!CE
activities

Shehara Rizly

Could you explain the strategies taken by STB to resume M!CE activities?

Singapore Tourism Board is preparing for the calibrated and safe resumption of B2B events in the coming months. To do so, STB has developed a Safe Business Event Risk Management Framework for business events of up to 50 attendees, based on strict safe management measures. STB will trial this framework with two pilot events before gradually scaling up to other events and event organisers thereafter.

What key outcomes should event organisers look at?

Under the framework, event organisers must achieve five key outcomes – infection control measures for every stage of an event attendee's journey (pre- to post-event); limits on crowd density; limits on close contacts between individuals; ensuring a safe and clean environment; and preparing for emergencies relating to COVID-19.

How has the M!CE industry supported the creation of virtual & hybrid business events?

The STB framework was created in consultation with the industry and is aligned with international best practices. It arises from reflections and lessons learnt over the past few months, when businesses in Singapore's M!CE sector conceptualised and re-imagined what a safe event could look like. Apart from adopting best practices

in safety, hygiene and sanitisation, Singapore's M!CE businesses have also experimented with innovative digital solutions such as technology to support the creation of virtual and hybrid business events.

Are there any upcoming hybrid events?

Hybrid formats with a mix of face-to-face and virtual interactions are likely to be the norm for business events in the near future. To prepare for this transition, STB's framework will be applied to two potential hybrid events, viz., the 2020 IEEE International Conference on Computational Electromagnetics to be held from August 24 – 26, 2020, and the Asia Pacific MedTech Virtual Forum 2020 on September 24. Each event will feature a maximum of 50 onsite attendees, in addition to approximately 1,000



TREND Hybrid formats with a mix of face-to-face & virtual interactions are likely to be the norm



Keith Tan

attendees participating virtually across both events.

Are there any measures in place to guide M!CE businesses in Singapore?

To provide further guidance for our M!CE businesses, STB and Enterprise Singapore (ESG) are collaborating with the Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (SACEOS) to formulate an Industry Resilience Roadmap – a public-private partnership focused on three strategic objectives – establishing best-in-class standards for new event safety measures; creating agile business models with a focus on digital capabilities; & developing pathways for professional development in the post-COVID-19 world.

STB has developed a Safe Business Event Risk Management Framework for business events of up to 50 attendees



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24 PROPERTIES

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Lindsay White, Etihad Airways' Vice President, Eastern Region (APAC and ISC), shares details about what the airline has been doing to make their corporate passengers feel safe before boarding & during their flight

Hazel Jain



Innovate and adapt

What are your views on corporate travel and M!CE sectors picking up this year from and into India?

The situation is dynamic, and no one has a crystal ball to predict what the travel landscape will look like as countries are likely to open their borders at different times. While travel restrictions are still in place, we have been working closely with the UAE government and global aviation authorities to ensure we gradually grow our network. We've expanded our network even further in July and August, and plan to operate to more than 58 worldwide destinations across Europe,

Middle East and Africa, North America, Asia and Australia as well as the Indian sub-continent.

Are you engaging with the trade in India, especially those who pick up corporate and business travel?

Our trade partners have been cooperative, and we are thankful for their continued support. We understand that the situation is dynamic and one that none of us have experienced before, leading to a lot of uncertainty and apprehensions among people. To provide maximum support to our trade partners, our teams have been working around



Lindsay White

the clock to make sure they are the first ones to know about our new policies, updated global network, procedures and other developments. We have also been regularly engaging in knowledge sharing sessions and have conducted various webinars to build industry confidence and keep our trade partners updated.

FLEXIBILITY

If guests are scheduled to fly with Etihad Airways before November 30, 2020, they can rebook their flight for free, or use the value of their ticket as credit towards their next trip. Tickets must have been issued before August 31, 2020 to be eligible, and standard fare rules will apply

Is there any new product offering for business class or corporate passengers on Etihad?

Last month, we launched 'Etihad Wellness', a comprehensive health and hygiene programme and customer guide. This is championed by the introduction of specially trained Wellness Ambassadors, a first in the industry, who will provide essential travel health information and care, from pre-flight and at the airport

STATS We offered members 40% more bonus miles when transferring loyalty points into Guest Miles

as well as on-board. All our Wellness Ambassadors, a multi-lingual and dedicated team, undergo special training at the airline's training facilities in Abu Dhabi. They are available 24/7 and guests can reach out to them via e-mail. They will also be available at Abu Dhabi International Airport as well as on-board to ensure guests are assisted at every point of their journey.

Is Etihad looking to make any changes/tweaks to its loyalty programme?

The pandemic has impacted every industry, and every business will have to re-strategise and adapt.

For our Etihad Guest, we have initiated multiple activities to support our loyalty members across the globe. We have adapted our programme to introduce

NDC STRATEGY

Earlier this month, Etihad Airways announced its partnership with Travelfusion for its New Distribution Capability (NDC) strategy launched earlier this year, providing access for travel agents & corporate clients to the airline's content and enhancing the sales distribution of tickets and ancillaries.

new ways for guests to earn and redeem their miles. We offered members 40 per cent more bonus miles when transferring loyalty points into Etihad Guest Miles for the first time from a range of partner programmes across banking, telecommunications and hotels.



Flexibility is the new currency in air travel. Are you looking to further extend flexibility on bookings made on Etihad, particularly to your corporate and business travellers?

Etihad has introduced a range of travel waivers, solutions and benefits to

help ease the burden and provide maximum flexibility. In March this year, Etihad Airways introduced Etihad Credit, giving guests the freedom to delay their travel by permitting free cancellation and offering the original value of their booking to be used as credit towards their next trip.

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M!CE in the Philippines

With guidelines in place, our stakeholders will be assured that their health and well-being is protected, says Tourism Secretary **Bernadette Romulo-Puyat**

The Department of Tourism, Philippines, has allowed meetings and conventions to take place under the modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) at 50 per cent capacity. The world is gradually opening up to tourism as well as the M!CE



Bernadette Romulo-Puyat

Disease (IATF-EID) shall be observed. Persons below 21, and over 60 years old, are prohibited from participating in any M!CE events, even under MGCQ, in accordance with the IATF rules. Meanwhile, Puyat also signed a Memorandum Circular on the health and safety guidelines

well-being is protected, as we maintain our position as an established M!CE destination," she said.

MICE organisers are required to formulate an emergency preparedness plan to prevent the spread of infection at the M!CE event. At the same time, the venue operator is required to designate an isolation room or area where persons who feel unwell while at the M!CE event may be brought to before referral to medical personnel, based on the prescribed protocols of the Department of Health (DOH).

Guidelines also require seating arrangements for different venue set-ups such as the one-metre distance between seats for conference and breakout rooms, and the two-person-maximum for each six-foot table. Exhibit layout shall have wider aisles than usual, preferably more than three metres. No adjacent booths shall be directly facing each other.

Buffet set-up and self-service will be prohibited. Pre-packed individual meals and drinks shall be the standard means of food packaging throughout the event. "Similarly, we would like to reiterate that they also need to comply with the applicable issuances of the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and other sector-related agencies for compliance with the minimum public health standards," Puyat emphasised.



sector, and though events and meetings are required to follow strict guidelines and adhere to a limit on the number of attendees, the move is set to help an industry and its people that have already been hit hard.

Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat recently signed the Administrative Order, also known as 'Guidelines on M!CE Operations under the MGCQ'. Based on the guidelines, M!CE events in areas under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ), modified ECQ,

REVIVAL M!CE tourism plays a critical role with its innate characteristic to boost local economy

and general community quarantine (GCQ) are strictly prohibited. Exemptions are those conducted through online platforms facilitated without physical interaction.

The guidelines also stress that the rules on inter-zonal and intra-zonal movement under the Inter Agency Task Force on the Emerging Infectious

governing the operations of M!CE organisers and venues or facilities under the new normal. "M!CE tourism plays a critical role in our recovery with its innate characteristic to boost local economy, generate employment and directly benefit tourism entrepreneurs. With these guidelines in place, our stakeholders will be assured that their health and

Luring corporate travellers

The sixth edition of CAPA Masterclass Series discussed the challenges that airlines will face to bring back their cash cow – the corporate travellers



Peter Harbison
Chairman Emeritus
CAPA – Centre of Aviation

Just how safe is it for an employer to ask an employee to travel internationally by air or any other mode? Moreover, once the bean counters have seen that they don't have to spend this much money in the short-term, you're going to have to justify why you need to travel



Richard Maslen
Analyst & Content Editor
The Blue Swan Daily

CAPA – Centre of Aviation
Corporate travel will be more about ROI, going forward. It's going to be difficult for airlines to re-assess where demand is. They base everything on data, and all historical data is basically irrelevant now. It's a whole new world out there.



Jonathan Wober
Chief Financial Analyst
CAPA – Centre for Aviation

Consumer confidence will be driven to some extent by aviation hygiene standards. We've seen no significant airlines go out of business so far. But in the recovery phases, it could be challenging as costs come back into the equation. But the extent to which revenue comes back is unknown.





Work from home, effectively

Our expert **Shital Kakkar Mehra** shares tips on how to enhance your productivity while working from home



Shital Kakkar Mehra
*Practitioner of Corporate
Etiquette and International
Protocol in India*

As companies grapple with ways to navigate the current COVID-19 crisis, one of the biggest game-changers has been the number of professionals who are working from home. In the past few days, corporations in India have been experimenting with different formats – some have quickly moved to work from home while others are recommending certain days of the week only. Whatever the format, working from home can pose several challenges as it requires working without supervision and the presence of your colleagues. Focus on the following points to enhance your productivity as you continue to convey a strong executive presence to stakeholders across the globe.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

While work spaces get automatically defined at the office, it takes planning to demarcate them at home. Buy high-speed wifi, sound-cancelling headphones and a high-definition camera for video-conferencing.

RESPONSE TIME

Stick to your work-schedules and deadlines. Remain accessible to your clients and teams,

ensuring the response time for phone calls/ emails/ text messages remains the same, regardless of where you are working from.

INCULCATE SELF-DISCIPLINE

Seamless transition from office to home-office will ensure both productivity and profit. Define your work hours – your inability to do so will leave you exhausted as you work over the weekends, stay up late or wake up early to meet deadlines, blurring professional and personal boundaries.

CONVEY PROFESSIONALISM USING TECHNOLOGY

As face-to-face meetings get compromised, your verbal and vocal presence has to be stronger to create impact. Speak with energy and enthusiasm when communicating with all stakeholders. Punctuality, commitment and a strong work ethic continue to remain important for success, regardless of your physical place of work.

NETWORK USING TECHNOLOGY

Telecommuters get isolated from all face-to-face interactions. Fill this void by scheduling e-meetings with colleagues, investors and clients (current and potential). Go through your LinkedIn contacts, make a list of contacts you have lost touch with and send them an email requesting for a brief chat. Use your spare time to update your online presence and connect with new business contacts/ potential customers.

GET NOTICED As face-to-face meetings get compromised, your verbal and vocal presence has to be stronger to create impact

Travel **SOPs** will change

We must be prepared for a M!CE industry with new protocols, perhaps one where travellers will require a doctor's fit-to-fly certificate, says **Zelum Chaubal**, Director, Kesari Tours

M!CE groups can only start when the world resumes business activities and countries open their borders. The first few international countries that will open up to M!CE will be the ones with very few cases and where safety precautions are strong such as Dubai, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Azerbaijan, and a few favourite European countries like Amsterdam and Switzerland.

These will also be the countries where governments and tourism boards are ready and prepared to welcome M!CE traffic. But before that can happen, we need to



Zelum Chaubal

ensure that our SOPs are strong and we are all adhering to the new COVID-19 norms. COVID-19 negative test certificates may be the new requirement and we must therefore be ready to adapt to these new norms that different countries may apply. At the same time, we



QUICK BYTE We must be prepared for mandatory requirements such as COVID-19 insurance

must also be prepared for mandatory requirements such as COVID-19 insurance and even a COVID-19 tax. Domestic M!CE should start

before international. Given that physical distancing is part of the new normal, we will need to rethink our M!CE numbers.










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For safe M!CE tourism

The M!CE segment is seen as a crucial income generator across the globe and depends on business travel safely resuming, says **Diane Thorsen**, Design Director, Gensler



Diane Thorsen

As flight paths open to certain parts of the world, hoteliers are investigating and researching the feasibility and demand of M!CE tourism. International business has dropped dramatically, and events and conferences have been cancelled due to the global pandemic. Many events are

the virtual networking has temporarily substituted the place of events, most respondents suggested face-to-face networking as these meetings are preferred long-term. Trade fairs exhibiting products and business conferences have a key role to play when they take place face-to-face, due to

return to the destination with family or friends and will often explore areas near their business destination.

CREATING SPACES THAT KEEP GUESTS SAFE

Our corporate clients have realised that in many cases, the expense of business travel is unnecessary and virtual meetings are often more productive and efficient. The concern that guests will contract the virus remains and business travel is stressful on our bodies as our sleep patterns are interrupted.

Hotels were always considered an escape and a place to relax, and as designers, we are partnering with operators to ensure that we design to keep guests safe. The evolving and growing evidence base has empowered us to understand more about the relationship between our environments and our health than ever before. We know how to create spaces that enhance, rather than hinder our health and well-being. Additionally, improving opportunities for restoration through mindfulness programming, restorative spaces and support of optimal sleep, can have marked impact on the physical and mental well-being, including relief from negative symptoms associated with anxiety, depression, pain and stress, as well as enhancements in overall perceived health.

(Diane Thorsen is Design Director at Gensler. The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author.)



TREND Bleisure travellers will often explore areas near their business destination with family or friends

taking place online which has become a concern for the rebound of the industry.

the collective energy around networking and assessing products in person.

FACE-TO-FACE NETWORKING PREFERRED

In the Asia Pacific and Middle East region, we are expecting M!CE tourism to recover very slowly as operators reinvent their approach to ensure safety in managing group interactions. Gensler's preliminary research indicated that most tourists are interested to travel to events provided they feel safe and secure within the hotels. Although

THE BLEISURE TRAVELLER

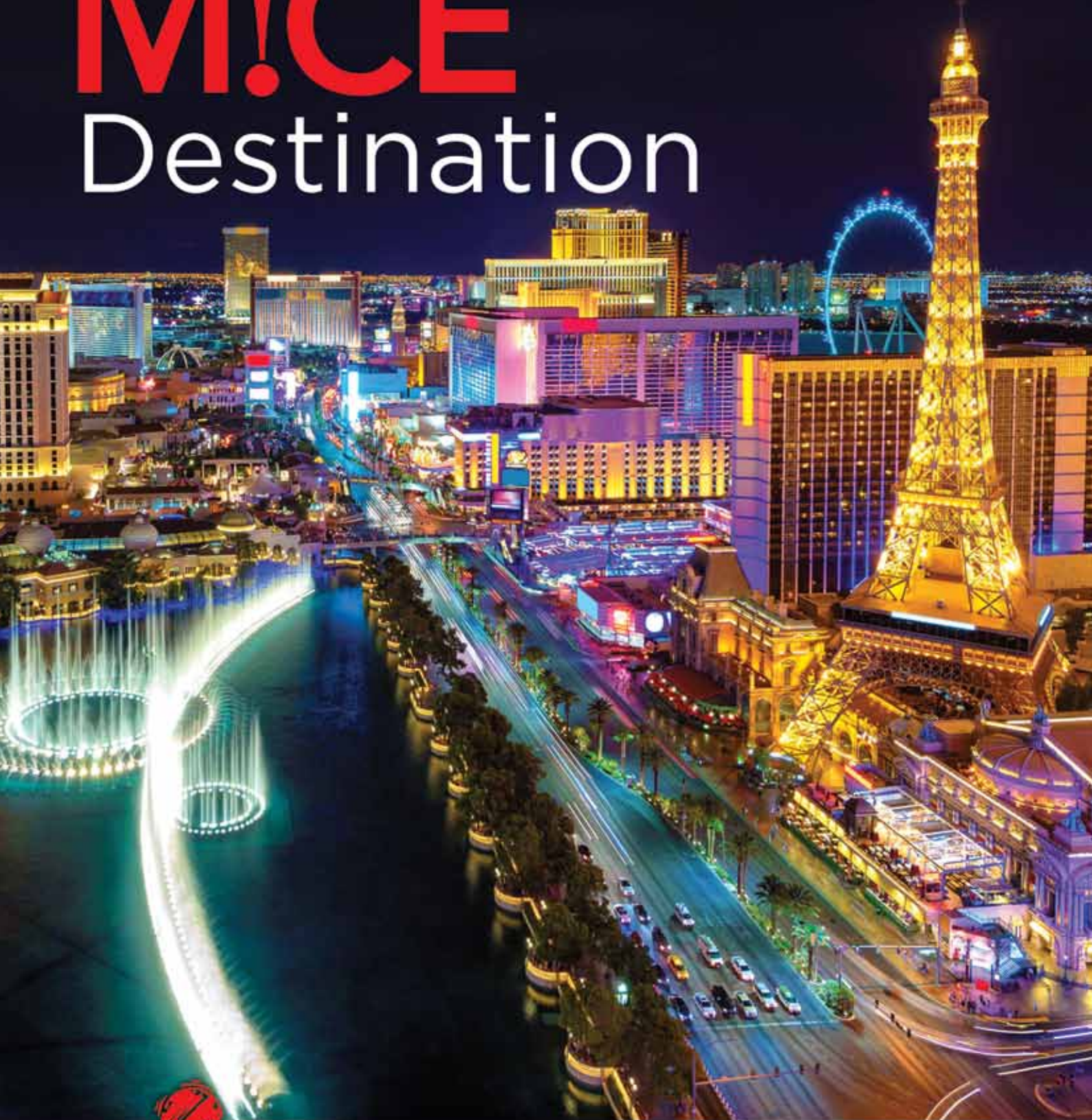
M!CE tourists supplement the leisure tourists as these functions are typically offered in off peak times which promote a more profitable tourism industry. These guests are also more likely to extend their business trips to include cultural excursions, leisure activities and eat at local restaurants providing further support to the local destination offerings. The bleisure traveller will typically



Trade fairs exhibiting products and business conferences have a key role to play when they take place face-to-face



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NEWS

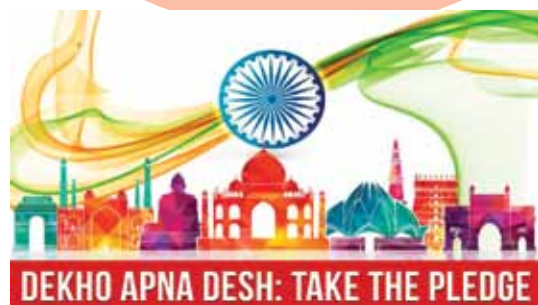


The Russian Union of Travel Industry (RUTI) has appointed Prashant Choudhary, MD, Salvia Promoters, as its Representative in India. The presence of RUTI in India will help promote tourism between India and Russia..



Travellers holding on to Indian bookings: ForwardKeys

Latest data on future bookings to India by ForwardKeys suggests that whilst there is no upward surge in tickets for November, travellers are generally holding onto their tickets. Ticketing history also tells the same story. **Olivier Ponti**, VP Insights says, "Bookings are flat as we can see a 'wait and see attitude' taking place, however, we expect the situation will evolve when people get more clarity regarding travel restrictions."



Govt to attract foreign tourists to Buddhist sites

With an eye on China and Buddhist countries in the neighbourhood, tourism minister Prahalad Singh Patel has stressed on the need to bring more Buddhist tourists to India. As better connectivity of Buddhist sites would help, the government has approved the upgrade of Kushinagar airport in Uttar Pradesh to an international one to allow more pilgrims to visit India. Promotional activities have also begun.

India to connect with more international destinations

"In Phase 5 of Vande Bharat Mission which started from August 1, India will connect with US, Canada, Qatar, Oman, UAE, Singapore, UK, Frankfurt, Paris, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, New Zealand, Philippines and more countries. Also, more destinations and flights will be added as this phase progresses," informed the Union Civil Aviation Minister **Hardeep Singh Puri**.



Israel instils confidence in travel trade partners

While it is still uncertain when air connections between India and Israel will resume, or whether there will be any change in the visa regime, Israel has continued to engage the travel trade here. **Sammy Yahia**, Director, Israel Ministry of Tourism – India and Philippines, says, "The Israel Government Tourist Office India has taken care to keep our partners in the trade, corporates, and travellers aware of the developments in Israel, especially with regards to the new health regulations."



India in top 5 searched South Asian destinations by key markets

India is still top of the mind in all the top searched markets in South Asia from all the source markets, namely UK, USA, Germany, UAE and Australia, revealed Olivier Ponti, VP Insights, ForwardKeys. "In fact, India is usually in the top two of the destinations for these markets," he said.



MON

TUE

WED

THURS

FRI

SAT

SUN

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9 PM

Research shows taking a
break outdoors increases
attention span by 20%.

Fun works.



Focus on **weddings & M!CE**

At Sri Lanka Tourism's first Virtual Summit held recently, **Kimarli Fernando**, Chairperson, Sri Lanka Tourism spoke about the segments they will be targetting aggressively

Hazel Jain

As a panellist, **Kimarli Fernando** explained, "We had a gradual opening of the country. Like India, Sri Lanka also loves big weddings. So we allowed banquets to be held but only with 100 people. Regarding international tourists, we have a detailed guideline for them on our website which covers everything that they need to know. The auditing process to receive them is currently on."

KEY SEGMENTS

Outlining the key segments that Sri Lanka wants to focus on going forward, Fernando



Kimarli Fernando



VENUE Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall in Colombo can cater to 1,500 pax

said, "We had so many plans for the India market this year. So it's really frustrating that

everything we had planned has been held up now. But believe me it will be done the

moment India opens up. The India market is exceptionally important for us." She added that on priority are a few segments that the tourism board will aggressively target. The wedding segment is one of them and it plans to do a special familiarisation tour just for wedding planners later this year or early next year. The other important segment is M!CE. Sri Lanka has one of the biggest M!CE venues in the region called Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) in Colombo which can cater to 1,500 pax given the present condition.



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Movements **Abroad**



Thien Kwee Eng
Chief Executive
SDC, Singapore

Thien Kwee Eng has been appointed as Chief Executive of Sentosa Development Corporation (SDC) and as a member of SDC and Singapore Tourism Board. Prior to this, she was Executive Vice President of the Economic Development Board (EDB) where she was responsible for global customer experience, marketing and public affairs and investment facilitation activities. In her role, she started a new operating model that expanded EDB's reach.



Dr. Timo Gruenert
Chief Executive Officer
Oetker Group, Baden-Baden

Oetker Collection has appointed Dr. Timo Gruenert as Chief Executive Officer. Dr. Gruenert began his career with the Oetker Group as Assistant to the Managing Partner in 2005 after receiving his PhD from University of Giessen. In 2009, he co-led the founding of Oetker Collection and has served as Co-Managing Director and Chief Financial Officer ever since. Over the past 11 years, Dr. Gruenert has overseen the steady growth of Oetker Collection's hotel portfolio from four Masterpiece Hotels in 2009, to nine in 2020.



Bastien Blanc
MD, KSA & Bahrain
IHG Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

To lead IHG's business in Saudi Arabia, Bastien Blanc has been appointed as Managing Director, KSA and Bahrain. In his new role, Blanc will be responsible for driving both growth and performance for IHG in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. With extensive experience of working in KSA, Blanc has been deeply ingrained into the market. He has also been leading IHG's Saudization efforts which he will continue to drive further in his new role.



Ravi Santiago
Cluster General Manager
R Hotels

R Hotels has appointed Ravi Santiago as Cluster General Manager of Ramada Hotel & Suites by Wyndham Ajman, Ramada by Wyndham Beach Hotel Ajman, and Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche. He brings over 25 years of expertise spanning various industries with 15 years in the hospitality sector. Santiago has been with the R Hotels group since 2009. Before taking the helm as Cluster General Manager, he was the Group Financial Controller for the 7 properties of R Hotels in the UAE.



Phatsalawadee Pimpila
Director of Sales and Marketing
Meliá Koh Samui, Thailand

Phatsalawadee Pimpila's appointment as Director of Sales and Marketing at the new 159-room and 41-suite luxury resort on Koh Samui's north-eastern coastline in the Gulf of Thailand, comes after she previously worked as Director of Sales for Kanda Residences, another five-star hotel situated on Koh Samui island. Pimpila has two decades of experience in sales and marketing and a passion for building strong business relationships.



Anna Luisa Asistio
Assistant Director, Mktg
Jannah Hotels and Resorts

Jannah Hotels and Resorts has appointed Anna Luisa Asistio as Assistant Director of Marketing & Communications. Her new position in the Jannah Brand sets as a breakthrough for a much developed and competitive hotel image of luxury halal segment in the UAE. Asistio is all set to take charge of the overall management of the Marketing Department, developing and executing strong strategic plans and budgets as well as spearheading the Digital Marketing team.



Eric Masalawala
Director of Rooms
Radisson Blu Hotel
Ajman

Eric Masalawala joins the Radisson Blu Hotel, Ajman as Director of Rooms with more than 13 years of hospitality experience. He started his career as Service Manager in 2007 at Radisson Hotel Dubai Deira Creek. In 2016, he was appointed as Front Office Manager and later Rooms Division Manager at the Hilton Abu Dhabi which was rebranded as Radisson Blu Hotel Abu Dhabi Corniche in 2019. His new appointment will be his third stint within the Radisson Hotel Group portfolio.



Ingo Stöneberg
Executive Chef
Alma Resort, Cam Ranh
Vietnam

A seasoned professional with almost two decades of experience in luxury hospitality in Europe and the Middle East has been named Alma Resort's Executive Chef. German national Ingo Stöneberg has joined the 196-pavilion and 384-suite resort overlooking Long Beach, on Vietnam's Cam Ranh peninsula, to oversee its rich culinary landscape comprising 14 dining venues. Five restaurants including Italian, modern Asian and traditional Vietnamese dining establishments, three bars and a food court are among venues under Stöneberg's stewardship.

COVID Safe



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NABCB Accreditation

(Under process)