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#### PUBLISHER & EDITOR

Sanjeet  
Devika Jeet

#### CHIEF EDITOR

Nisha Verma  
nisha.verma@ddppl.com

#### EDITORIAL TEAM

Janice Alyosius  
janice.alynosius@ddppl.com

Hazel Jain  
hazel.jain@ddppl.com

#### DESK EDITOR

VVN Murthi

#### CREATIVE DESIGNER

Subhash Chaudhary

#### ADVERTISING

Arumita Gupta  
arumita.gupta@ddppl.com

Meetu Malhotra  
meetu.malhotra@ddppl.com

Jaspreet Kaur

#### ADVERTISEMENT DESIGNERS

Nitin Kumar  
Aditya Pratap Singh

#### PRODUCTION MANAGER

Anil Kharbanda

#### CIRCULATION MANAGER

Ashok Rana

#### MUMBAI: ADVERTISING

Harshal Ashar  
harshal@ddppl.com

Samantha Pereira  
samantha.pereira@ddppl.com



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

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# INDIA'S M!CE POTENTIAL IS GROWING

Novo significado do Trabalho

e o futuro da Gestão

Alexandre Pellaes

O novo significado do Trabalho

e o futuro da Gestão



**Janice Alyosius**

**C**ollaboration, marketing efforts, and simplified visa processes are seen as factors for improving India's M!CE image. With a diverse range of experiential destinations and captivating experiences, the country aims to attract travellers. As it invests in infrastructure, India's rise as a global M!CE destination offers abundant opportunities for growth and success. Expressing optimism, **Barun Gupta**, President, SITE India Chapter, said, "This year is promising for the M!CE sector,



**BARUN GUPTA**  
President,  
SITE India Chapter

with ample opportunities for both domestic and international travellers."

***This year is promising for the M!CE sector, with ample options for both domestic and international travellers***

## **Meeting buyer expectations**

**Nitin Sachdeva**, Member, International Board of Directors, SITE Global, said, "When it comes to meeting buyer expectations, safety and

security are paramount for M!CE destinations. To enhance India's image, we need to focus on perception that outweighs performance. Public relations activities, conducted by government offices and tourism boards, can play a vital role in shaping this perception. The government and stakeholders are planning to introduce i-M!CE, which is a step in the right direction. Through joint efforts between corporate entities, the government, all stakeholders in India could establish itself as a favoured M!CE destination."





Sachdeva shared, “The outbound travel market has witnessed expansion, particularly in terms of group sizes. Previously, we had 2,500 groups, but now we are seeing groups of 10,000 to 12,000 travellers, indicating a massive growth trend. Incentive travel has gained traction for employees and sellers of various firms. Post pandemic, people have developed a stronger desire to travel and seek new experiences. This shift in mindset has led to a surge in domestic travel in the Indian market, resulting in demand for flights, trade, and hotel pricing.”

He said, “The government’s investment in the M!CE industry, particularly with its involvement

in G20, is encouraging. This commitment demonstrates its recognition of the M!CE industry and its growth potential. If this momentum continues, there is potential for the M!CE business to thrive in India.”

### Promoting India

**Manpreet Bindra**, Vice President, M!CE, FCM Travel Solutions India, stressed the need to promote India as an attractive destination for inbound and corporate M!CE events. Highlighting the government’s efforts to invest in infrastructure and improve the perception of India as a tourist destination, he said, “Organizations must collaborate with the government and motivate people to choose India as a

destination for M!CE events.” He said the importance of simplifying visa processes is a must—attracting travellers from Australia and Singapore.

### Creating capsules

To enhance India’s appeal as a M!CE destination, Bindra suggested creating capsules for cities where business travellers can feel comfortable during their stay here. “These capsules must offer interesting attractions and experiences, thereby encouraging travellers to return to India.” He believes the government must lead the way in creating such capsules.

Highlighting the motivational aspect of incentive trips and the positive return on investment offered to corporations, Bindra said, “FCM Travel Solutions India experienced remarkable growth this year—52 per cent as compared to 2019. While last year, there was a surge in group bookings, exceeding 1,000 passengers, the current market reflects a decrease in the number of queries. It is worth noting that the size of the queries range between 250-300 like those in 2019. Such positive M!CE trends indicate the continued popularity and effectiveness of incentive trips and the industry’s resilience and potential for growth.”

### India a M!CE destination

**Naveen Kundu**, Managing Director, EbixCash, said the



**NITIN SACHDEVA**  
Member, International Board of  
Directors, SITE Global

**Through joint efforts between corporate entities, govt, all partners in India could emerge as a favoured M!CE target**

macro-economic indicators, ongoing infra development, and the government’s vision will position India as an ideal M!CE destination soon. Kundu added, “India is an emerging market and is on way to become the favoured destination in Asia-Pacific region.” He averred India’s ability to offer short-haul and long-haul M!CE experiences thereby attracting visitors from Asian countries, as well as European and American nations.

### Aggressive marketing

Kundu stressed the need to market India as a M!CE destination and







**MANPREET BINDRA**  
Vice President,  
M!CE, FCM Travel Solutions India

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### **Organizations must collaborate with the govt and motivate people to choose India as a destination for M!CE events**

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spoke of the changes that have taken place in India's convention sector in the past five years, with several convention centres in the pipeline. He said, "Within the next decade, India will have large and medium-scale convention centres in 30 cities, providing ample supply for global events, conferences, meetings, and incentive travel. Pointing out to India's thriving exhibition market, he said, "The market is

experiencing a growth, attracting exhibitors from across the world. The large population has become a consuming force, making India an ideal market for a range of products."



**NAVEEN KUNDU**  
Managing Director,  
EbixCash

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### **India will have convention centres in 30 cities, providing ample supply for events, conferences, meetings & incentives**

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#### **Marketing campaigns**

Kundu said global buyers assess the appeal and potential rewards of a destination before making their choices. He shared, "As India focuses on marketing



**JYOTHI VARMA**  
Advisory Consultant,  
Travel & Hospitality

drives to promote its products and experiences globally through government initiatives and private sector efforts, more M!CE events will be take place in India. The country has something to offer for everyone. The nation's abundance of offerings should be communicated to the global market." Expressing confidence in the government's plans, Kundu believed they will achieve the desired outcomes.

Kundu called upon professionals to be optimistic about India's potential as a M!CE destination. "Rather than focusing on challenges, our focus should be to recognize the opportunities that lie ahead. With a united effort to market the country aggressively, collaborate across sectors, and dispel misconceptions, India

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### **There is a need to spread awareness about India's offerings to unlock India's brilliance in M!CE industry**

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can position itself as a premier destination for M!CE," he said.

#### **Gaining popularity**

**Jyothi Varma**, Advisory Consultant, Travel & Hospitality, said India has everything needed to be an M!CE destination. Recognizing the market perception needed improvement, she said there is need to spread awareness about India's offerings and collaboration to unlock India's brilliance in the M!CE industry. She said, "Currently, stakeholders working in isolation, hinder India's progress. By working together and leveraging a unified platform, India can reach greater heights and become a much sought-after M!CE market. While smaller M!CE events can still be successful, greater support from the hotels and the airlines is also needed, support from hotels and airlines are needed to make incentives viable." ➔





# Monsoon Bliss in Madhya Pradesh

#MPMonsoonMagic

Madhya Pradesh, The Heart of Incredible India, has a huge potential for tourism during the monsoons.

Mandu

**M**P's multi-hued landscapes from lush forests, rolling hills to magnificent water bodies, come alive with vibrant greenery and gushing waterfalls during the monsoon months. The national parks and wildlife sanctuaries such as Kanha, Bandhavgarh, and Pench, offer an unforgettable experience for wildlife enthusiasts to witness the flora and fauna in their natural habitat. The historical sites and architectural marvels, such as Khajuraho temples, Gwalior Fort and Sanchi Stupa, are enhanced by the monsoon. The natural settings of Madhya Pradesh becomes even more picturesque, attracting nature lovers and adventure seekers alike. With its rich cultural heritage, sublime beauty, and salubrious weather, Madhya Pradesh offers a colourful kaleidoscope for tourists looking to explore the state during the monsoons.

There is a lot to be served on the plate for the tourists. Pachmarhi,

Mandu, and Amarkantak offers unique experiences and an enthralling natural beauty. While these places are popular throughout the year, they have a special charm during the monsoons. Let's explore the scope of tourism in each of these destinations during the rainy season:

## Pachmarhi

Pachmarhi, a hill station located in Madhya Pradesh, is known as the "Queen of Satpura." It is nestled amidst lush green forests, cascading waterfalls, and picturesque valleys. During the monsoons, Pachmarhi transforms into a paradise with fresh greenery, misty mountains, and gushing waterfalls. The pleasant weather and rejuvenating ambience make it an ideal retreat for nature lovers and adventure enthusiasts. Visitors can enjoy trekking through the dense forests, explore the cave shelters, and tread through Rajat Prapat and Bee Falls during the monsoon season.

**Nearest Railway Station** – Pipariya 55 Kms

**Nearest Airport** – Bhopal 210 Kms

## Mandu

Mandu, also known as City of Joy, is a historic city in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. It is renowned for its magnificent medieval architecture and romantic legends. During the

monsoons, Mandu becomes even more beautiful as the ancient palaces, mausoleums, and gardens get covered in lush greenery. The rain-washed landscapes and misty atmosphere create a romantic ambience, attracting tourists seeking solitude and tranquillity. Visitors can explore iconic attractions like Jahaz Mahal, Hindola Mahal, and Rani Roopmati Pavilion while enjoying the refreshing monsoon breeze and occasional drizzles.

**Nearest Airport** – Indore 96 Kms

**Nearest Railway Station** – Indore 99 Kms

## Amarkantak

Amarkantak is a pilgrim town located in the eastern part of Madhya Pradesh, where the Vindhya and Satpura mountain ranges meet. It is considered a sacred place as it is the source of rivers like Narmada, Sone, and Johila. Monsoons bring life to Amarkantak with lush green forests, mist-covered peaks, and numerous waterfalls. The natural beauty of this place is at its peak during the rainy season. Visitors can go on nature walks, visit ancient temples, and enjoy the serenity of the surroundings. The waterfalls like Kapildhara and Durgdhara are especially mesmerizing during the monsoons, offering a beautiful sight and a refreshing experience.



Amarkantak

**Nearest Railway Station** – Pendra Road 25 Kms

Several other destinations of the state offers a serene and rejuvenating experience. From exploring historical sites to savouring the cascading waterfalls and enjoying pleasant weather the state has a special buoyancy during the monsoons. One such hidden gem is Chitrakoot, known for its resonating waterfalls and lush greenery that comes alive during the rainy season. Another destination that is worth a visit is Maheshwar, where the Narmada River flows majestically, surrounded by ancient temples and architectural marvels. For nature enthusiasts, Bargi Dam is a perfect retreat, with its vast reservoir that becomes a haven for migratory birds during the monsoons. Lastly, Orchha, with its magnificent palaces and cenotaphs, takes on a mystical charm as the raindrops gently cascade over its historical structures, making it an ideal monsoon getaway in Madhya Pradesh. ➔

Amarkantak





# RISE OF EXPERIENTIAL SPORTS TRAVEL

India's Outbound Travel Surges: DreamSetGo leads the way, curating unparalleled sports experiences for discerning travellers. With a focus on the MISE (Meetings, Incentives, Sports & Experiences) segment and unique experiential offerings, the shift from sightseeing to immersive sports journeys drives industry growth.





**G**rowing rapidly under the radar, India's appetite for outbound travel has been turning several eyeballs. Registering a 190% rise in outbound travel, India leads the Asian continent with over 10 Million foreign trips according to the report published by IPK International and published in ITB Berlin 2024. Framing an understanding on the basis of this exponential increase along with the change in consumer travel patterns, it is easy to understand how sports experiences will push India's outbound travel appetite even further.

Post-pandemic, the influence the sports market has had on outbound tourism cannot be understated. According to a report by market analysts Future Market Insights (FMI),

Sports travellers account for 10-12 per cent of the entire outbound travel market post the pandemic. Five years ago, this number was noted to be barely 5-7 per cent. Founded with a vision to increase accessibility for Indians to sporting events and contributing to nation building in the process, DreamSetGo has come a long way since its inception in 2020 and has grown significantly in the last 2-3 years. A sports experience platform, DreamSetGo seeks to innovate and curate lasting experiences with fans alongside their favourite teams, players and tournaments. Growing from strength to strength, DreamSetGo is a member of the DreamSports family that houses iconic brands like Dream11 and Fancode; has been instrumental in developing and facilitating Indian accessibility to key sporting events. In 2021, the company was acquired by Dream Sports, a sports technology company and the parent company of India's biggest sports gaming platform. With the guidance and network of the Dream Sports ecosystem, DreamSetGo continues to grow.

As the company continues to grow in the post-pandemic world, corporate travel with a sporty twist has emerged as a key focus area. Focusing on the MICE segment, DreamSetGo looks to facilitate travel for the top 10-15 percentile of traveller profiles. The company offers a wide range of services including travel management, event planning, and incentive travel. Today, discerning travellers are looking for unique and experiential travel options rather than traditional sightseeing tours. With budgets not factoring as a major constraint, individuals



**AMIT VYAS**  
Head, MICE & Sports Travel  
DreamSetGo

from this sector are willing to spend on unique experiences and as a result the innovative factor of the service from an accessibility, attraction, and accommodation point of view needs to match expectations.

At DreamSetGo, they pride on delivering 'money-can't-buy' experiences with the greatest premium hospitality access, athlete meets and greets, and private charters with sports legends. "Travellers are on the lookout for different and out of the box experiences rather than the regular travel offerings and that's exactly what we want to deliver our clients with experiential travel with a sporting twist," said Amit Vyas, Head, MICE & Sports Travel, DreamSetGo. The shift in customer preferences from the traditional 'sightseeing' approach to one that is experiential & layered with sports has allowed them to innovate and capture a significant market in the sector. With offerings that include High Tea with Sourav Ganguly at the Lord's Stadium, a private yacht dinner planned with Brett Lee in Australia, a DSG Diwali party with Venkatesh Prasad, Aamir Sohail, Mike Hussey & Gautam Bhimani during the ICC T20 World Cup in Australia, current and potential clients are guaranteed

an experience like no other. In the recent past, they hosted a holistic experience at ICC Women's T20 World Cup South Africa 2023 to ensure the clients have the best sporting experience as well as with Manchester United, hosting one of their leading corporates to watch the LIVE match between the Red Devils and Fulham.

In the past 12 months alone, DreamSetGo has facilitated over 5,000 Indian sports travellers to major sporting events like the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Australia 2022, F1 Experiences, Wimbledon Championships and the FIFA World Cup. Working alongside several other high profile international sporting entities to curate personalised experiences away from the usual match day experience, DreamSetGo also has partnerships with Manchester United, On Location, ICC Travel & Tours, and Rugby World Cup 2023.

As customer demand and mindset shift continues to dictate the experience, they are certain that this year will provide an excellent opportunity for the cross-border sports tourism industry to thrive. As there continues to be a significant untapped market for outbound luxury sports travel in India due to the niche nature of the industry, a need to constantly innovate new offerings will be key to standing out and bridging the knowledge gap. As the second half of 2023 looks promising from a sporting event perspective, DreamSetGo hopes to facilitate sports experiences for 10,000 people by the end of the year. ➔



High Tea with Sourav Ganguly  
at Lord's Cricket Stadium





# G20 BODES WELL FOR HOTELS

Indian hospitality sector is shining because of G20 Presidency. While M!CE is on the anvil, it is believed the hotels will see several leisure guests checking in.



**Nisha Verma**

For tourism and hospitality, the pandemic was the biggest blow. Agreeing to the view, **KB Kachru**, Vice President, Hotel Association of India & Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor, South-Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, said, “As travel resumed, Indian hospitality started to recover on the back of domestic tourism, private events, staycations and workcations. International business and leisure travel was slow to pick up impacting the rebound.”

## G20 a blessing

However, he believes that India’s G20 Presidency has come at an opportune time for hotels. “The G20 related events have contributed in quickening the pace of recovery for hotels, especially in the locations



**KB KACHRU**  
VP, HAI, Chairman Emeritus &  
Principal Advisor, South-Asia,  
Radisson Hotel Group

where these events are being organized. Hotels are seeing better occupancies and average daily rates. In some locations, the occupancies and revenues have attained the pre-pandemic levels and surpassed them in certain others,” he claimed.

“The Presidency has also served as a unique and public platform

for Indian hotels to send a strong and reassuring message that after the pandemic they are ready and equipped with unmatched excellence in services to host global travellers with additional protocols of safety and hygiene in place. G20 Presidency is a huge honour and a glorious opportunity for India to further strengthen its position on the global tourism map. Hotels are showcasing traditional Indian hospitality, which follows the age-old doctrine of *Atithi Devo Bhava* that equates guests to God. G20 has not only augmented hotel revenues and receipts; its cascading effect should see India emerge as a preferred leisure and M!CE destination as all eyes are on India. The nation is promoting tourism through related side events on different tourism themes. The richness and variety of Indian tourist destinations – focusing on

local cuisine, culture and craft—is at display at each of the 50 plus meeting venues, as is the fast paced and continuous development in infrastructure,” he informed.

**In some places, the occupancies and revenues are at 2019 levels and have surpassed them in certain others**

Kachru said, “Another aspect in which hotels will benefit is the flow of investments in the sector, especially in tier II and III cities where the potential is immense. Overall, G20 bodes well for hotel business in more ways than one





**PUNEET DHAWAN**  
Senior Vice President, Operations,  
India & South Asia, Accor

**The G20 Summit has impacted the overall travel and hospitality industry, attracting more visitors and guests during the event**

– in commercial terms, to future outlook of the sector, to confidence building.”

### High occupancy rates

Saying that the effect of G20 has been encouraging for hospitality, **Puneet Dhawan**, Senior Vice President, Operations, India & South Asia, Accor, shared, “The G20 Summit has impacted the overall travel and hospitality industry, including Accor hotels, attracting more visitors and guests during the event. Increased occupancy rates and M!CE related business have been observed, leading to a successful business period for our properties.”

**Kush Kapoor**, Chief Executive Officer, Roseate Hotels and Resorts, claimed the visits and corresponding meetings for the G20 delegations are scheduled to take place in August-September and will have multiple pre and post-event stays and meetings. “We are already receiving many inquiries for this period and are engaging with the various

parties involved to meet their requirements,” he adds.

### Long-term benefits

The year-long G20 Presidency is the most important thing in the country now and will reap benefits, both direct and indirect for all brands, said **Deepraj Mukherjee**, General Manager, Le Meridien, Kochi. “It is an acknowledgement of the great strides the country has made amidst the international challenges, and definitely a matter of great pride for all of us. Although, this may not actualize as business for us at Le Meridien currently, in the larger scheme of things, the collective momentum the presidency brings to tourism will, no doubt, lend a positive vibe and momentum in projecting the country as



**KUSH KAPOOR**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Roseate Hotels and Resorts

**The visits and meetings for the G20 delegations will have multiple pre and post-event stays and meetings**

a progressive and meaningful destination for Green Tourism, which you know, has been identified as one of the five building blocks of the SDGs,” Mukherjee said.

**Abhishek Sadhoo**, General Manager, Shangri-La Eros, New



**DEEPAJ MUKHERJEE**  
General Manager,  
Le Meridien, Kochi

**It is an affirmation of great strides the country has made amid global challenges, & definitely a matter of great pride for all of us**

Delhi, echoing the thought, said, “The G20 Summit has provided us a unique opportunity to promote India to an international audience, attracting both business and leisure travellers and boosting the hospitality industry by generating additional revenues and creating multiple opportunities as well. At Shangri-La Eros, New Delhi, we are witnessing increased bookings, and the hotel is also playing host to many important delegates. I believe we should make the most of this unique chance to promote India to the world.”

### Boon for small cities

Kachru said that the G20 meetings are providing opportunities to smaller cities and unknown destinations to showcase their infrastructure, as well as the capabilities of city authorities and the destination’s tourism sector, including hotels. “Most host cities are providing renovation budgets. The cities have been spruced up,” Kachru said. Mukherjee added, “The year-long presidency presents a platform

for all the cities that are hosting the G20 meetings and delegates. It presents a chance to provide the participants an immersive and intimate experience of the vibrantly rich and diversely beautiful cultural heritage of our country.”

While the Indian hotels are known for welcoming their guests in age-old traditions, Kachru informed that HAI member hotels’ guest welcome for G20 delegates has been taken to another level by being unique and innovative. “Lobbies of member hotels normally exhibit Indian art and art forms paintings, and for G20 they have donned the avatar of mini museums to give a 360-degree feel of the city to delegates.



**ABHISHEK SADHOO**  
General Manager,  
Shangri-La Eros, New Delhi

**At Shangri-La Eros, New Delhi, we are witnessing increased bookings, and the hotel is also playing host to many delegates**

“Over 150,000 delegates from G20 countries are expected. The generation of revenue from the event is a whopping ₹ 850 crore on account of delegates-related travelling and accommodation. Jobs in the sector are likely to grow at 5.5 per cent CAGR,” he shared. ➔



# WEDDING INDUSTRY ON UPWARD TREND

The Travel Wedding Show held in Udaipur covered a range of topics creating a platform for collaboration. The Indian wedding market size has grown to around US\$50 billion.



**Janice Alyosius**

**T**he eighth edition of Travel Wedding Show in Udaipur was a resounding success, boasting more than 2,000 productive meetings. The two-day event welcomed wedding planners, hotels, airlines, and global tourism boards, creating an engaging platform for collaboration.

The panel discussion was moderated by **Rajeev Jain**, Founder and MD, Rashi Entertainment. The panellists included **Elisa Maria Robles Fraga**, Director (India), Spain Tourism Board, **Kamilia Hani Abdul Halim**, Deputy Director, Tourism Malaysia, and **Aishvarya Guhagarkar**, Director, MICE, Switzerland Convention Bureau. Their valuable insights added depth to the discussion.

## Travel WEDDING SHOW

Highlighting the growth of Indian wedding industry, Jain said, "The wedding sector accounts for US\$50 billion (₹ 5,00,000 crores) post-COVID. From small intimate weddings to extravagant celebrations costing ₹ 100 crores, the industry offers a range of options."

He emphasized that India boasts the largest growth rate in the wedding business. "With a

growth of 30 per cent following the COVID challenges, India has outperformed other nations. The USA has experienced a decline of 2 per cent, while China and the UK have witnessed growth rates of 10 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively," he said.

### Hotel pricing challenges

Expressed concern about issues of pricing with Indian hotels, he revealed, "Hotels in India

tend to charge exorbitant rates for wedding events, which is becoming an obstacle for wedding agencies. The hotels should consider reasonable pricing to support global partners and cater to the growing Indian wedding market." Incentivization should be based on total billing,

**Hotels in India tend to charge exorbitant rates for wedding events, which is becoming an obstacle for wedding agencies**

fair pricing policies must be adopted, the hotels must stop overcharging their clients, he added.







Elisa Maria Robles Fraga highlighting Spain's potential as a prime wedding destination, shared a few aspects that make Spain stand out, such as the pleasant Mediterranean climate, rich cultural heritage, glorious castles and monasteries, and diverse natural landscapes. Responding to Jain's concerns about visa processing delays for Indian weddings in Europe, Fraga said, "The visa application process has improved significantly. The Spanish Consulate in Mumbai has streamlined procedures for big groups, including weddings, with a quick turnaround time for visas."

### Popular tourism destination

Kamilia Hani Abdul Halim revealed Malaysia is well acquainted with Indian travellers.

Kuala Lumpur, Penang, and Langkawi have become prominent attractions not only for Indian tourists but also for travellers from other nations. As a multicultural country, Malaysia embraces diverse customs and traditions, including those of the local Indian communities. This cultural richness is one of the reasons why these locations are favoured by Indian tourists. Also, Malaysia offers a wide array of culinary delights, allowing individuals to easily find their preferred Indian cuisine," shared Halim.

"Many hotels, particularly five-star ones, have hosted Indian weddings in the past. These hotels have the necessary infrastructure to accommodate Indian weddings, handling a guest count of around 300-400 people with ease. As

the competition intensifies, these properties strive to provide exceptional wedding experiences," Halim asserted.

Malaysia's temperate climate allows weddings throughout the year, except for the monsoon season on the East Coast, which lasts from September to February. Advising that this period should be avoided, she recommended March to August as the most suitable months for destination weddings in Malaysia.

To support Indian wedding planners, Halim averred, the Malaysia government has improved visa facilitation, offering assistance for groups with specific requirements, including special treatment and direct flights to destinations with no direct access to Malaysia.

**As a multicultural country, Malaysia embraces customs & traditions, including those of local Indian communities**

### Wedding packages

Switzerland offers many opportunities to enhance the wedding experience with tailored activities and excursions, said Aishvarya Guhagarkar. "Switzerland offers a range of wedding packages to cater to the specific needs and desires of Indian couples. These packages often include traditional Indian ceremonies, such as *mehndi* and *sangeet*,







combined with Swiss-inspired elements to create a unique fusion of cultures,” highlighted Guhagarkar.

Emphasizing Switzerland’s efficient visa services and its role in making Switzerland a dream destination for extravagant weddings, Guhagarkar said, “Switzerland is the lone country having 13 VFS centers. We have done the maximum number of visas this year until June. We have issued close to 30 per cent more visas than those issued in 2019,” she said.

**Switzerland is the lone country having 13 VFS centers. We have done the maximum number of visas this year until June**

Elaborating on the cooperation with the Switzerland Embassy, she said, “We work closely with the embassy. We tell them well in advance as to

which M!CE groups are going. The tour operators are including Switzerland in their programmes, and also inform them about the weddings that are taking place in Switzerland.”

Guhagarkar further said, “If we are informed around 3-4 months in advance, we can intimate the Swiss embassy, and they will then prepare the roadmap for these weddings in Switzerland. This proactive approach by the Swiss authorities

**Availability of Indian food is no issue for us. We have one of the biggest suppliers of Indian ingredients in Switzerland**

ensures a smooth and efficient visa application process for the couples and the wedding guests alike.”

### Catering to Indian palate

Switzerland takes pride in catering to culinary preferences, and Indian cuisine is no exception. He shared, “Availability of Indian food is no issue for us. We have one of the biggest suppliers of ingredients, and he has outlets in at least four different parts of Switzerland. So, ingredients are not an issue, Indian chefs are not an issue. They are all based here in different regions. Couples and their guests can indulge in the flavours of home, while enjoying Switzerland.” ➔





# WEDDINGS GALORE

Nowadays, destination weddings are on the rise with a majority of couples trying to bring back the missing pomp and splendour, which had temporarily halted during the pandemic.



**Sofitel Hotels and Resorts, Bahrain**  
Atif Khan  
Sales Manager

Now, people have begun to explore more. They want new destinations and new ways to celebrate their weddings. Everyone wants to do something different. Be it M!CE incentive business, pre and post-wedding celebrations. Also, people don't want to repeat a location.



**Le Florence Weddings**  
Vikramjeet Sharma  
Founder and MD

The way the wedding industry is evolving of late, our clients are seeking newer and better options in terms of the flexibility. Most couples are well-informed about their preferences. The focus of properties has shifted towards creating an atmosphere of celebration since weddings are primarily about festivities.



**MSC Cruises**  
Rashmi Ahuja  
Divisional Manager, India

MSC Cruises has a track record of hosting M!CE events and weddings, replete with *pheras*, *sangeet*, and *baraat*. MSC provides the solution with beautiful destinations and inclusive services. MSC is a top bet for Indian weddings, offering a seamless experience for a dream wedding at sea.



**YOLO Entertainment and Weddings**  
Pratik Hemdev  
Founder and Director

The wedding industry has evolved in the past two to three years. The couple now are trying to bring the lost pomp and splendour of weddings by selecting to tie the knot in select places in heritage hotels, while some opt for destination weddings.



**Touchwood Group**  
Vijay Arora  
Whole Time Director

I think the wedding industry is booming and we are lucky to be part of it. Now, everyone wants a destination wedding. One of the key trends is people search for an offbeat location, experiment with concepts, or travel abroad. They look for new ways instead of performing a traditional Indian wedding.



**Tourism Malaysia (India)**  
Noriah Jaafar  
Director

Malaysia stands out as an ideal choice, blending foreign and Indian influences, while offering a diverse range of amenities. From traditional rituals to authentic food, Malaysia caters to every aspect of the celebration, thereby reducing the overall expenditure. Such events help us in hosting the best events possible.



**Weddings by Chime**  
Vandita Bawa  
VP, Business Development

Nowadays, people are inclined towards intimate destination weddings rather than grand ones. I think one of the reasons of this change is the pandemic. Couples are actively getting involved now, be it concepts and experiences. The younger generation has become more practical.



**Gogunda Palace, Udaipur**  
Hiral Shah  
Head of Sales, Marketing & Revenue

Focus of clients is beyond the number of guests, but about providing them the best experiences. We aim to hold weddings that offer a memorable experience for everyone. Innovation has become vital, we are coming up with new ideas and concepts.



**7 Vachan**  
Minnat Lalpuria  
Founder and CEO

Big fat Indian weddings are back with a bang. The wedding if it is for, say, 300-400, the couple chose to travel abroad. Over the past nine months, we noticed the number of such weddings have increased. The parameter of choosing a location for wedding has changed.



**Oman Air**  
Vineet Nayyar  
Manager-North India

While the promotion of a destination depends on various factors, airlines play a crucial role in attracting travellers. To promote a destination, it is imperative for airlines to focus on providing dedicated check-in services and customized in-flight experiences. Pricing is also a consideration.



**Lexis Hotel Group**  
Steve Woon  
Senior VP, Sales & Marketing

Prior to 2019, we conducted one destination wedding every month. We held two destination weddings in November and December last, followed by two more this January 2023. We received enquiries for such weddings towards end of 2024. So far, we have held over eight destination weddings.



**ANR Weddings and Events**  
Ankit N Rao  
Founder

The industry is evolving, post pandemic. A lot of new trends have come into the picture. Many weddings are influenced by social media and celebrities. With every passing year, the preferences of the couples are changing. The couple are looking for options subtle than extravagant celebrations.



# TAKING BUSINESS A KNOT HIGHER









# STEPPING UP THE TECH GAME







Digitalisation in M!CE industry is making it easier for event planners, hotels, convention centres and corporates to organize an event.



**Janice Alyosius**

It is evident that technology has become a cornerstone of hosting M!CE and corporate events. From seamless event planning to immersive experiences and personalized solutions, hotels and convention centres are embracing digital innovations to stay competitive in the market. By upgrading their offerings and staying ahead of the technology curve, these organizations ensure the industry continues to evolve and provide enhanced experiences for guests.

On how Roseate Hotels & Resorts has embraced various digital technologies and platforms to streamline event planning, **Kush Kapoor**, CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts, said, “Technology is helping us and our guests plan, decide and execute to ensure that all expectations and scenarios are communicated, understood, and incorporated for a seamless experience. It has become an integral part of M!CE from the planning stage to venue shortlisting, layouts, invites, registration desks, kiosks and apps, virtual attendees, seamless attendee check-in, movement, and post-event feedback.”

Stressing on how The Anam Group is embracing the power of digital technologies, **Laurent Myter**, Group General Manager, The Anam Group shared, “Hotels such as The Anam Vietnam are fully embracing the power of digital technologies for organizing events. We rely on Eventbrite, Zoom, and Slack to manage events seamlessly, to enable remote collaboration, track registrations, and streamline communication. Technology is a vital support system for the customised solutions that The Anam is renowned for.” Citing examples of enhancing guest experience through

technology, Kapoor highlighted the use of their digital app solution. “With our digital app solution, we can send notifications, reminders, updates, and directions to guests and direct them to the right venue at the right time. This approach not only enhances the guest experience, but also ensures seamless communication throughout the event,” he said.

### Digital offerings

Myter said, “At The Anam Vietnam, technology is essential for hosting large-scale M!CE and corporate gatherings. Our meeting rooms are equipped with cutting-edge projectors, devices, and



**KUSH KAPOOR**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Roseate Hotels & Resorts

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**Technology is helping us & our guests plan, decide & execute to ensure that all expectations are communicated**

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modern sound systems, creating an immersive experience for all attendees. The Au Lac Ballroom boasts striking 4K LED screen, enhanced by surround sound system and two wall-mounted TVs placed to ensure optimal visibility from every corner. These features allow us to provide high-quality video conferencing, captivating live streaming, and interactive



polling capabilities, enhancing engagement and facilitating seamless communication during the event.”



**LAURENT MYTER**  
Group General Manager  
The Anam Group

### **Hotels such as The Anam Vietnam are fully embracing the power of digital technologies for organizing events**

Elaborating on some of the emerging technologies the hotels are enhancing their M!CE event experiences, Kapoor shared, “We are making it easier for our event planners to collaborate with our teams online in real-time to make changes to cater to their needs. Planners will be able to use their handphones to view, edit and approve layouts, menus, arrangements, and every aspect of their event.”

While hotels have upgraded their offerings and are looking at digital transformation and are adapting to transformative changes through technology, convention centres are eyeing on leveraging the technological advances and stepping up the tech-game. **John Burke**, GM, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, said, “More events are incorporating digital engagement and content into their

events such as online registration and programme, hybrid meeting or streaming, tech needs and demands keep increasing.

Burke said, “Corporate and event planners use Internet bandwidth between 20Mbps-1Gb, while hosting business or corporate events at our convention centre. The right infrastructure is in place to accommodate their event requisites and ensure seamless delivery of their events.” He said their convention centre has prioritized investing in technology and digital infrastructure to ensure they float above the curve, enabling them to cater to the clients and organisers changing digital needs. “As more organizations are adopting digitalisation, demand for digital



**JOHN BURKE**  
General Manager  
Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

### **With changing event formats, incorporation of digital engagement and content tech needs, demands have increased**

services is only growing. We are positioned as one of Malaysia’s well-equipped facilities to deliver to the needs of our clients. Our wireless technology accommodates up to 10,000 concurrent connections or devices, with a

variety of standard and customised WiFi packages to suit individual client or event needs,” Burke said.

He said, “On the production side, we have a range of audio-visual solutions available for organizers and clients. From built-in sound systems and comprehensive lighting equipment, including LED parcans, moving cans, pin spots and Fresnel units to all our main function halls, equipped with automated truss system with maximum loads ranging from 50 kg-1,000 kg and can be moved from ceiling level to a height of 1.5 metres from the ground.”

### **‘Purpose-built factory’**

Revealing the factors that differentiate hotels’ convention centres when it comes to hosting M!CE and corporate events, Burke shared, “Compared to hotels, our convention centre is a facility that is designed to cater to all types of business events with all the supporting facilities and infra in place to accommodate international event planners’ requirements. A feature that sets us apart from other hotels is our advanced rigging system with a capacity of up to 1,000 kg that allows a variety of flexible LED set-ups in different forms and for different functions.”

For **Aditya Gupta**, Sr. Manager HR&GA at Panasonic, key digitization factors in selecting a venue for corporate or M!CE events include technological infrastructure and capabilities, location, digital signages, attendance capturing methods, billing procedures, height, capacity, and internet connectivity speed. Discussing a recent event hosted by Panasonic, Gupta shared, “We recently ended an event where we showcased our technology via an event agencies, Digital Signages and 3D Running and display of a car, Signages with

no need to charge.” He stressed technology has impacted corporate events within M!CE, “Digital transformation helps in providing ease of hosting events and we can foresee what we have planned



**ADITYA GUPTA**  
Sr. Manager HR&GA  
Panasonic

### **Digitization has improved overall efficiency in corporate events as it aligns event planning & execution**

and what we are trying to execute is seen before the event and that helps us to corrections. This has avoided losses for us in terms of the agenda and outcome of the event which we want to showcase,” he said.

### **Emerging trends**

The future of technology and digitalisation in the industry looks promising, highlighting some key emerging technologies or trends. Kapoor shared, “We are making it easier for our event planners to collaborate with our teams online and to make changes to meet their needs, get revised layouts and proposals, and avoid face to face meetings. Planners will now be able to use their handphones to view, edit and approve layouts, menus, arrangements, and every aspect of their event.” ➡



# 9 TIPS FOR CUTTING BIZ TRAVEL COSTS

**Gaurav Luthra** shares expert tips for helping businesses slash expenses, while enhancing travel efficiency.

 **MT Bureau**

**B**usiness travel is on the rise, with forecast of a staggering 188 per cent increase over the next five years. Alongside this growth, the costs associated with business-related activities, especially travel, have also surged. In response to these trends, an experienced business travel expert, Gaurav Luthra, MD, FCM India, offers nine valuable tips to help businesses optimize their travel expenses in the next financial year.

## Hacking Business Costs

- 1.** Booking flights 8-14 days in advance can lead to savings of up to 20 per cent on airfares. Airlines tend to release cheaper seats during this timeframe to fill their flights.
- 2.** Opt for flights departing on the quarter-hour or half-hour mark for more affordable fares. Flights on the hour are usually in high

demand and, as a result, come with higher price tags. By booking flights just before or after these peak hours, travellers can find less busy and cheaper options.



**GAURAV LUTHRA**  
Managing Director,  
FCM India

- 3.** Consider booking early-week flights, specifically on early week days as they tend to be 12 per cent cheaper than weekend departures. While late-week flights may be more expensive, they offer the advantage of combining business and leisure travel for a weekend away.

- 4.** To maximize benefits, stick to one or two airline rewards programmes and work on achieving gold or platinum status. Programmes such as Flying Returns by Air India, allows one to accumulate and redeem points when flying with their alliance partners.

- 5.** Negotiate prices with travel suppliers every 24 months, as many businesses fall into the trap of maintaining outdated travel policies. In a bid to reduce the travel budget, it is essential to revisit pacts with providers, such as hotels and car hire companies, and consider switching to more cost-effective options.

- 6.** Follow the 'five-block rule', while booking accommodations and restaurants in cities. It is better to avoid staying within five blocks of the central business district (CBD) to save on expenses. Opt for areas with easy access to CBD.

- 7.** Bundle trips by scheduling multiple meetings into a single 2-3 day trip. This approach has gained popularity, allowing businesses to save on travel costs and add leisure trips.

## *Opt for flights leaving on the quarter-hour or half-hour mark for affordable fares*

- 8.** Prioritize flexibility over loyalty, while trying to reduce costs. While loyalty programmes might offer unique incentives, comparing prices with other providers can lead to better value for business travel.
- 9.** Signing up for the programmes and travel newsletters in order to stay updated on exclusive sales and discount codes, which are offered by the hotels and airlines. ➔



# MIXING BUSINESS with pleasure on high seas

Seamlessly integrating business and leisure for an unmatched event experience, MSC Cruises are taking the M!CE industry a notch further by conducting events onboard.



MT Bureau

**M**SC Cruises is revolutionizing the M!CE industry by offering a unique advantage over traditional on land venues. With their all-in-one venue concept, all-inclusive packages, cost savings, and hosting M!CE events on their luxurious cruise ships creates an extraordinary experience for attendees.

**Rashmi Ahuja**, Divisional Manager, India, MSC Cruises emphasized that MSC Cruises is all about optimizing the user experience. "Acclaimed for spectacular interiors and green technology, MSC Cruises are luxury resorts with a view that keeps evolving daily." She said that as the MSC Cruises continues to transform the M!CE landscape, their commitment to providing top-notch facilities, unparalleled experiences, and seamless integration between business and leisure sets them apart.

Enlarging, Ahuja said, "The world-class conference



**RASHMI AHUJA**  
Divisional Manager, India  
MSC Cruises

facilities include a theatre for large corporate events, meeting rooms and complete technical infrastructure for M!CE requirements. Varied modern sports and leisure facilities provide several opportunities such as team building, private gala, and cocktails that are theme based, while spa centres, gourmet cuisine, varied entertainment, and attentive staff pamper the guests who have come for the M!CE movements in elegant surroundings."

By choosing MSC Cruises, the event organizers would gain

access to an infrastructure such as conference facilities, meeting rooms, and technological capabilities for presentations, workshops, and conferences. Not only are these capacities perfect to various event sizes, but these spaces also provide the backdrop for productive and inspiring gatherings.

The guests can enjoy the best of both worlds, as MSC Cruises integrates M!CE events with the overall cruise experience. Guests can indulge in leisure activities, entertainment, and relaxation, while attending the event. From team-building exercises and theme-based gala to spa treatments, gourmet cuisines, MSC Cruises ensures attendees make the most of their time at sea. Collaboration is at the heart of the MSC Cruises' approach. Their dedicated sales and operations teams work with event planners to understand their needs, curate the perfect itinerary, select the most suitable ship, and choose the ideal venues on board. This effort also ensures a successful event that aligns with the corporate

brand values and the clients' strategic objectives.

When queried, Ahuja said, "We do more than just provide for latest facilities. Our sales team along with operations understand the requirements of the clients. It is a collaborative effort between the back-end team and the onboard specialists. It is they who make it necessary that successful events depend not only on a successful cruise, but also

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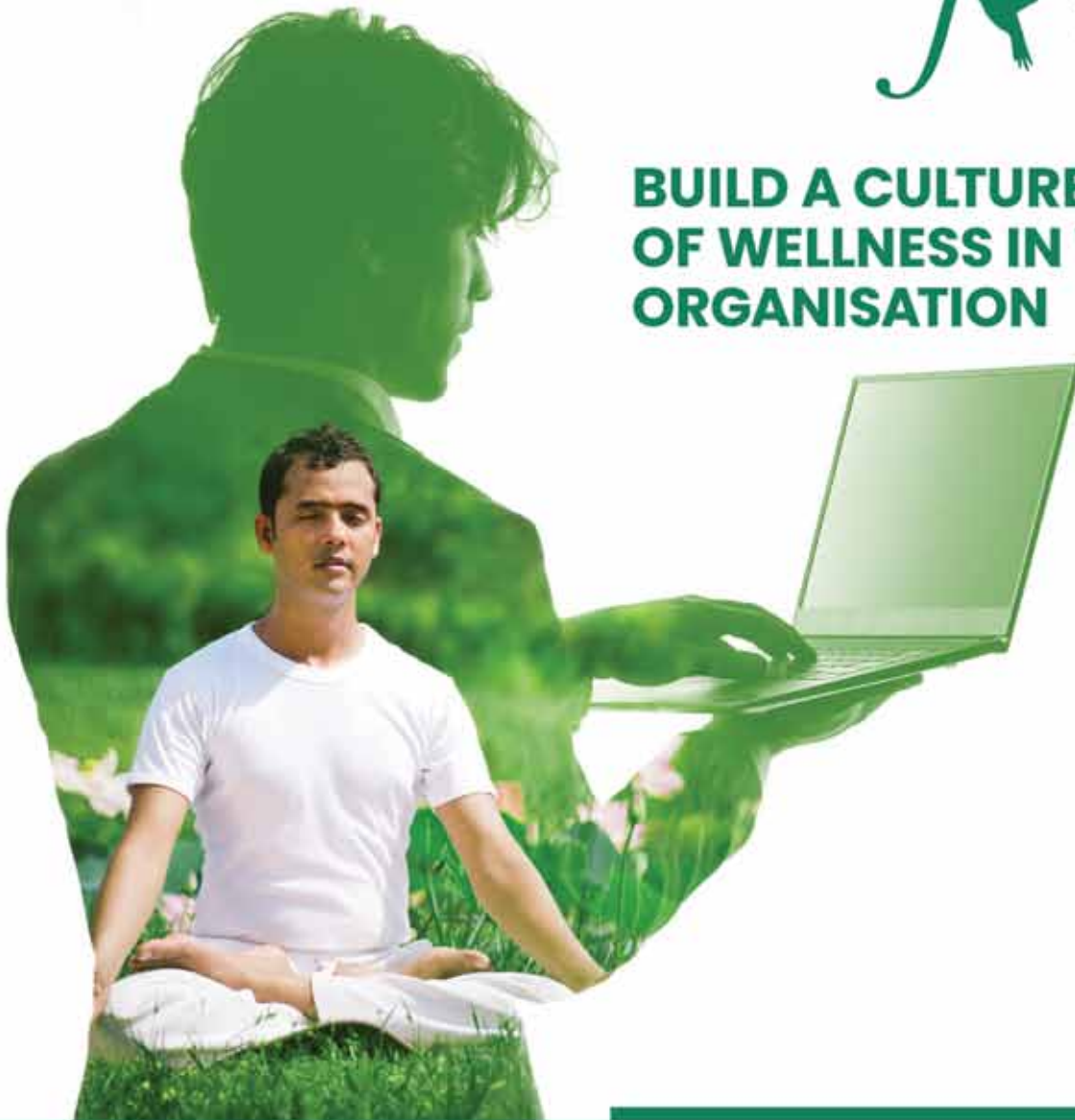
**Guests can enjoy the best of both worlds, as we integrate M!CE events with the overall cruise experience**

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on our support to the corporates. With their dedication to customer satisfaction, the MSC Cruises is the ideal choice for unforgettable M!CE events on the open seas," Ahuja said. ➔



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# VARIED OFFERINGS TO BIG INDIAN M!CE GROUPS IN MAURITIUS

Mauritius is well known for handling big M!CE groups and big weddings. We have many times been given awards and accolades for our M!CE excellence, says **Arvind Bundhun**, Director, MTPA.



**Nisha Verma**

**M**auritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) recently organized a FAM trip to Mauritius and showcased its varied offerings. **Arvind Bundhun**, Director, MTPA, said this was part of their visibility and B2B trade strategy.

“The MTPA regularly invests in taking the media to Mauritius to experience the various facets of the destination. We believe the experiences lived by the media enable them to have an in-depth understanding of the destination and its products, which can be showcased in their articles as an experience that they have personally lived on the island.”

## India market

India is an important source market for MTPA. “Mauritius is considered as a honeymoon destination offering high quality service in India and family destination with many experiences compared to other beach destinations. Mauritius is one of the world’s aspirational tourism



**ARVIND BUNDHUN**  
Director, Mauritius Tourism  
Promotion Authority

destinations for Indian visitors, especially from its film-induced, strong cultural diaspora, and lifestyle reputation over the years. It provides the Indian traveller with white beaches, stunning nature, a wide range of water and land-based activities, rich gastronomy, culture, visa free, security, golf, and spas among others. Mauritius, an island destination, provides beyond the beach experiences along with high quality service and a variety of offerings. M!CE and weddings are key segments that have been actively promoted,” he added.

After Mauritius reopened its borders in March 2022, five flights were reinstated from Mumbai.

“Last year was a slow recovery and with the start of operation of Vistara flights in end March 2023, we are expecting a good recovery over pre pandemic levels,” Bundhun said.

## India connection

A visit to Mauritius will open doors to a culture that has a lot of Indian influence, thus making it easier for the country to cater to Indians. He said, “The cultural

One cannot only gaze at its scenic locales but indulge in varied adventure activities such as Quad biking and zip lining at La Vallée des Couleurs Nature Park, or nature walks and interaction with animals at Casela Nature Parks. While water sports and activities are very popular, the people can also take a submarine trip, which gives an opportunity to explore the wonders of the ocean up close. This apart, a sundowner catamaran tour is icing on the cake.

## Mauritius provides beyond-the-beach experiences along with high quality service and a variety of offerings

relations, the food influence, language as a high percentage of the local populace is of Indian descent gives one a feeling of home away from home.”

## Activities galore

Mauritius offers a plethora of activities for every kind of traveller.

## High on M!CE

In fact, he said with Air Mauritius launching its flight from Delhi and with the operation of Vistara flights from Mumbai, they are expecting M!CE numbers to increase during the M!CE season in September. He added, “Mauritius is known for its logistics, facilitations and ease and professionalism of its stakeholders to handle big M!CE groups and big weddings. We have received awards for our M!CE excellence. Bundhun claimed that the hotels there are well prepared to cater to big Indian groups. “All our M!CE stakeholders give their their best to Indian M!CE groups, adapting to their tastes and requirements.” ➔



# MCB OFFERS PERKS FOR CORPORATE CLIENTS

India remains one of Australia's largest markets from leisure and M!CE point of view, says **Joanna Garrie**, Director, Corporate Meetings & Incentives, MCB.

 **Hazel Jain**

**J**oanna Garrie, Director, Corporate Meetings & Incentives, Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB), is excited about the Indian market. She said, "The overarching numbers out of India, which is one of our largest markets at the moment post pandemic—from a leisure and M!CE perspective. There is a big opportunity for us here, and we have a representative agency in India in Beautiful Planet."

"We noticed the M!CE side of the business coming from India has started to increase and the bureau wanted to make sure that it collected the maximum business by being pro-active in this market. "We got a lot of incentive interest from the Indian M!CE market. We have a financial incentive programme for the corporate clients with 150 people or more, travelling for at least two nights in the city of Melbourne," Garrie explained.



**JOANNA GARRIE**  
Director,  
Corporate Meetings & Incentives, MCB

***M!CE biz from India has risen. Indian tourists can have a typical Australian experience here***

"Visitors can have a typical Australian experience. Whether it is visiting our beautiful coastline, experiencing our food and wine,

doing team-building activities, nature walks, and having encounters with animals, it can all be done within 90 minutes from Melbourne. So, it is a great city to have as base and have that global, cosmopolitan experience," she said.

## **Focus for India in 2023**

Since the MCB has invested in this market, it is looking at education Melbourne and Victoria can offer. She averred, "We understand Sydney and Gold Coast are the cities that Indians like to visit in Australia. We are here to say, hey, we are here too! We are unique and we have some great experiences as well, with Melbourne being home to the MCG. Melbourne is also home to a many events in Australia. We have Australia Tennis Open championships, Grand Prix, Spring Racing Carnival, and we want to showcase that the groups can include any of these major events, while planning their incentive trip." Melbourne

received a large insurance group from India in June last year. "It was our first post-COVID M!CE group. We have a couple of more groups coming up soon. We are helping them build itineraries. We recommend four nights in Melbourne; to do two days of city-focus activities and then two days in regional Victoria. But this gives one a variety and some exciting experiences. We are

***We are unique with Melbourne being home to the MCG. Melbourne is also home to a many events in Australia***

happy to work with other states in Australia. We understand there are some incentives for four nights in Melbourne and two nights in Tasmania, for example, so we can work on that," she said. ➔





# SENTOSA REAFFIRMS ITS M!CE STATURE

Embracing digital advancements to enhance guest experience, Sentosa continues to be the ideal M!CE and wedding destination for Indian guests.

 **MT Bureau**

**S**entosa, where discovery never ends, has gained popularity as a sought-after destination for M!CE events and weddings. Understanding the needs and preferences of its Indian visitors, Sentosa constantly aims to be the preferred choice for Indian guests looking to host M!CE events and weddings. The island takes pride in its versatile venues, where the guests can choose from seafront locations, expansive

open lawns, beach clubs, or grand ballrooms for an “Out of Boardroom” M!CE experience. Beyond the visual appeal of unique venues at Sentosa, guests can also enjoy offerings such as Universal Studios Singapore, the Singapore Cable Car, award-winning spa retreats, world-renowned golf courses, and a deep-water yachting marina while they are here for M!CE or wedding events.

## Going digital

Beyond building the island as a fulfilling destination for

all, Sentosa Development Corporation seeks to leverage new technologies and solutions, such as CRM and an Events Management System, to enhance guest experience and perfecting the execution of M!CE, and weddings across the island.

A new trend observed is within the space of Augmented Reality (AR), which leverages technology to create an immersive experience. Trickeye Singapore Museum, Scentopia and Fort Siloso are some attractions in Sentosa that have incorporated AR elements.

For M!CE and weddings venues, ballrooms at Capella Singapore, W Singapore—Sentosa Cove, Shangri-La Rasa Sentosa and Resorts World Convention Centre—have implemented LED walls and are also equipped to conduct hybrid meetings. In order to attract Indian corporates, the island further participates in Singapore M!CE Advantage Program and In Singapore Incentives & Rewards Global 2.0 program by Singapore Tourism Board (STB), enhancing and





complementing delegates' itineraries when they are in Singapore for their events.

### **Sustainability initiatives**

As a Global Sustainable Tourism Council-certified destination, Sentosa empowers clients and event organisers to prioritise sustainability. Many of its initiatives are driven through the Sentosa Carbon Neutral Network, a carbon neutrality focused alliance comprising 25 businesses on the island, which make up 97 per cent of Sentosa's carbon footprint. Sentosa also collaborates with a carbon consultant to develop carbon profile templates, guiding organisers on reducing Co2 emissions. Meanwhile, experiences such as SentoSights Tours and Explorers of Sentosa also offer M!CE guests eco-friendly

opportunities to explore the island's hidden gems.

In February 2023, Sentosa engaged 30 Indian wedding planners from Delhi and

Mumbai. This event, called 'STB x Wedding Sutra,' was aimed to promote Singapore and Sentosa as luxury wedding destinations. To make weddings on Sentosa more appealing, the island offers a complimentary pyrotechnic show or a drone display as a captivating wedding highlight for couples who meet a minimum spend requirement. The island collaborates with Indian wedding planners so that couples receive personalised experiences, making their day exceptional.

### **Indian cuisine**

Realising the importance of desi food in Indian culture, Sentosa ensures its Indian guests get to relish authentic Indian cuisine. By collaborating with reputable F&B caterers experienced in serving Indian delicacies, Sentosa ensures that guests feel at home. Additionally, it also offers the award-winning Royal Albatross Tall Ship and open beach venues, all within minutes' walk of accommodation options by global hotel chains.

Sentosa also provides open-air venues, giving organisers an opportunity to incorporate cultural elements and decorations, as per choice. To make weddings organised in Sentosa more appealing, they collaborate with Indian wedding planners to include cultural activities and authentic Indian cuisine, ensuring a seamless and authentic experience for couples and other guests.

### **Upcoming developments**

Upcoming developments in Sentosa include the new lifestyle precinct, The Palawan @ Sentosa, and the Topsy Unicorn Beach Club, both being venues that social events and destination wedding organisers can look forward to. Meanwhile, the upcoming Raffles Sentosa Resort & Spa will cater to marquee M!CE events and luxury weddings. Lastly, the Sentosa SensoryScape to be launched in 2024, and the Resorts World Sentosa 2.0 expansion will introduce even more diverse experiences for guests. ➔







# INDIA 6<sup>TH</sup> BIG M!CE MARKET FOR S. AFRICA

M!CE and business travel motivated 41% of overall tourist visits to the nation from India out of which M!CE encouraged 18% of visits last year, says South African Tourism.

 **Hazel Jain**

**What is the kind of traffic South Africa is seeing from India right now?**

Post pandemic, India has moved to become the sixth-largest inbound traveller market for South African Tourism. Led by our robust recovery efforts, we witnessed

more than 200 per cent surge in travellers from India in 2022, welcoming 50,000 Indian tourists to the Rainbow Nation. Out of the overall arrivals to South Africa, one out of four visits were motivated by M!CE.

As we continue to witness an increase in inbound traffic from India, we believe direct flights between the two nations will

serve as a solution for business travellers, who currently have to layover at an international airport. Once established, the direct route will have the potential to propel a multifold increase in travel between the two nations. Being an active member of the global economy, South Africa boasts the presence of many Indian MNCs, and direct connectivity will simplify trade prospects for both countries.

**Which segment of M!CE is doing well and why?**

M!CE is a huge segment for us. We constantly have multiple groups travelling to South Africa all the year round. COVID curbed many companies that operate on a global scale from hosting events, conducting in-person meetings, conferences, and exhibitions across borders.



After the borders reopened post-pandemic, M!CE tourism has been receiving increased interest from all segments. Many Indian businesses are expecting a rise in business travel and are expected to increase their travel budgets for 2023 viz-a-viz 2022. Attending, hosting, or presenting at conferences, presentations or events are some of the top reasons for business travel.

In 2022, M!CE and business travel motivated 41 per cent of overall tourist visits to South Africa from India out of which M!CE alone encouraged 18 per cent of travellers. Aiming to build on this momentum, we hosted the second edition of the M!CE Think Tank program for corporates in India to provide them with an in-depth understanding of the overall MICE market this year. Such programmes help us educate decision-makers on various business-oriented facilities that the destination has to offer.

#### **How big a group is South Africa seeing from India and what industries are doing well for M!CE?**

We witness huge demand for M!CE tourism to South Africa from corporates in India and have had multiple groups travel to the country in the past on various occasions. We receive enquiries from group sizes varying from 2,000 to 4,000 passengers, especially from the financial, IT, beauty, insurance, coal, and mining, pharmaceutical, entertainment, and sporting sectors in India.

#### **Are M!CE clients asking for sustainable options?**

As travellers continue to seek meaningful experiences, their demand patterns constantly shift and evolve, especially in the post-pandemic era. Sustainability is at the core of all the travel decisions



**NELISWA NKANI**  
Hub Head, MEISEA  
South African Tourism

they make. We are proud to say that travellers are more conscious of where they spend their money, what kind of accommodation they choose, where they dine, and how they travel locally.

At South African Tourism, we have enhanced efforts to make our itineraries, properties, and transport facilities more sustainable. We are also actively showcasing our sustainable product offerings and ecotourism experiences, such as cycling tours, nature safaris, conservation projects, and rural experiences.

#### **We are showcasing our sustainable offerings and ecotourism experiences, nature safaris to foreign tourists**

#### **Are they exploring newer destinations in South Africa?**

Yes. We are also driving awareness around our picturesque smaller towns called 'small dorps' that are relatively unexplored and continue to have M!CE accommodation and a wide range of activities. South Africa is a world-class M!CE destination with facilities and services adhering to the highest standards.

With more than 1,700 conference centers nationwide and nearly 2,000 hotels, South Africa has emerged as a prime location for corporates for their M!CE needs. The events industry is well-established to suit every business need and its varying budgets. The destination is adept at hosting mega events of 10,000 delegates and intimate corporate team-building activities employees.

Indian corporates and across the globe have entrusted South Africa for their M!CE outings, considering and visiting the nation frequently. They are seeking fresh experiences and unique destinations to enhance their business trips and are looking beyond Cape Town and Durban. We keep receiving requests for customized itineraries to strike a balance between business-related activities and opportunities, to get immersed in local culture, cuisine, and attractions. By exploring newer regions, corporates can combine professional engagements with authentic experiences.

#### **Are M!CE players opting to do newer, more immersive activities?**

South Africa has many unique activities to discover on a M!CE outing. We are seeing interest from the Indian buyers opting

for adventure and glamping experiences in South Africa. We are optimistic M!CE will continue to drive a large percentage of Indian corporate visitors. Forward bookings for leisure and business travel look promising and visa issuance numbers tell us there is pent-up demand the destination.

#### **Indian corporates have entrusted South Africa for their M!CE outings, considering and visiting the nation frequently**

#### **Any upcoming engagements with M!CE agents/corporates in terms of FAMs?**

India is a core market for us globally. This year, we are aiming to achieve an increase of 35 per cent in Indian M!CE travellers over 2022 arrivals. We recently hosted a Indian trade delegation to Africa's Travel Indaba 2023. The trade show is Africa's largest travel event. It organized our 19th edition of 'Annual India Roadshow' in Indian cities such as Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Mumbai. ➔







# STRATEGIES FOR HOTELS TO STEER MEETINGS, EVENTS

It is significant to be digitally-savvy in all aspects such as work, social connections and travel, which lead to successfully creating immersive experiences.



MT Bureau

As travel evolves, industry leaders have started exploring new opportunities. Success hinges on sales and catering teams adapt to changing expectations and embracing modern methods for generating superior experiences for hotel guests. We spoke to many experts and researchers. However, Amadeus data revealed six strategies for traversing industry-shaping trends.

## Targeting the right business

To target the right market segments, sales and catering teams must collaborate with revenue management teams. Understanding group behaviour enables customized proposals and itineraries based on specific

factors. Evaluation of market conditions is crucial for strategy implementation in lieu of factors such as domestic leisure travel and booking windows. Group segmentation assists in capturing the right business by addressing the unique requirements of each group individually, such as

## Hotels focus on engaging next gen travellers by understanding their needs and meeting their expectations

business groups vis-à-vis wedding groups, customization based on demographics, geography, group type, and duration of stay.

## Need of business, social, and hybrid events

The changing landscape of business meetings prompted companies to seek innovative and creative ways to produce immersive experiences for hotel guests and employees. While virtual meetings have become prevalent of late, there is still a preference for face-to-face (physical) meetings. The demand for meetings is likely to grow, with a projected 10 per cent rise in the number of meetings to be held in the USA this year. Corporate budgets are increasing globally, reflecting increased expenditure on organizing meetings. To leverage the growth of group business, hotels focus on engaging next gen of group travellers by understanding their needs and delivering experiences that meet their expectations.

The resurgence of in-person events has led to a rise in social groups of a variety of sizes. From large events impacting hospitality markets to smaller ones such as micro-weddings, people are excited about attending different types of in-person group events. The wedding market is experiencing a significant growth. Despite inflation, couples are not cutting back on expenditure, and demand for weddings at some hotels is at an all-time high. While individuals remain financially conscious, they seek best value for money and are open to creative ways to celebrate their special moment. This may result in smaller gatherings held frequently for events or fewer guests in elaborate settings for weddings.

Hotel leaders are gaining confidence in organizing virtual



or hybrid events as technology becomes familiar. Hybrid events are projected to form a substantial proportion of future meetings and events—29 per cent in North America and 33 per cent in Europe in this year. While face to face interactions are irreplaceable, virtual and hybrid events will continue to be an integral business strategy in the longer run. While physical events return with impunity, hybrid options ensures financial viability and accessibility to a broader audience of attendees.

### Travellers' demands amidst staffing challenge

Hoteliers worldwide are struggling to hire staff to meet the growing demand and solve concerns that labour challenge may persist longer than initially anticipated. The shortage of workers impacts various aspects of on-site services and the event planning cycle, resulting in slower response

### Changes in traveller expectations and budgets have led to quick decision-making in event bookings

times to RFPs, delays in contract negotiations and rewrites, and difficulties in managing tasks such as room turnovers during events. The reduced staffing strains the traditionally full teams, leading to disruptions in overall operations.

### Flexibility in successful contracting

Changes in traveller expectations and budgets have led to quick decision-making in event bookings, with frequent cancellation and rebooking in recent years. Hesitation to book meetings at the last minute

stemmed from COVID-related uncertainties combined with economic pressures increased flexibility in contracting new meetings and events. Hotels and planners must establish collaborative ties to find win-win solutions to meet the hotel and customers' needs. Exploring options such as adjusting arrival dates, booking during low-demand periods, offering weekend stay extensions, or transforming

and engaging in community-focused activities. The industry has had an environmental impact, contributing to carbon emissions and biodiversity loss. However, the hotels are taking steps to address these issues, with initiatives such as net zero buildings and large renewable energy projects. Meeting and event professionals are prioritizing sustainability, with 80 per cent of organizations considering it at the planning

trend by offering wellness-focused programs, such as MGM Resorts' Stay Well Meetings and Hilton's EventReady Wellness initiatives, which emphasize fitness, mindfulness, and nutrition.

### Navigating opportunities for next gen hospitality

In today's digital age, it has become crucial to be digitally savvy, including work, social connections, and travel. The increasing reliance



small board meetings into comprehensive retreats can enhance value for the clients. Effective negotiation, relationship cultivation, and a focus on flexibility communicate their needs to clients will be prioritized at the chosen property.

### Prioritizing sustainability and wellness

With the industry focusing on sustainability, this trend is extending to meetings and events. The attendees are becoming conscious of sustainability practices, such as local sourcing, reducing carbon and resource usage, using renewable materials,

stage. The sustainability efforts resonate with the attendees who prioritize environmental responsibility, influencing their choice of venues.

Since the pandemic has increased focus on health and wellbeing, this has also impacted the hospitality and events industry. Pre-pandemic, there was an increasing demand for wellness in these sectors, but recent surveys indicate a rise in workforce burnout. As a result, there is an appreciation for relaxing and wellness-oriented meeting and event experiences. Hotels are responding to this

on tech highlighted its ability to enhance individual capabilities. Hotel leaders recognize this trend and believe technology is vital for future success.

As per a recent survey, 77.6 per cent of respondents plan to increase their investment in hotel tech in next three years. Teams streamlining manual processes through usage of meeting and event distribution platforms, will have an advantage as group travel resumes. By leveraging tech, these teams will be able to spend less time on administrative tasks and more time on creating personalized experiences for the guests. ➔



# INDIAN WEDDING IN LAGOS

Despite lack of local resources and higher costs, the wedding planners, grooms' family and wedding planners made efforts to create an authentic destination wedding experience, says **Ruchika Arora**, Founder, Plush Weddings.



Janice Alyosius

**O**rganizing a destination wedding requires planning to create an unforgettable and extraordinary experience for the couple and their guests. In this case, the location was Lagos, Nigeria.

"The groom's family is an established business family settled in Lagos. And, that played a vital role in selecting this vibrant city as the destination for the wedding," says **Ruchika Arora**, Founder, Plush Weddings. Planning a destination wedding is no cake walk. Wedding planners encounter numerous obstacles and work tirelessly to make the wedding an enormous success.



**RUCHIKA ARORA**  
Founder  
Plush Weddings

***Planning destination wedding is no cake walk. Wedding planners encounter many obstacles and work tirelessly***





### Bringing India to Lagos

Shedding light to her valuable empiricism, Arora shared, “Finding the production material was a huge task in Lagos; everything had to be sourced from a distance. The wedding planning team faced many challenges due to lack of Indian vendors in Lagos. However, they remained determined to provide an authentic Indian experience to the guests. Lagos may not offer many unique features, except for the support we received from a wonderful local family who stood by us through the entire process to ensure the wedding’s success. Nearly everything, from flowers sourced from Turkey and Holland to the production materials for decorations obtained by local vendors, came from a certain distance from Lagos. We

worked with more than a hundred and fifty vendors who played a massive role in ensuring that the wedding went off well. From our dedicated caterers, choreography team, artists and makeup artists to our scrupulous planning and design team, each vendor contributed their expertise.” She further added “Our client, being an Indian, longed for an authentic Indian wedding experience. This meant sourcing Indian vendors to ensure an indelible and truly immersive Indian wedding in Lagos.”

### Visa & safety

The process of obtaining yellow fever certificates and visa proved to be an arduous task for the guests. “Acquiring yellow fever certificates and obtaining visas proved to be a complex and expensive process—

around ₹30,000 per person. But we received tremendous support from the groom’s family and their office staff. We took all precautions to ensure the safety and security of every family member by arranging personal mobile police escorts from their arrival in Lagos to when they stepped out for the airport,” Arora said.

destination far away from home. Renting cooking equipment and cutlery items in Lagos is seven times more expensive than buying them. We enlisted the help of a professional caterer. They made sure that every dish was a gastronomic delight. We went to great lengths to ensure authenticity,” Arora said. She said she and her team assembled 50 chefs and 30 management personnel. They flew servers from India. To maintain the freshness and quality of the dishes, they sourced 800 kg of fresh ingredients and spices from India. Since Lagos lacks a well-established vegetable and fruit market, obtaining fresh ingredients required extensive preplanning. They also sourced exotic fruits and vegetables from various parts of the world, ensuring they were flown in daily.

Arora and her team provided personalized in-room hampers for our guests, sourcing delightful treats from distant places, such as Jagdish Farsan. In addition, each guest received a Bang & Olufsen Bluetooth speaker, selected by the groom to ensure their comfort

### NOTEWORTHY MENTIONS

**Venues:** Eko Hotels & Suites; Shiro Lagos; Breeze Beach Lagos  
**Wedding planners:** Plush Weddings  
**Design and Decor:** Abhinav Bhagat Events  
**Outfits:** Manish Malhotra  
**Catering:** Foodlink Luxury Catering  
**Bar:** The Wedding Bartenders

**Choreography:** Cheena Dasani Productions  
**Entertainment:** DJ Ganesh, Swaarag Fusion Band  
**Emcee:** Vishaal Rasquinha  
**Stationery:** Akansha Negi Designs  
**Production:** Newton and David (Mehndi, Sangeet), Perfectly Planned (Haldi), Sara O Events (Wedding, Reception)

### Culinary delights

Food took centre stage with the planners prioritizing satisfaction of Indian taste buds in a destination far from home. “We had an excellent selection of vendors to handle each aspect of the wedding to ensure a memorable experience. Our top priority was food; to satisfy the Indian taste buds in a

and enjoyment. During the *pheras*, we distributed hand fans from Africa, adding a unique touch to the festivities. “We spared no effort in curating special items, such as hand-made gajras flown in from Bengaluru and *mukhwas* from Chandni Chowk. The wedding was more like a carnival,” said Arora, proudly. ➔





# A NEW ERA OF BLEISURE TRAVEL

Bleisure travel was an option for certain professionals, but post-COVID, this option became available for several people who can work remotely or travel for business.

**B**leisure travel has become a quintessential cog in blending work and play. The term 'bleisure' refers to business plus leisure. Bleisure is not a new trend, rather it existed for a decade or more; COVID has accelerated this trend. While many trends emerged from the pandemic, the one trend that has created a behavioral change and is irreversible is bleisure. The changes are not only from the travellers, but also from the hospitality industry and companies as well.

Many public-listed hospitality companies have hit an all-time high stock prices. It is a clear validation that the hospitality industry in the country has bounced back strongly. Prior to COVID, the business mix was higher than the leisure mix. But, post-pandemic, leisure travel picked up first, contributing to almost 50 per cent of the mix.

Pre-pandemic, bleisure travel was an option for certain professionals such as freelancers and was adopted primarily by millennials, but post-pandemic, this option is now accessible by a significantly large number of varied professionals across all age groups who can perform their work remotely or travel for business. As per a report from a travel management company, millennials



**MANU SASHIDHARAN**  
Head, Hotels & Accommodation  
Cleartrip

are likely to account for 38 per cent of all bleisure travellers and GenX accounts for 31 per cent of biz-cation stays.

Companies have rolled out policies that promote various forms of hybrid work environments—work from home/ anywhere, for a period ranging from a few days to a few months. According to a survey, 9 per cent of Indian companies are operating 100 per cent remotely. In Cleartrip, we have a four-week per year 'work from anywhere' policy.

New age policies like this are aimed towards employee wellness, creating a better work-life balance, improving productivity, and de-stress. Travellers are taking shorter holidays than longer ones. Business travellers either add a few days before their business

meetings, enabling them to explore the destination and add an element of leisure to their work trip.

## Hotel brands adapting to bleisure

The rise of bleisure travel has pushed the hospitality industry in India to adapt and enhance guest experiences. To cater to this spike of bleisure travellers, hotels have increased their offering of leisure elements such as early morning /

## Bleisure trips are increasing the occupancy of hotels during weekdays and helping them maintain a higher ARR

late evening activities (so that the core working hours do not get affected), and wellness programs such as spa and massage.

Business hotels such as Hilton Mumbai International Airport are promoting themselves as a bleisure destination as well. Brij hotels offer extended stay packages with complimentary inclusions and curated experiences such as nature walks, night safaris, and wellness sessions that suit a bleisure traveller's schedule. The revised

IHG One Reward loyalty program offers more personalized deals to bleisure guests. Some hotels have introduced new initiatives such as flexible check-in/check-out timings, co-working spaces, high-speed internet with certain rate plans, and concierge services that assist guests in planning their leisure activities.

## Revenue generation opportunities

Bleisure travel presents significant revenue generation opportunities for the hospitality industry. Bleisure trips are increasing the occupancy of hotels during weekdays and helping them maintain a higher ARR. It is no surprise that the hotel rates are 10-15 per cent more expensive than during pre-pandemic. Hotels can upsell their services by offering tailor-made packages that combine business facilities with leisure experiences, such as spa treatments, city tours, or access to cultural events. This approach allows hotels to maximize their revenue potential, while providing added value to guests. Bleisure travellers often seek authentic experiences beyond the confines of their hotel rooms. This demand has led to increased collaboration between hotels and local businesses, such as restaurants, cafes, and tour operators. ➔





# CHANGING ROLE OF MAKEUP ARTISTS DURING WEDDINGS

**Samvedita Singh**, a freelance makeup artist, in conversation with MICETalk, shares about evolution of the wedding industry and the increased demand for professional makeup artists post-pandemic.



**Janice Alyosius**

**M**akeup artists hold a place of importance when it comes to destination weddings. Their expertise is dedicated entirely to the bride, ensuring she looks stunning on her special day. To provide the best service, makeup artists request to stay at the same hotel where the wedding takes place, allowing them to be fully involved and provide hands-on support.

**Samvedita Singh**, a freelance makeup artist said, “Weddings have shifted towards being more focused on quality rather than quantity, emphasizing meaningful connections and experiences over extravagant celebrations. Post-pandemic, there is a demand for professional makeup artists. “Both brides and wedding guests seek quality work that enhances



**SAMVEDITA SINGH**  
Freelancer  
Makeup Artist

their appearance. With the advent of social media, we are more in demand as everyone wants to look their best in pictures. Brides and their families often request work catalogues beforehand to ensure the selection of the perfect artist.”

## **Budget considerations**

Of late, people have become more realistic about wedding expenditures. Singh averred

clients have become more budget conscious: they select makeup artists carefully, considering travel and stay expenses. “Couples understand the importance of ensuring they invest in top-tier makeup services to enhance their overall wedding experience.”

## **Expanding makeup services**

Makeup artists have expanded their portfolio to meet the changing needs of wedding guests. “Previously, the services were dedicated to the bride and her immediate family. But now we also provide services, such as hair, saree draping, and makeup for guests as well so that everyone attending the wedding looked their best.”

## **Bridal makeup**

Although the minimalistic makeup look is currently trending, it seems it is not yet in demand for weddings. She highlighted,

“Minimalism may not be in focus when it comes to bridal makeup. Alongside glamorous styles, there is an emphasis on achieving a healthy glow. We suggest dietary guidelines a month before the D-day so that brides radiate natural beauty.”

***With the advent of social media, makeup artists are more in demand as everyone wants to look their best in pictures***

## **Client satisfaction**

Understanding the client’s personal preferences is paramount. “We take time to meet the clients and have consultations to suggest skincare routines much before the wedding,” Singh said. ➔



# NEWS

## India business travel market to reach US\$59.5 bn by 2028

As per recent research conducted by IMARC Group, the size of the business travel industry in India would reach US \$59.5 billion by 2028. "The business travel market is accelerated by the rapid globalization and digitization in the tourism industry and the increasing adoption of advanced technology in travel management processes. This is supported by the declining airfares following introduction of new airlines. Stable economic growth in the country has created opportunities for corporates to establish offices in India, which is creating a positive outlook for the market," the report stated.



## Corporate travel market will hit US \$330.2 bn by 2032

Custom Market Insights' study has forecast global corporate travel market may reach US\$330.2 billion by 2032, driven by economic growth, technology advancements and increased business trips. "Strong economic growth drives business activities, leading to increased corporate travel. As economies thrive, the firms expand their operations, tap new markets, and seek growth opportunities, which necessitates travel for meetings, negotiations, and market research. From online booking platforms, travel management tools and mobile apps, technology has made travel planning and management convenient, encouraging companies to invest in business trips," the study noted.

## Outbound M!CE market at US\$272 bn by 2031



## Infrastructure improvement in G20-hosted cities boosting M!CE: V Vidyavathi

**V Vidyavathi**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, has

said the infrastructure created at cities that hosted G20 meetings has been phenomenal and will boost M!CE tourism in India. "We must keep the momentum going and attract more meetings, conventions to happen at these places. For us, it is the beginning of the opportunity, so that we can keep these cities working as destinations for tourism, as well as for M!CE tourism. The MoT will develop marketing strategies to promote these locations as M!CE destinations after the necessary infrastructure and amenities have been installed in the locations hosting G20 sessions." Adding to this, **Rakesh Verma**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, shared, "All the destinations, where G20 meetings are taking place have established themselves as having the infrastructure and capability to host meetings."

## Sri Lanka's M!CE to reach US\$285 million by 2025



The report, 'Sri Lanka M!CE Tourism Market: Current Trends, Opportunity, Growth Potential, and Forecast to 2025' has forecast Sri Lanka M!CE tourism market will reach US\$285 million by 2025. The report examined the market from a country-focused perspective, analyzing 20 countries. These include India, China, the UK, Germany, the Maldives, France, Australia, Russia, the USA, Canada, Sweden, Indonesia, Singapore, Pakistan, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea, Bangladesh, and other countries.

The outbound M!CE market is likely to reach US\$1272.2 billion by 2031, growing at a CAGR of 13.3 per cent from 2022 to 2031, as per a recent research conducted by Allied Market Research. According to the outbound M!CE market opportunities, APAC garnered a significant outbound M!CE market share in 2021, and is likely to maintain its market share throughout the outbound M!CE market forecast period. Asia-Pacific has been gaining traction in the global outbound market owing to factors such as rise in the manufacturing and services sector among others.



## Morgan Stanley forecasts increased corporate travel budgets for 2024

Even though corporate travel executives are attempting to reduce costs by employing virtual meeting technology, travel expenses do not seem to be decreasing as the second half of this year draws near, as per data from Morgan Stanley. Second-half 2023 travel budgets would increase by

an average of 9 per cent year over year, the research stated. The study was conducted by Morgan Stanley from 16 to 31 May and gathered responses from 92 corporate travel managers worldwide. In 2023, travel managers anticipate that virtual meetings would replace 18 per cent of their in-person meetings, according to Morgan Stanley study.



## Nustar Convention Centre commences ops in Philippines

Nustar Convention Centre has officially opened its doors. For various demands, the Nustar Convention Centre provides a variety of special venues. For instance, the bridal lounge, which includes a dressing area, offers the bride and her guests a sumptuous waiting area prior to the celebration. A powder room with washroom facilities is connected to the lounge to provide visitors with the highest comfort and convenience. Additionally, the location also has an open-air lounge ideal for guest after-parties, informal get-togethers, and networking events. These deliberately created rooms are adaptable and can accommodate a wide range of participants' tastes.



## UNICEO, ADCEB form strategic alliance to enhance M!CE

United Networks of International Corporate Event Organisers (UNICEO) and Abu Dhabi Convention and Exhibition Bureau (ADCEB), a division of the Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi, have formed an alliance.

**Mubarak Al Shamisi**, Director, Abu Dhabi

Convention and Exhibition Bureau, said, "We are delighted to partner with UNICEO to enhance our M!CE offer and increase awareness of Abu Dhabi as the gateway to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region among its 2,500 members. This strategic partnership will benefit international corporations convening events, which will be held in Abu Dhabi, and help them leverage the diverse offerings of the UAE capital."



## Biz travellers less keen on eco-friendly travel: Emburse

According to a census-wide survey of 1,003 employees and 254 employers conducted by Emburse, only 16 per cent of business travellers prioritize sustainability when booking trips, while 71 per cent of employees want their employers to do more to enable more sustainable travel. The data showed that while the environment is front of mind for many companies and their travelling employees, the majority

are yet to turn good intentions into concrete actions, and are placing the onus on the other to implement sustainable travel. According to the report, 38 per cent of businesses reported increased investment in sustainability, with 71 per cent reporting having a formal sustainability policy or guidelines in place. However, only 37 per cent of these businesses actively enforce these policies during bookings and travel expense approvals.



# MOVEMENTS



**Rahul Sharma**  
Director, Sales, M!CE and  
Travel Trade  
Radisson Hotel Group

Rahul Sharma has been appointed as the Director, Sales, M!CE and Travel Trade by the Radisson Hotel Group. He brings a 15-year background in the hospitality industry. He worked for a decade with the Radisson Group hotels and for five years at the Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport. Sharma's leadership skills have made him stand as an outstanding addition to the hotel's team. In his new responsibility, Sharma will take the lead in driving sales initiatives in M!CE and Travel Trade. We look forward to the positive impact, Sharma will make in his new position.



**Sanjay Temkar**  
Country Manager,  
India and Middle East  
The Travel Corporation

Sanjay Temkar has been appointed as the new Country Manager for India and Middle East for The Travel Corporation (TTC). He has been working with TTC for 10 years and succeeds Darshan Maheshwari, who has been the Country Manager since 2012. Earlier, he served as the Director, Sales. Temkar has a demonstrated history in leadership, industry knowledge and has helped achieve a record of growth in the region. Nicholas Lim, CEO, Asia, TTC, said, "On behalf of the TTC team, we are thrilled to have Temkar as the new Country Manager and are confident that he will expand business in India and Middle East."



**Gurpreet S Kandhari**  
GM, The Fern Seaside  
Luxurious Tent Resort  
& Nest Beacon Resort

Gurpreet S Kandhari has been promoted as the General Manager of The Fern Seaside Luxurious Tent Resort and Nest Beacon Resort, Daman. With his leadership of operations in Daman since 2020, he has exhibited exceptional skills. In his new role, Kandhari will be entrusted with the responsibility of elevating the guest experience, managing the hotels' online reputation, driving core sales, cultivating valuable ties, and uplifting both properties. He encompasses over a decade of experience with brands such as ITC, Taj, Hilton, and Radisson before joining Concept Hospitality.



**Monica Edara**  
Director, Marketing  
NHCC and HICC

Monica Edara joined as the Director, Marketing of Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre (NHCC) & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC). With over two decades of experience in the industry, she is an award-winning, seasoned professional with a passion for excellence. In her current role, Edara will be responsible for strategizing, budgeting, planning, and implementing marketing and communication activities for the property. She will focus on strategies to enhance market penetration and increased brand recall, by creating strong and impactful frameworks.



**Nidhi Verma**  
Director, Marketing &  
Communication  
India and South Asia, Accor

Nidhi Verma has been appointed as Director of Marketing & Communication for India and South Asia of Accor. With a background in marketing, public relations, and brand development, he brings a wealth of experience and expertise to Accor's Marketing and Communication efforts in the region. Verma is responsible for driving development and execution of integrated public relations campaigns that align with the brand's marketing strategies, alongside leveraging a 360-degree approach across various media platforms. She has a proven record of developing and implementing PR campaigns.



**Ritu Gupta**  
Director, Revenue  
Sofitel Mumbai BKC

Ritu Gupta has joined Sofitel Mumbai BKC as the Director, Revenue. She brings over a decade of experience to her role and owes much of her success to the leadership traits, excellent interpersonal skills, nurturing stakeholder experiences, and ability to formulate tactical plans and implement business strategies. Gupta began her career at the Taj President Mumbai in 2012 as a Revenue Executive. She moved to the Taj MG Road in Bengaluru in 2015, as the Revenue Manager, before becoming the Cluster Revenue Manager for the Taj Clubhouse and Vivanta IT Expressway.



**Saheli Chaudhuri**  
Marketing & Communications  
Manager, JW Marriott  
Chandigarh

Saheli Chaudhuri has been appointed as the new Marketing and Communications Manager for JW Marriott Chandigarh. With over a decade of experience in the hospitality industry, she has worked with brands such as Marriott, Zuri Group Global, IHG, and The Den, Bengaluru. She collaborated with communication agencies specialized in the hotel segment. Chaudhuri's areas of expertise include media-influencer relations, creative direction, events management, and campaign strategy. Vishal Singh, GM, JW Marriott Chandigarh, said, "We are delighted to welcome her to our team."



**Malcolm Moniz**  
Cluster IT Manager  
Hilton Goa Resort

Malcolm Moniz has been promoted as the Cluster IT Manager of Hilton Goa Resort. He joined Hilton Goa Resort as an IT Manager in August 2018. Moniz has made significant contributions to the resort's technology infra and ops. His dedication and exceptional skills have been instrumental in enhancing the guest experience through efficient and reliable IT services. With 17 years experience in the IT industry, Moniz brings a wealth of knowledge to his new role. Prior to joining Hilton Goa Resort, he has held key positions in Radisson Blu Resort Goa, Park Hyatt Goa Resort & Spa, among others.



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