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## ONLINE PORTALS

# Indian Online Travel Agents expanding global footprint

The online travel industry in India had kept notching new highs even during the period when the broader travel economy was facing the economic downturn. Now, when the travel sector is setting its eyes on scaling the previous highs, the online travel agents are announcing many initiatives to script new success history. Vivek Sethi reports on various initiatives.

### TT BUREAU

#### 1) makemytrip.com

On back of strong performance in the third fiscal quarter, makemytrip.com shared its projections for the fiscal year 2011's 'revenue less service cost' to be between US\$ 59 million and US\$ 61 million. Sharing the financial results with the respective stock exchange, **Deep Kalra**, CEO and Founder, makemytrip.com said, "MakeMyTrip is the leader in India's rapidly growing online travel market. We believe our continuous focus on improving our customers' booking experience, providing innovative travel products and strengthening supplier relationships will continue to make us the Indian online travel portal of choice for the growing middle class population of India."

Recently, on February 9, 2011, MakeMyTrip entered into a share purchase agreement (SPA) worth US\$ 3 mil-

lion with Singapore based Luxury Tours & Travel.

The acquisition is a major strategic move for MMYT, beyond India, as South East Asia region is a highly popular destination of choice for Indian travellers and among the biggest and fastest growing markets for our outbound tours and packages business.

It has also rolled out packages to Europe that saves travel time by pressing inter region air connectivity into service. The group has also rolled out BlackBerry application, which provides access to MMT inventory on the BlackBerry platform.

#### 2) arzoo.com

The arzoo.com is betting big on the theme based online travel options, as the revenues from air component are likely to get further squeezed. In a free wheeling conversation with TravTalk,



**Deep Kalra**  
CEO and Founder  
makemytrip.com

**Anshul Srivastava**, Head Sales, arzoo.com said, "Tours, weekend getaways and homestays are the segments where there is sufficient value to be unlocked, as the revenues from air component gets squeezed. Likewise, we

"We are now in advance stages of unifying Travelocity India and Travelguru. To further enhance our leadership in the online space, we are open to both organic and inorganic options as we plan to make more investments in leading travel markets in



**Neelu Singh**  
COO,  
ezeego1.com

APAC region including India," said **Roshan Mendis**, President of ZUJI and Regional Vice President of Travelocity Asia Pacific.

As part of the unifying process, **Himanshu Singh**, Managing Director,

its expansion plans in South India with special emphasis on Kerala.

"With success of its present offices in Delhi, Agra & Goa, travelchacha.com will soon set up new holiday offices in other key cities in

coming years. Kerala is one of the largest tourist hubs in India, famous for its eco-tourism initiatives. There is huge scope for all domestic, outbound & inbound market in this state," said **Sanjay Bhasin**, CEO, travelchacha.com.

"We expect the Kerala market to contribute to at least 20 per cent to the company's total revenue, which currently stands at 10 per cent," he added.

#### 5) ezeego1.com

Lately Ezeego1.com, the online travel market place has entered into a joint promotion with Oman Tourism to promote the destination. As part of the initiative, it presents exciting deals to Oman. According to **Neelu Singh**, COO, Ezeego1.com, "Oman is an offbeat destination which offers unforgettable experiences to travellers. It offers a unique mix of culture, heritage & landscape. One can explore over 500 castles & forts, virgin beaches and rocky cliffs throughout its diverse landscape."

"Oman is approximately 2 hours away from Mumbai and 3 and a half hours away from New Delhi. It is conveniently connected by Oman Air, Air India, Jet Airways & Indian Airlines offering direct flights to Muscat. Visa is easy to obtain within five to six days, encouraging a traveller

Contd. on page 40 ▶



**Himanshu Singh**  
Managing Director  
Travelocity India



**Sanjay Bhasin**  
CEO  
travelchacha.com



**Jaal Shah**  
Managing Director  
RezLive.com

have also started focussing big time on scaling up our MICE operations."

"In the year 2011, we look forward to opening our sales offices in Hyderabad, Madhya Pradesh, and other parts in Southern India. We would also consolidate our B2B segment with facilities like virtual credit, refundable deposits and franchise model," he added.

#### 3) travelocity.com

In line with its strategy to get bigger in the APAC region while improving profitability, Travelocity India announced the launch of their ambitious domestic flights engine on January 7, 2011 in New Delhi.

Travelocity India will lead the combined organisation. Elaborating further, Singh said, "The new domestic flight booking engine (available at www.travelocity.co.in) will display the lowest fare available at a given time integrating results displayed by the airlines and other OTAs on a user friendly format."

"In the second phase, later in 2011, the company will integrate the interests of travel agents, who then could also be rewarded for using the said booking engine," he added.

#### 4) travelchacha.com

India's leading online travel company opened a new sales office in Kochi as part of

## Record number of foreign buyers register for GITB 2011

178 Indian suppliers have registered for the event. The number is expected to grow further.

**SHAYAN MALLIK**

With both foreign buyers and the Indian suppliers booking early, the fourth edition of the Great India Travel Bazaar (GITB) 2011 has outgrown all its previous editions. Billed as India's largest travel exhibition dedicated to promoting destination India to the key global buyers, GITB 2011 has already registered a record 246 foreign buyers from 56 countries, who will come to shop for India's diverse tourism products. The event is scheduled from April 17-19, 2011.

And with two months more to go, the event has already recorded more than 5200 business meetings. The total numbers of meetings are expected to be about 7000 this year. GITB's last edition attracted 207 buyers from 50 countries and logged in close to 5000 buyers-suppliers' meetings.



So far, 178 Indian sellers have registered to showcase their products at the event. The suppliers' number is expected to further go up by at least 10. About 90 per cent of the buyers are first time visitors giving Indian suppliers an opportunity to establish new business ties and venture into newer markets. Gujarat will showcase itself as the theme state at the event whereas Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa are partner states.

The event exclusively focusses to promote inbound tourism. It offers platform to the Indian suppliers to interact with foreign buyers, other registered Indian sellers, policy makers, investors and members of the media.

Besides, the event will also witness social networking events, hosted dinners and cultural programmes along with the interactive business sessions that would take up issues and trends.

GITB is jointly organised by The Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). The event takes place at B M Birla Convention Centre in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

### GITB 2011 updated

- Buyers – 246 from 56 countries
- Suppliers – 178 with at least 10 more expected
- B2B meetings – More than 5200 already scheduled
- Theme state – Gujarat
- Partner State – J&K, MP, Maharashtra, Orissa

## IT&CM to have 2 themed pavilions

The 1<sup>st</sup> new pavilion will showcase unique convention venues, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> pavilion will comprise a collection of health and medical suppliers.

**TT BUREAU**

In response to buyers' feedback on the industry trends and demands, IT&CM China 2011 will feature new elements including two themed pavilions. In the previous editions, buyers have indicated that their clients are increasingly requesting for proposals that have a 'wow' factor.

In 2011, the first new pavilion will showcase innovative and unique convention venues. Further, research of current trends has highlighted that health and travel wellness has grown both in China's MICE and Corporate Travel sectors in terms of importance. Hence, the second pavilion will comprise a collection of health and medical suppliers with travel wellness offerings.

This new addition will strike a stronger chord with corporate buyers and HR managers, who are increasingly concerned with managing employee health welfare during business trips.



A couple of well-received event features will also return to the 2011 event. Shanghai Municipal Tourism Administration, the returning sponsor of this year's IT&CM China pre-show city tours of Shanghai, will highlight four new venues and attractions in the tour line-up.

## Indian OTAs expanding...

Contd. from page 32 ▶

to go for a quick getaway or on a short notice," she added.

### 6) rezlive.com

Lately, rezlive.com has appointed FAL Travelmart as its foreign distributor in Qatar. FAL Travelmart established since 2001 will be acting as exclusive (sole) distributor of RezLive.com in Qatar. FAL's office will be the rezlive.com's Qatar-based office.

In a recent conversation with TravTalk, Jaal Shah, Managing Director, rezlive.com said, "We have noticed considerable growth in Eastern India and our focus will continue on growing our presence both in terms of offices and client base pan India and global basis. Reaching out to regional market and working closely with our travel partners had remained on top of our agenda and our expansion in Southern India with an office in Bengaluru and Qatar is a key example of the same."

"In 2011, we will move forward towards the integration of an airline booking tool on rezlive.com offering our agents to book Air Tickets and hotels under same window. Effective online payment gateway, multi-level collection process and mobile technology is also on the final round of completion and will be launched in phase wise manner," he added.

## 'Globus' back with 'I know America'

Training in February 2011 reaches out to over 200 travel agents!

**TT BUREAU**

After the success of Americas' Certification Programme, Globus Family of Brands is back with an 'I Know America' crash course on the USA & Canada for the travel agents.

With a choice of over 110 vacations to USA & Canada, the Globus family of brands has the largest selection of vacations for the Indian travel agents, ranging from panoramic tours, Alaskan cruises and Canadian rail journeys to self-drives and city getaways.

"We are happy to share our vast and in-depth knowledge with the industry. Our training programmes, both the 'I Know Europe' and the 'I know Americas' have a huge demand and we intend to offer this as a benefit to our core supporters," says Gauri Jayaram, Regional



**Gauri Jayaram**  
Regional Director – South Asia & the Middle East

Director – South Asia & the Middle East.

The one-day programme had various modules on destinations and interactive sessions that covered USA (including Alaska and Hawaii) and Canada. Agents were certified for having attended the 'I Know America' crash course. The 'I Know America' programme was held in 4 cities – Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata and trained over 200 travel agents in the first week of February.

## TTF-OTM proves to be a big hit in Mumbai

TTF-OTM in Mumbai proved to be a huge success with a growth over 27% in the number of sellers. Over 700 exhibitors from 34 countries showcased their products. The exhibition was attended by over 15000 visitors which included 10000 trade buyers.

**ANITA JAIN**

Most of the destinations, international as well as domestic, made an aggressive pitch for the Indian tourists with attractive displays and eye-catching exhibits showcasing their attractions at the recently concluded annual TTF-OTM travel exhibition in Mumbai. Belgium, Croatia, Hungary, Israel, Philippines, Seychelles, and Uzbekistan were represented for the first time in TTF-OTM Mumbai.

Canada, China, Egypt, Thailand, Israel and Nepal were the partner countries, while the feature countries were Macau, Turkey, Indonesia, Bhutan, Kenya, Korea and Philippines.

From India, partner states like Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir,

Himachal, Gujarat and Kerala participated with large private delegations of 50 plus each. Karnataka, West Bengal and Punjab were the feature states this time, while Maharashtra was the host state.

Continuing the trend of public-private partnership in destination promotion, many of the countries and states participated along with private operators. Prominent among these were the large contingents from Thailand, Nepal, China, Philippines, Macau, Canada, Bhutan, Kenya, Turkey, and Indonesia. Even first-timers like Israel, Seychelles and Philippines had brought along private sector co-exhibitors. Among the Indian states, the large delegations were from Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand,

Kerala, and Gujarat. While the countries and states did generic destination promotion, the private sector organisations transacted the actual buying and selling of



**Sanjeev Agarwal**  
Chairman & CEO  
Fairfest Media

tour packages, hotel rooms and transportation, with the travel trade, business travellers, MICE sector, groups and FITs.

## Launch

### TA launches New Campaign in India

Tourism Australia has created a new destination campaign to make Australia the destination of choice for leisure travellers. The campaign has been created on the theme of personal narratives of select personalities who nurture a bond with Australia through their visits or stay.

Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager – India, TA said, "We are optimistic that a people's perspective approach will add a new and distinctive dimension to our campaign."