

With secure online deals

# OTAs get the midas touch

TRAVELTALK brings to you the leading online travel agents, who spoke at length about the strong growth prospects and the midas touch offered by enhancing safety and security of the online transactions. *Vivek Sethi* finds out more on different aspects of the online travel segment.

**Robust Growth:**

The leading online travel agents in India are entrepreneurs, who have got addicted to driving in the super fast growth zone. The recent slowdown stands testimony to the fact that even adverse economic terrain could not take the steam out of their engine.

"In a sense, online travel companies are only replicating what happened a couple of decades ago in terms of off-line consolidation which gave rise to big B2B players. With online purchase of

Echoing similar sentiments, **Neelu Singh**, COO, Ezeego1.com said, "Online purchase of travel options is

security aspects attached to making online transactions.

"With RBI getting more stringent about online credit

that we have been able to extend our reach not only to new agents but remote areas where bank transfers

customisation is still best done face-to-face."

"The most sold products are domestic air flights and rail tickets. New products constantly hit the markets to stimulate online sales and these are backed by marketing offers to generate or increase demand. We have innovative products like BYOP (Build Your Own Package), fixed departure itineraries, charters, fly and stay etc. We also have some excellent marketing campaigns running to stimulate sales and keep our customers loyal and happy," he added.

domains fully, right from checking itineraries, prices and booking," said **Ravi Gusain**, Managing Director, Mastholiday.com.

"We are educating and training our travel partners to use our online portal for bookings, which reduces the time and increases efficiency of staff at both ends," he added.

Echoing similar views, **Sanjay Bhasin**, CEO, Travelchacha.com, said "Online purchase of travel options are cost effective, safe and flexible to use. A best combination of imaginative and conceptual thinking on the part of IT solutions providers is required to help companies in offering travel services to carve an alcove for themselves."

Embracing another important aspect to keep the enthusiasm level high among all the value chains, Singh said, "Travel products like flights, hotels, rail, cars, insurance and short-haul-hol-



**Keyur Joshi**  
Co-Founder and COO  
MakeMyTrip.com



**Raja Natesan**  
COO  
Yatra.com



**Neelu Singh**  
COO  
Ezeego1.com

Application to secure online transactions

**MakeMyTrip** has recently been validated compliant with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS)

**Ezeego1** has implemented master secure which ensures a safer way for online transactions

**Yatra.com** has many technology solutions that make online transactions totally secure and foolproof. Some of these technologies have been designed in-house.

**RezLive.com** is in the process of integrating an

intermediately online payment gateway, which will allow travel agents to pay for their transaction and transfer online funds to their account through all leading banks in India

**Mastholiday.com** is using Verisign and Thawrite SSL servers, which help in data encryption, in order to protect against data theft

**Travelchacha.com** maintains foolproof B2B channels by providing SMS to agents after the transactions, login & log out information history

travel options on an increase, online travel companies these days feel bad if they register YOY growth rates of less than 40 per cent. It certainly gives a fair idea that the segment will grow further in the B2B domain," said **Raja Natesan**, COO, Yatra.com.

increasing and we have seen a sharp rise in the B2B segment as well."

**Secure Online Option:**

One among the key elements that has enabled the OTA segment sustain a dream run is the enhanced safety and

card fraud, customers' belief on online transactions is only growing. Also, besides travel, other sectors are adopting e-commerce as a platform to increase their reach which will also lead to an increase in customer confidence," said **Keyur Joshi**, Co-Founder and COO, MakeMyTrip.com.

"We had recently been validated compliant with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS). Trust Wave, the leading provider of PCI DSS compliance management solutions, performed the validation. With this certification, MakeMyTrip has become the only travel portal in India to receive compliance for its online transactions," he added.

**RezLive.com**, another key player in this segment, has successfully expanded its reach to even the remotest areas on the back of a safe gateway for online payments.

"It's due to an effective payment gateway and secure online banking solutions



**Jaal Shah**  
Managing Director  
RezLive.com



**Sanjay Bhasin**  
CEO  
Travelchacha.com



**Ravi Gusain**  
Managing Director  
Mastholiday.com

are little difficult to make. We had seen a growth of 85 per cent on YOY last year for online transactions," said **Jaal Shah**, Managing Director, RezLive.com.

**Hit Online Products:**

Describing the rule of thumb that determines the success of an online product, Natesan said, "In the online sales engine, the products that get sold the most are the ones that require least human intervention. Any complex sale that takes convincing, bargaining or

**Going Forward:**

As the overall hits on online travel portals increase substantially, there are ample challenges on hand to realise the true potential of the said segment in India.

"OTAs in the B2B side need to overcome the knowledge constraint of small and middle segment travel agents. These agents use travel portals for price checking, but prefer to get in touch through e-mails or phone for actual booking. I think it will take some more time for them to use B2B

days sell the most. We also offer products like cruises and long holidays on our website. But, equally important is keeping our affiliates motivated."

"We keep incentivising our travel partners through regular e-mailers and incentive schemes like Cash Ki Seedi scheme where on booking international hotels, they get cash vouchers in the form of Sodexo vouchers, the value of which are equal to the sale amount," she added. ☺

FAMILY ALBUM

## South African Airways organises trip for Indian agents

South African Airways recently flew seven Indian tour operators to South Africa in partnership with Mantis. The eight-day trip offered the agents an exotic experience at cities like Johannesburg, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and wine regions of Franschhoek and Paarl.

