

TRAVTALK



THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

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Wyndham for sustainability

With the theme 'Sustainability: responsibility or profitability?', Wyndham Garden Ajman initiated a round table discussion on the commercial advantages of different eco-friendly practices. The discussion also included the importance of creating awareness among stakeholders & aligning the company's vision vis-à-vis the projected benefits.



Iftikhar Hamdani
Cluster General Manager –
Ramada Hotel & Suites by
Wyndham Ajman, Ramada by
Wyndham Beach Hotel
Ajman and Wyndham Garden
Ajman Corniche

“ Sustainability has always been on our agenda and we intend to keep the ball rolling and kickstart the year 2020 with a very insightful discussion on a cause that we are truly passionate about. Ramada Ajman has been campaigning for sustainability since 2012 and we have established an outstanding case study on its commercial benefits within our operations. We have an annual savings of AED120,000 from our zero-landfill initiative, and have proven that it is possible to have a profitable and socially responsible business. Another point that we want to highlight is the value of staff retention in the success of any campaigns related to sustainability, which equates to higher profit for the business. ”



Rafik Kamel
Director for Franchise Operations
– Middle East and Africa,
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts

of the day, profits are the main focus, so if we work together to ensure that the energy is saved, we can rest assured that there will be an escalation of profits as well. As we didn't have the expertise to understand how to save energy. We got some energy audit companies to let us know what initiatives we need to take in ensuring energy savings. As I look after Middle East and Africa we have ensured that all hotels comply with the strategies which we came up with after the findings. ”



John Arnold
Director
GreenGood Eco Tech

“ Living in UAE for over 20 years, I came from Australia with unique food packaging products which were environmentally friendly and they were coming from sustainable products from Australia; we cut a tree, we grow a tree. As time moved on, paper packaging grew and we exported into this region, at one stage we did all the work for the leading food chains. Thereafter my next venture is GreenGood Eco Tech, an eco-friendly company – one for packaging compostable and other is the machinery. We ensure that composting in GCC machines will take the food waste and compost away the end result of being sustainable. The machinery is very important to those in the hospitality trade as it is a long-term investment that will save them a lot of finances, although the initial payment will just be a one-time amount to be paid. ”

Contd. on page 3 ►

Paradise, unfolded

The salty wind caresses your skin, your hair leap in joy and your feet is tucked in soft white sand. A refreshing drink in hand, unending blues ahead and fawning leaves overhead. Waves beckon you to take a dip or ride them as you wish. The clear waters invite you to take a peek underneath. Heaven has multiple addresses; and that is at Adaaran Resorts.

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Ras Al Khaimah
BEYOND A JOURNEY

Round table discussion

► Contd. from page 1

“Human sustainability is something which is very relevant at this stage. It helps to ensure that the profits are still kept at the same level. When you employ a person in your organisation, you need to make sure that the person will be with you for a longer period of time. Selecting the right individuals and making sure that they stay on is another key aspect in sustainability. Every company needs the numbers to be high at the close of the day, so finding the best strategies for it is an important element in life.”



Harbinder Singh
Managing Director
Sudeku



Tanya Daud
Founder and CEO
Qissa' Go

“As storytellers, we understand the importance of reaching out to the audience, speaking their language, and finding out what drives them to take actions. This has been a very informative discussion on how each of us, as individuals and organisations, can act and motivate others to take positive actions to promote sustainability, no matter what field we are in. We understand that it is important to have commercial advantages of different eco-friendly practices and we try in our own way to work on climate change issues.”

“Change needs to come top down and the most effective way is story telling – what happens when you do it and we believe that change in terms of having sustainability is to humanise the past, for example, instead of stating you wasted this much of paper etc. you explain how humans are affected, then it is more effective, the impact is more powerful and we partner with Ramada Ajman and multiple broadcasts to ensure more people are engaged.”



Fraz Ajmal
Chief Services Officer,
Qissa' Go

Inputs by Shehara Rizly

Glamping in Longbeach RAK

Longbeach Campground is located on the azure shoreline of Ras Al Khaimah featuring tonnes of new activities. Stays start from AED 599 for a family of four in one of the authentic tents or luxuriously appointed safari and dome suites.

Bin Majid Hotels & Resorts have properties which are located in the Northern Emirates and enjoy magnificent locations in popular destinations providing premium hospital-

ity services and creating unforgettable experiences for both business and leisure travellers.

The latest addition is the glamping ground in Ras Al Khaimah for the discerning travellers who wish to partake in a different kind of adventure. You can find your adventure whilst you plunge into their infinity pool and partake into many activities including water sports, beach games, archery, Zumba, embroidery, pottery and much

more. The little ones have their own world of adventure including activities like petting zoo, karate classes, junior chef classes, kite flying, pottery, beach activities, painting competition and more.

You can indulge in a sumptuous live BBQ dinner and breakfast spread by the beach; gaze at the moonlit sky by the bonfire with some marshmallows to savour; or simply enjoy a classic at the floating theatre.



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Tourism BreakingNews

■ EDGE joins Mubadala as host partner of Global Aerospace Summit 2020

■ Etihad Airways partners with UK's easyJet

■ Dubai to host 3rd edition of Air Traffic Control Forum in June 2020

■ UAE Cabinet approves multi-entry five-year tourist visas

■ Etihad and Miral sign agreement for entertainment venue on Yas Island

■ Amadeus and Air India sign new distribution agreement

■ Air Arabia Abu Dhabi approved by cabinet as national carrier airline for UAE

■ Emirates to showcase A380 at Kuwait Aviation Show 2020

■ The first Millennium Central debuts in Kuwait

■ SriLankan Airlines and Gulf Air ink codeshare agreement

■ BTEA to host second edition of Saturday Market at Bab Al Bahrain

Travel Trends for 2020

It's a truism to say that digital technology is advancing rapidly and transforming the travel industry. **Maher Koubaa**, Executive Vice President for Airlines, Amadeus META shares what can be expected from the travel market as 2020 ushers in a new decade.

You've got mail: using AI and Machine Learning to communicate with customers

As carriers strive to grow their footprint while delivering fast service for customers, many have been trialing direct bookings and communication with AI via text and WhatsApp. Mobile has transformed the way in which companies communicate with consumers and AI & ML are helping to improve this communication even further.

If it's not online, it never happened: social media and travel bookings

With social media taking an increasing hold on society, industry players are working to provide a similar experience. Among younger generations and emerging economies, the smartphone has usurped the laptop as the travel research, booking and content sharing platform of choice, so travel companies must think mobile-first throughout the user experience.

Higher ground: conscious travel

Sustainability has be-



“2020 is set to be an exciting year of change for the travel industry. As the relationship between humans and machines in the travel industry develops, the most successful brands will be the ones that can prove they understand their audiences inside-out”

come a deciding factor for individuals purchasing travel, and travel companies are adapting their offers to reflect this. From reducing plastic in hotels, to the creation of sustainably-focused package holidays, consumers are offered a wide choice when it comes to an eco-stay and are starting to hold companies accountable if they don't meet requirements.

A million ways to pay: Fintech innovation and alternative payment methods

With the growth of on-the-go destination driven pur-

chases and the focus on in-destination support, the travel industry is ripe for payment innovation. Global Fintech innovation is happening at a rapid pace and there are now more than 300 different ways to pay for travel across the world.

Fairweather friends: why old rules don't apply to traveller loyalty

Traveller loyalty will be a major battleground in 2020, with technology as a key differentiator. Travel brands will need to invest in technology to connect with customers to win their loyalty and lower acquisi-

tion costs. With so much choice out there for travellers, travel brands need to be smarter than ever about how they target consumers, and technology will be the absolute key to their success.

Machines can't replace the human touch

While technology will provide unprecedented support for travellers, predicting behaviour, anticipating potential problems and providing solutions, people still prefer to deal with people. Consumer and business travellers' expectations have been raised by their

everyday experiences. Overall, 2020 is set to be an exciting year of change for the travel industry. As the relationship between humans and machines in the travel industry develops, the most successful brands will be the ones that can prove they understand their audiences inside-out using permissioned data and can build personalised, tailored offerings for them.

At Amadeus, we'll be working with our partners and customers around the world to tackle these changes head on.



Maher Koubaa
Executive Vice President for Airlines
Amadeus META

(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)

A word from stalwarts



“We are delighted to have launched the new identity and logo of Manama Capital of Arab Tourism for 2020. We aim to strengthen and develop intra-tourism between the Arab and international countries and its people through promoting the uniqueness of the Kingdom of Bahrain which has both, rich historical offerings and modern city life. We also strive to increase tourism numbers and expect to attract 12.2 million visitors in 2020, an equivalent increase of 5 per cent. In addition, we seek to increase the total number of nights spent by tourists by 15.8 million nights, an equivalent increase of 15 per cent compared to 2019, as well as increase the average length of stay to 3.5 nights per tourist, an equivalent increase of 3 per cent compared to 2019.

BTEA will continue to develop unique tourism projects in line with its long-term strategy that focuses on four pillars — awareness, attraction, access and accommodation; this includes improving the overall accessibility of the Kingdom of Bahrain, attracting exhibitions and conferences in larger numbers, enhancing the quality of services in the tourism and hospitality sectors, and finally strengthening the position of the Kingdom as an ideal tourist destination for international tourists, with a special focus on families.”

— Nader Al Moayyed, Chief Executive Officer, BTEA

Indonesia all set to lure UAE visitors

Emiratis visiting Indonesia increased by 26.92 per cent, from 6.561 in the year 2018 to 8.327 in 2019. **H.E. Ridwan Hassan**, Consul General of the Indonesian Consulate in Dubai shares with **TRAVTALK**, some of the plans to promote the country in the Middle East market.

Shehara Rizly

How was 2019 in terms of tourism growth from UAE to Indonesia?

Emiratis visiting Indonesia increased by 26.92 per cent, from 6.561 in 2018 to 8.327 in 2019. Generally, Emiratis are interested in family tour packages, wellness packages and sports tourism. Unlike most other foreign tourists, Emiratis are fond of attractions like modern shopping centres, beaches, mountains, hotels and resorts with complete facilities. Most tourists from UAE to Indonesia are expatriates living in Dubai and Northern

Emirates, this is important considering that of the total 9.6 million population, only around 11 per cent or 1 million people are native Emiratis.

Could you share the plans for 2020 by the Consulate General office in Dubai?

In order to increase tourist arrivals from the Northern Emirates to Indonesia, the Consulate General has undertaken various steps such as facilitating the holding of the Wonderful Indonesia exhibition and Tourism Sales Mission with the Ministry of Tourism to market tour packages to UAE travel agents.

Indonesia has superior tourism potential from several regions which can be offered through cooperation between Indonesian travel agency entrepreneurs and UAE to create tour packages, participating in Heritage Week, Expo 2020; and other expos held in Dubai and Northern Emirates, and organising Fam trips to tourist destinations in Indonesia.

Also, we are looking at the chance to promote Indonesia via radio and universities, to attract youngsters in UAE to visit Indonesia. For universities, we are offering scholarships for students.

In the year of Expo 2020 what are the initiatives taken by the Consulate to attract visitors from the UAE?

We want Expo 2020 to be



H.E. Ridwan Hassan
Consul General
Indonesian Consulate in Dubai

What is being done to increase UAE citizens' awareness about Indonesia?

Indonesia, a country with conducive political environment, was chosen as the Most Preferred Emerging Market in 2020. Positioning Indonesia as an attractive destination in global markets is imperative to the success of the entire tourism strategy, particularly for UAE as well as the Gulf region and beyond. We need to increase UAE citizens' awareness about Indonesia through optimal promotion by involving the active role of Visit Indonesia Tourism Office (VITO) through various means and media.

“Most tourists from UAE to Indonesia are expatriates living in Dubai & Northern Emirates, this is important considering that of the total 9.6 million population, only around 11 per cent or 1 million people are native Emiratis”

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Personality of the Month

Shurooq's focus on sustainability

As the Chief Operating Officer of the investment promotion arm of the Sharjah Government Ahmed Obaid Al Qaseer has an enormous task to ensure sustainability in the projects & destinations promoted and developed by Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq).

TT Bureau

In line with the vision of Sharjah to attract more investors to the region, the investment and development arm – Shurooq was initiated several years ago. Some of the key personnel were selected by His Highness Dr. Sultan bin Al Qasimi, the Ruler of Sharjah to implement and carry out the many projects that present the success story of the emirate of Sharjah. The person we have selected to be featured this month is an individual who started off in the telecommunication field but today heads the operations at Shurooq.

Embarking on his career path

Graduating from Dubai Men's College with a bachelor's degree in Business Information Technology, Al Qaseer started his career in 2002 at the Emirates Telecommunication

Corporation (Etisalat) in the government and corporate segment. The next four years equipped him with the necessary experience working as a Senior Sales Support and Senior Sales Executive.

Venturing into new terrain

Stepping in as Business Development Manager in 2006 in Al Qasba development authority ushered in a new leaf in life. Within a short span of two years, he was promoted as Director Business Development which formed an integral part of the team which transformed Al Qasba into one of the most popular leisure and tourism destinations in the emirate of Sharjah. Following his highly successful track record with Al Qasba, Al Qaseer played a key role in the establishment of Shurooq, where he held the position of Director of Property

“Our efforts towards Sharjah's eco-tourism reaching out to both regional and global entities have continued this year with the launch of two distinctive luxury retreats in key locations – the Al Faya lodge in Mleiha and Al Badaya Oasis in Sharjah's Al Badaya desert”

Management in 2010, as well as Operations, Sales and Leasing. Since then he has been promoted to become Shurooq's CEO in 2011, and in this capacity is responsible for the operational execution of all of Shurooq's projects and destinations.

Passionate about diversifying portfolio

Al Qaseer states how over the past few years Shurooq has been instrumental in diversifying its portfolio of investment and tourism projects with Sharjah's rich culture, heritage and history creating a unique backdrop for every desti-

nation. They have invested close to US\$ 1.5 billion in eco-tourism and heritage projects in Sharjah whilst being committed to be a top promoter of responsible profitability of the sector in the global economy.

Key projects implemented

The past three years Shurooq with its young team of experts revolutionised the emirate with its spectacular projects. One of the first niche projects to be completed was the luxurious 20 tent Kingfisher lodge in Kalba, which is one of UAE's most important nature reserves and mangrove swamps. The second

is Al Bait hotel, UAE's first five-star luxury hotel built and developed on a nineteenth century heritage site. At an event last year, Qaseer spoke passionately about the eco retreats developed by Shurooq. “Our efforts towards Sharjah's eco-tourism reaching out to both regional and global entities have continued this year with the launch of two distinctive luxury retreats in key locations – the Al

Faya lodge in Mleiha and Al Badaya Oasis in Sharjah's Al Badaya desert,” he said.



Ahmed Obaid Al Qaseer
Chief Operating Officer
Shurooq

flydubai lands in Yangon

Emirates flydubai codeshare continues to grow over this year as they recently started operations to another Southeast Asian destination Yangon in Myanmar. The new daily flights are codeshared with Emirates and will operate from Terminal 3 at Dubai International (DXB). Speaking at the inaugural event Sudhir Sreedharan, Senior Vice President, Commercial Operations (UAE, GCC, Subcontinent and Africa)

at flydubai, said, “We are confident that the new service will not only support the trade links between the UAE and Myanmar but also become a popular route for passengers travelling from the UAE and the GCC and for those connecting to Europe and the USA with Emirates.”

During his opening remarks at the event, His Excellency U Phyo Min Thein, Chief Minister of Yangon, said, “Yangon

International Airport plays an essential role in the tourism development of Myanmar. The airport is a gateway to international travel.” Emirates passengers will receive complimentary meals and the Emirates checked baggage allowance on flights operated by flydubai in Business and Economy Class.

The partnership between flydubai and Emirates was announced in 2017 and has expanded to meet increasing demand



as passengers realise the benefits, such as access to an expanded global network, the convenience of travelling on a single ticket with seamless point-to-point baggage handling and the alignment of the frequent flyer programme.

Jose Angeja, Chief Operating Officer of Yangon

Aerodrome Company, operator of Yangon International Airport said, “We are delighted to receive a new international airline, which will not only maintain a direct flight to Middle East — Dubai, as the main feeder of the European and American markets to Yangon, but also for adding a new route to Krabi (Thailand),

increasing YIA's connections portfolio, which will definitely increase the number of passengers and visitors to Myanmar.”

FlightDetails

flydubai flights FZ 1585/ FZ1586 will operate daily between Terminal 3, Dubai International (DXB), and Yangon International Airport (RGN)

SCTDA's new resolution for hotels

As the emirate of Sharjah is on a drive to attract 10 million tourists by 2021, the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) has implemented a new hotel classification to better serve the expected number of tourists to the emirate over the next two years.

 TT Bureau

Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) announced its new standards for classification of hotel establishments in the emirate, in line with the implementation of Resolution No. 38 of 2019. The resolution aims to classify hotel establishments in Sharjah in line with the latest standards. The new standards were announced following a workshop organised by SCTDA for representatives of hotels and other hospitality establishments in Sharjah. The workshop detailed the updated classification criteria for hotel establish-



H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman
SCTDA

ments and the process of implementation. The new standards fall within the directives of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, to continuously enhance the

experience of tourists visiting Sharjah, considering the tourism sector as one of the most important pillars of the national economy.

H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman of SCTDA, said, "We are confident that the new classification will reflect positively on the performance of hotel establishments, including enhancements in facilities and services, and further contribute to boosting the hotel industry's contribution as one of the most important components of the tourism infrastructure in the emirate. SCTDA has developed the classification in line with international standards and local require-

ments of establishments, with the support of our partners in the government and private sectors, in line with our mission to empower the hotel industry and realise Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021, which targets 10 million tourist arrivals in the emirate by 2021."


He added, "Sharjah has witnessed an increase in the number of hotel establishments during past years, and currently has a total of 10,883 hotel rooms, providing ideal services and accommodation options that cater to every visitor's expectations. Over the next five years, the local tourism

market will be served by a total of 34 hotel establishments (5,700 rooms), reflecting a 50 per cent increase in the number of new rooms. SCTDA continues to work on updating the classification and



Ahmed Obaid Al Tunajji
Manager - Tourism Standards Department
SCTDA

licensing criteria for existing hotel establishments in the emirate and attaining the highest international standards, with the goal of enhancing quality services of hotel establishments and providing more options for tourists."

Ahmed Obaid Al Tunajji, Manager - Tourism Standards Department, SCTDA, stated, "The new classification system gives a hotel property the flexibility to implement criteria which focus on guest experience, human resources and operations. The main objective is to enhance the level of services and facilities in the hotel property." 



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Announces GCC Roadshow

Marcelo Molinari, Tourism Director – Destination Marketing, The Bicester Village Shopping Collection speaks to **TRAVTALK** about the initiatives for the GCC Roadshow which will be held from February 10-13, 2020. The roadshow will increase awareness of European shopping destinations and their associated regions in the ME market.

 TT Bureau

Do share details about the roadshow to be held in GCC.

The GCC Roadshow comprises a series of luxury events scheduled from 10 am to 3 pm at The St Regis Doha on February 10, The JW Marriott Hotel Kuwait City on February 11, the Fairmont Dubai on February 12 and Sofitel Abu Dhabi Corniche on February 13. While not the Collection's first in the region, this roadshow is

unprecedented in terms of scale. Among others, it incorporates tourism boards and tourism development agencies, including VisitBritain, Atout France, Turespana and Tourism Ireland, together with numerous boutique hotels local to our Villages. Travel trade incentives include the opportunity to win a six-night, two-city break for two in Europe.

What does the roadshow entail?

Unifying nine distinctive destinations across Europe and two in China, The Bicester Village Shopping Collection offers a personalised and differentiated luxury shopping experience – one that has significant appeal to the discerning Middle Eastern guests. Not only does the GCC Roadshow allow us to showcase our exceptional offerings to our second-largest market, but it

“We anticipate 22 partners, including the hotels neighbouring our nine European Villages, as well as four tourism boards. Our audience will largely comprise travel bookers experienced in selling luxury packages to the GCC market”

provides an opportunity for us to establish face-to-face relationships with our travel partners and, in so doing, to give our Middle Eastern guests the best shopping experience possible. We anticipate 22 partners, including the hotels neighbouring our nine European Villages, as well as four tourism boards. Our audience will largely comprise travel bookers experienced in selling luxury packages to the GCC market.

Could you share the key objectives for organising the roadshow?

After China, the Middle East represents the larg-

est market for The Bicester Village Shopping Collection and this roadshow allows us to gather valuable insights so that we can cater to the needs of this important guest. The collaboration of tourism boards, travel partners and travel trade media also provides an outstanding opportunity to promote our nine European Villages.

What are the expected number of visitors?

We hope to attract some 200 travel trade professionals, all of whom will gain an in-depth understanding of our experience-led luxury retail offerings and the culturally rich regions in which our Villages are located.

What are the initiatives taken to promote the event among industry professionals?

In addition to media partnerships, such as that established with TravTalk Middle East, we are also working with destination experts, Emirates Holidays, to curate travel packages for promotion to the trade.

The Bicester Village Shopping Collection also boasts a powerful global PR network and works extensively with key influencers in our source markets, including the Middle East, to promote events of this nature.

Is the Middle East a key source market?

The Middle East represents our second-largest strategic market in terms of tax-free sales. Topping the list is Kuwait while the KSA, UAE, Qatar and Egypt are our other key markets in the region. We cater to guests from these

SHOPPING
Destinations

markets with relevant brands in all our Villages as well as through our exceptional service offerings which include contemplation rooms, halal dining, Arabic speaking concierges and a host of targeted activities throughout the year.

What will be the expectations at the event?

Not only will the roadshow increase awareness of our European shopping destinations and their associated regions in this important market, but it will also furnish our travel trade partners with a suite of exceptional value-added incentives that they can pass onto their clients. 🌟



Travel Shop Assurance

Shopping while travelling either for leisure or business is very common. Major shopping festivals around the world running to packed houses are evidence enough. **Fardan Haneef**, Director, Deira Travel talks with TTME about Travel Shop Assurance, a unique travel protection programme.



Fardan Haneef
Director, Deira Travel

Can a traveller's shopping be protected?

Travellers need to be made aware of the fact that their precious shopping needs a safety cover as much as they do. Tune Protect along with its local partners have ensured a unique travel protection programme for this specific need

or niche traveller called the Travel Shop Assurance.

The right product can protect a traveller's shopping. While it takes some research to know how travellers need to stay safe from thefts in foreign lands, it takes a single protection programme like Travel Shop Assurance to protect travellers from mishaps.

What does Travel Shop Assurance include?

The Travel Shop Assurance not only covers a traveller's shopping, but also includes protection

“The Travel Shop Assurance not only covers a traveller's shopping, but also includes protection for cash and personal valuables during travel. In addition, it covers 'fraudulent charges' and offers ATM withdrawal protection. It also includes medical reimbursement of up to US\$ 600 in the event of a medical mishap in situations where the person being robbed also suffers an injury”

for cash and personal valuables during travel. In addition, it covers 'fraudulent charges' and offers ATM withdrawal protection. It also includes medical reimbursement of up to US\$ 600 in the event of a medical mishap in situations where the person

being robbed also suffers an injury.

What is unique about this product?

The policy itself is uniquely designed to cover 'shopping'. But having seen that travellers are spending huge

amounts of money on shopping when they travel; while some are actually travelling only to shop, this policy has been introduced at the right time. It will provide a certain peace of mind to traveller-shoppers and give their shopping a boost too. And it can be clubbed with other travel protection products.

Tune Protect and its local partners are completely in tune with the needs of travellers when it comes to protecting them and their specific interests. This partnership ensures peace of mind.



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TTB organises M!CE evening in Dubai

The Taiwan Tourism Bureau (TTB) in the Middle East organised a M!CE evening in Dubai. The aim of the networking evening was to attract companies from the Middle East to visit Taiwan for meetings and incentives along with various attractions that the destination has to offer.

TT Bureau

Taiwan Tourism Bureau (TTB) office in the Middle East recently concluded a media and trade Fam trip to the heart of Asia for major companies in the region to showcase Taiwan's autumn season and various festivals. The evening was attended by personnel from trade, airlines and bloggers. Earlier this year, it has also concluded a GCC multi-city roadshow. The multi-city roadshow, part of a series of three events in the GCC, is an effort by Taiwan to boost tourism from the Middle East to the Asian nation – a booming destination that experienced



Leading ME travel agents at the event

visitor numbers increasing by 6.17 per cent in 2018.

The Taiwan Tourism Bureau in the Middle East is promoting the heart of Asia through various pro-

motional activities. In the first quarter of the year, it has completed a successful campaign with emirates. The efforts are continuing in the market through sales trainings,

familiarisation trips for trade and media, print advertisements and creative digital campaigns. The theme is 'mountains' with the focus on mountain ranges, which include

about 268 mountain peaks over 3,000 metres high.

Adventure for Middle East visitors begins in Taipei, Taiwan's capital and cultural heart. Featuring the world-renowned Taipei 101, visitors can begin their journey by taking in the vistas from the 88th and 89th floors of the stunning city landmark. Located deep in the mountains of Nantou County, Sun Moon Lake offers visitors breathtaking lake scenery donned by mountainous surrounds.

On the eastern flank of the lake's perimeter, the lake is relatively round with an array of intriguing inlets,

while the western side is elongated and features a narrow shape often compared to that of a crescent moon. Nearby attractions include Wenwu Temple, the Sun Moon Lake Ropeway, and scenic views on and around the lake.

Located between Taichung and Tainan, the scenic beauty of Alishan's lush forests offers visitors old world charm and one of the most renowned sunrises. A visit to Taiwan also must include a pass through the spectacular Taroko Gorge, which is home to cascading turquoise rivers and towering thousand-foot marble walls. 🌄

The multi-city roadshow, part of a series of three events in the GCC, is an effort by Taiwan to boost tourism from the Middle East to the Asian nation.

Turkish adds Xi'an to its network

Offering its guests the opportunity to fly directly to 126 countries from Istanbul, Turkish Airlines added Xi'an, the Chinese city with 3,000 years of history, to its flight network on Dec 30. Xi'an became the flag carrier's fourth destination in Mainland China and the 318th destination in the world.

TT Bureau

The flights will be operated three times a week with Airbus A330 aircrafts. Starting its flights to People's Republic of China back in 1999 with Beijing as its destination, Turkish Airlines reinforced its strong position in Asia with the Xi'an flights. With this new addition, the global carrier's flight network encompasses the entirety of the historical Silk Road that started in Xi'an and ended in Venice.

During the ceremony of the inaugural flight, **Bilal Eksi**, General Manager, Turkish Airlines, stated,

"We conclude the year by adding a very special city to our flight network after numerous innovations in various areas and the move to our new home that took place during 2019.

We will carry our guests to 126 countries from Xi'an, one of the most significant historical capitals while transferring the historical Silk Road to above clouds with our cargo operations. Our new flights will also contribute to the tourist numbers coming to our country with the increasing attention from Chinese tourists to tourism centres of Turkey."

Turkish Airlines passengers travelling to Xi'an will have the opportunity to explore the numerous cultural heritages along with the histori-

cal fabric of the three thousand years old city. Serving as the capital of 13 different dynasties during the history of China, the region's

most popular destination is the Terracotta Army, which draws over two million tourists annually. Hidden underground for nearly

2,200 years, it was first discovered in 1974. Featuring 8,000 terracotta soldiers, it is considered as the eighth wonder of the world. 🏯

*Istanbul – Xi'an – Istanbul flight schedule:


Flight No.	Days	Departure	Arrival	Start Date
TK 196	Monday, Wednesday, Friday	IST	01:55 XIY 16:10	30.12.2019
TK 197	Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday	XIY	00:35 IST 06:10	31.12.2019

*All times are in LMT.



Rise in DPNA SSR code use on Travelport

Requests for assistance for airline passengers with intellectual disabilities have seen an increase of 342 per cent in Middle East and Africa (MEA), following a 10-month long campaign to raise awareness of a dedicated Special Service Request (SSR) booking code by Travelport.

 TT Bureau

SR codes are used in the airline industry to communicate traveller preferences or needs to airlines. They are delivered through standardised four-letter codes defined by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). The Disabled Passenger with Intellectual or Developmental Disability (DPNA) SSR code can be used by travel agents, among others, to alert airlines when a passenger has intellectual or developmental disability and needs assistance.

Travelport launched its Travel Unified campaign in March 2019 after it found evidence of exceptionally low use of the code on bookings made through its Global Distribution System (GDS). Of the more than 250 million flight bookings made through Travelport in 2018, the DPNA code was applied to just 4,309 bookings – approximately 0.0015 per cent; despite an estimated 2.6 per cent of the world’s population having an intellectual disability. A poll of travel agents and conversations with non-profit organisations confirmed this was due to lack of awareness.

Regional/Local Data – Year End	
Since the start of the campaign, use of the DPNA code on flight bookings made through Travelport has increased. The % increase across regions is depicted in the following table:	
Geography	% Increase
Globally	85%
Europe	74%
Asia	762%
Africa	67%
Oceania	45%
North America	27%
South America	-41%

From the launch of the campaign up until the end of 2019, use of the DPNA SSR code on flights booked through Travelport in Middle East and Africa increased by

342 per cent compared to the same period in 2018. The code was used for the first time through Travelport in Oman, Kuwait, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

As part of its campaign to raise awareness of the DPNA SSR code, Travelport has shared educational ‘sign-on alerts’ and graphical ‘prompts’ more than 10 million times with hundreds of thousands of travel agents across the world through Travelport Smartpoint, its flagship Point of Sale solution that is used by travel agents, among others, to search and book airline seats, hotel rooms and more. The digital media used to reach travel agents is typically sold by Travelport to travel providers, like airlines and hotels, as advertising space.

It is now being used for the first time through Travelport in 22 countries viz. United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kuwait, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Israel, Mongolia, Panama, Mexico, Ecuador, Netherlands, Slovakia, Serbia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Sweden, Suriname, Zambia, Botswana, Côte d’Ivoire and Kenya.

FactFile

■ In 2018, the DPNA code was applied to just 4,309 bookings – approximately 0.0015 per cent; despite an estimated 2.6 per cent of the world’s population having an intellectual disability

RAKTDA focuses on Nordic markets

In keeping with its vision to attract more tourists to the destination, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority exhibited from January 16-19, 2020 at MATKA, the largest travel trade and consumer fair in Nordic region, for the third consecutive year.





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SRI LANKA

The land of unexplored wonders

There is little that the island nation of Sri Lanka does not possess. Exquisite scenery for weddings, untouched nature, mountains and sports for adventure enthusiasts and exotic wildlife are just slivers of the pie. Visitors to Sri Lanka can also expect a warm welcome by truly hospitable people.

TT Bureau

Fondly known as the "Pearl of the Indian Ocean", Sri Lanka's rich heritage and culture make it one of the most unique destinations in South Asia. With a myriad of experiences round the year for every kind of traveller – be it business, leisure, MICE or students and millennials – the country is home to pristine beaches, exotic wildlife, adventure destinations, and mouth-watering cuisine to liven up any day.

Short-haul getaway for the UAE traveller

A four-hour flight from the United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka, with easy accessibility from one region to another and a vivid

diversity of locations, is one of the most sought-after destinations. With not a moment to spare when in the country, visitors can make the most of its adventure offerings that include hiking and mountain climbing, spend some idle time among exotic birds and rare species of wildlife, or simply laze at one of the pristine beaches, whiling away time by the magnificent Indian Ocean.

Rich heritage and culture

Home to eight UNESCO World Heritage sites, Sri Lanka has a unique offering for the eager traveller who's willing to explore unique destinations of the world. Its documented history spans 3,000 years and so, the country is home to some of the

most noteworthy sites in the history of the region.

Adam's Peak is located in the southern reaches of the Central Highlands, in the Ratnapura district and Nuwara Eliya district of the Sabaragamuwa Province and Central Province. The mountain, believed to be sacred, is climbed by every traveller to witness its great splendour. The Sigiriya caves, which honeycomb the base of a rock fortress, are another heritage site known for their religious significance during the reign of a powerful king who built the fortress for himself. The rock is an interesting climb and depicts ancient frescoes showcasing the richness of art at the time.

Picturesque splendour

With its romantic locations and storybook sceneries, Sri Lanka is sought by many for

hosting destination weddings. Be it a beachside arrangement or one by the mountain, the splendid vistas make for perfect backdrops. For a perfect beach holiday, Sri Lanka has a golden coastline which spreads continuously along the southern and northern coasts, where travellers can relax in the palm-fringed beaches while sipping on a king coconut, or surf at Arugam Bay. Up in hill country, one can enjoy the soft, cool breeze drifting through the hotel room in Nuwara Eliya, or enjoy a cup of freshly brewed, world-renowned Ceylon tea. Visitors can also head down to St. Clair's or Bambarakanda Falls in this picturesque hill capital fondly called 'Little England'.

Sri Lanka has gained popularity as an adventure tourism destination, as it offers a horde of opportunities and experiences to hikers, trekkers, and outdoor enthusiasts in Horton Plains and Riverston, water rafting in Kitulgala, and dolphin watching in Mirissa and Kalpitiya. The four natural harbours also give the country an edge for cruise tourism.

Festivals and parades

One can witness some of the most colourful festivals and parades in Sri Lanka at different times of the year. 'Kandy Perahera' in the central region, 'Gangarama Perahera' in Colombo, and 'Kataragama Perahera' in the southern region are some of the most looked-forward-to festivals and parades here. They attract many a traveller from different parts of the world, who are awed by their beauty as they depict the rich culture of the country. 🇱🇰

❖ The island nation boasts of a rich cultural heritage as is evident from Pali Canon, the first known Buddhist writings of Sri Lanka, which can be traced way back to the Fourth Buddhist Council in 29 BC.

❖ By virtue of its deep harbours and geographic location, Sri Lanka became a region of great strategic importance from the time of the ancient Silk Road through to the modern Maritime Silk Road.



2nd Central Hotel opens at The Palm

Central Hotels recently celebrated the opening of a 203-key luxury beachfront hotel with magnificent views of the Arabian Gulf. C Central Resort The Palm is strategically located in Dubai's iconic man-made island, home to some of Dubai's top luxury resorts – The Palm Jumeirah.

TT Bureau

One of the world's most well-known developments, the Palm Jumeirah in Dubai is a haven for adventure seekers, honeymooners and family vacationers. "We are pleased to launch C Central Resort The Palm, a rare gem that sparkles in the sea, where guests can truly experience privacy and beachfront living, unwind and enjoy spectacular views of the ocean," says **Abdulla Al Abdulla**, Chief Operating Officer of Central Hotels.

Featuring 192 spacious and well-equipped rooms, 11 stunning suites, four dis-

tinctly themed F&B outlets, a world-class spa & wellness centre, and a state-of-the-art gym, C Central Resort The Palm exemplifies a grand canvas of contemporary sophistication and luxurious tranquility. "Our top clients are travellers and tourists from the CIS market, as well as guests from GCC & Middle East, South-east Asia, Far East Asia, Europe and Latin America,"

“Our top clients are travellers and tourists from the CIS market, as well as guests from GCC & Middle East, Southeast Asia, Far East Asia, Europe and Latin America”

— **Basel Eshak Butrs**
General Manager of C Central Resort The Palm

says **Basel Eshak Butrs**, General Manager of C Central Resort The Palm.

Both leisure and business travellers are in for something new and exciting. Within close proximity to prominent business districts, top attractions and the airports, the new hotel is the perfect address for modern travellers. For business meetings and



events, C Central Resort The Palm can take care of all the details, book meeting rooms suitable for a wide variety of events from executive board meetings to corporate team building workshops, conferences, seminars, product launches as well as intimate weddings.

Gourmet dining, fresh seafood and locally sourced ingredients are at the core of the dining options such as at Waves restaurant, an all-day dining concept that lets you feast on the choicest cuisine. Coffee and tea lovers can have their heart's content at Barista's Corner. C Grill Restaurant

and Bar, a modern steakhouse excites your palate. Mojito Pool Bar at the beach side is where guests can chill, relax and watch the sunset while sipping on enticing beverages. Guests can also choose to have their food delivered straight to their rooms with discreet in-room dining. 🌅

Hometel experience at Movenpick

Movenpick Hotel Apartments Downtown Dubai has unveiled their latest addition to the property, offering guests a more spacious and comfortable experience.

TT Bureau

Movenpick Hotel Apartments Downtown Dubai has been recognised in offering home-like stays with its spacious rooms and apartments. In an aim to amplify the 'hometel' experience, Mövenpick Hotel

Apartments Downtown Dubai recently unveiled a new unit matching the needs of travellers who desire to have more comfort and space.

The new unit offers a guaranteed connection with a two-bedroom apartment

and deluxe studio room offering an average size of 143 sqm. that can accommodate up to six adults and two children. The three-bedroom family room will have the same contemporary design equipped with a king bedroom, twin beds in the other whilst an option for a king and twin for the connected unit with a two bathroom and a bathtub and the other with a shower.

It offers a dedicated area for a living room and a fully equipped kitchen that includes an induction cooker, oven, microwave, washing machine, dishwasher and cooking equipments. 🌅



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SCTDA participates at MATKA to



H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman, SCTDA

“As the largest tourism and travel exhibition in Northern Europe, the Matka Nordic Travel Fair is a significant and strategic platform for us at SCTDA to showcase the emirate’s diverse range of tourism products for visitors and companies in the region. Our participation is part of our continuous efforts to raise Sharjah’s profile as a leading destination that attracts all kinds of tourists from all over the world”

The Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) continues to work towards establishing a strong foothold in the Northern European tourism market. Efforts to draw in more visitors from the region commenced this year with its participation at the Matka Nordic Travel Fair in Helsinki, Finland.

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Held from January 15 to 19, 2020, the latest edition marked the second consecutive year that SCTDA joined the premier global travel event. In 2020, the Authority showcased Sharjah’s range of diverse tourism offerings – from world-class hotels to exciting adventures and other fun activities to special packages and promos – which are expected to appeal to the Northern European travellers.

The five-day Matka Nordic Travel Fair is the largest travel and tourism exhibition in Northern Europe, an important source market for Sharjah’s tourism sector. More than 50,000 visitors and about 20,000 tourism and travel agencies attend the annual international gathering.

According to SCTDA, the Matka Nordic Travel Fair is an opportunity for the Authority to boost aware-



ness of Sharjah’s beauty and hospitality and what the emirate has to offer as one of the GCC’s top tourist destinations. SCTDA delegates will take advantage of the travel fair’s popularity to directly engage with a large percentage of international tourists.

Furthermore, SCTDA will display Sharjah’s major hospitality projects launched to help fast-track the industry’s development and global competitiveness. Over the next five years, for instance, the number of hotel rooms in the city is expected to increase by 50 per cent, supporting the influx of visitors to the emirate. A total of 34 new hotel facilities with up to 5,700 rooms will be added to the existing numbers within the period.

Besides Sharjah’s large-scale hospitality developments and unique tourism products, SCTDA will



also give emphasis on its key strategies to promote Sharjah as a year-round global destination for family holidays. H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman of SCTDA, said, “As the largest tourism and travel exhibition in Northern Europe, the Matka Nordic Travel Fair

is a significant and strategic platform for us at SCTDA to showcase the emirate’s diverse range of tourism products for visitors and companies in the region. Our participation is part of our continuous efforts to raise Sharjah’s profile as a leading destination that attracts all



Lure Northern European tourists

kinds of tourists from all over the world."

The emirate is known for its world-class hotel services, modern tourism infrastructure, and exciting activities, among others. Its eco-tourism segment is also steadily rising in popularity thanks to the government's intensified enhancements of the local eco-tourism offerings and relevant promotional initiatives. International hospitality institutions have been flocking to the local market over the years to capitalise on its immense growth opportunities amid the vibrant domestic tourism. Tourism is a key pillar of the government's economic diversification initiative. Sharjah welcomed more than 578,000 European travellers in 2018, up 24 per cent from 468,034 tourists recorded in 2017.

Joining the SCTDA delegates in the global event are the executives of the Sharjah International Airport Authority, Sharjah Expo, Environment and Protected Areas Authority, Sheraton Sharjah Beach Resort & Spa, Radisson Blu Resort Sharjah, Coral Beach Hotel, The Act Hotel, Orient Tours, Wasel Tours and TravTalk magazine.



Dubai welcomes six cruise liners

Mina Rashid dealt with over 60,000 cruise passengers, as it handled processes for the arrival of TUI Cruises' Mein Schiff 5, Pullmantur Cruises' Horizon, MSC Cruises' MSC Lirica, Jalesh Cruises' Karnika as well as the maiden calls from Costa Cruises' Costa Diadema and Royal Caribbean's Jewel of the Seas on Dec 29, 2019.

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Throughout the upcoming season, the city will go on to receive five cruise vessels in a single day on 10 additional occasions and six cruise vessels in a single day twice during the season. Since its inauguration in 2014, Mina Rashid's

Hamdan bin Mohammed Cruise Terminal has received over 2.3 million visitors, marking a 172 per cent increase towards the end of 2018.

Mohammed Abdul Aziz Al Mannaie, CEO – P&O Marinas & Executive Director, Mina Rashid, said, "De-

cember 29 is a memorable day for Mina Rashid Cruise Terminal and marks a new peak performance for us in a season of double-digit increase in tourist traffic. The flawless handling of more than 60,000 cruise visitors on a single day testifies to the operational efficiencies we've put in place. At Mina Rashid, we constantly invest in enhancing the services and support systems for today's fleet of ultra-modern cruise vessels. Our aim is to help build on the increasing popularity of luxury cruise tourism and strengthen Dubai's position as the 'cruise hub of the region'."

“At Mina Rashid, we constantly invest in enhancing the services and support systems for today's fleet of ultra-modern cruise vessels. Our aim is to help build on the increasing popularity of luxury cruise tourism and strengthen Dubai's position as the 'cruise hub of the region'”

— Mohammed Abdul Aziz Al Mannaie
CEO – P&O Marinas & Executive Director, Mina Rashid



Hamad Bin Mejren, Senior Vice President, Dubai Tourism, commented, "With the arrival of six leading international cruise liners to Dubai on a single day, we are delighted to celebrate this historic occasion for the city. As testament to the emirate's position as the leading hub for cruis-

ing in the region, this milestone is a sound reflection of how far Dubai has come on its journey to becoming the preferred destination of choice for international cruise travellers and cruise operators alike."

The 2019-2020 cruise season is expected to

welcome more than 200 ship calls, with an estimated one million cruise visitors visiting Dubai. The season will also see increased efforts to promote cruise tourism in the region by the Dubai Cruise Committee which comprises of leading industry partners. 🌅

Ras Al Khaimah hosts Vakantiebeurs

RAK hosted the largest travel trade and consumer fair in Utrecht, Netherlands, Vakantiebeurs 2020, with Emirates Airlines as their partner from Jan 15-19 ushering in an opportunity to augment awareness, as the event brought together tourism authorities, travel agencies and cultural associations from around the world.



10th Annual Investment Meeting

UAE Ministry of Economy has launched the milestone edition of AIM under the theme, 'Investing for the Future: Shaping the Global Investment Strategies'. Government officials, economic experts, global investors and entrepreneurs from over 140 countries will come together at the 10th edition to be held from March 24-26, 2020 in Dubai.

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Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) is under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai. AIM has consistently provided a unique platform mostly for emerging economies to attract FDI. Now in its milestone edition, AIM is adhering to the call for a more extensive and inclusive economic growth and has added, aside from FDI, four more pillars- small and medium enterprises, foreign portfolio investment, startups, and future cities. It will also hold 'One Belt,

One Road' which is an exclusive side event.

Praising the expanded network of AIM 2020, HE Abdullah Al Saleh, the UAE Ministry of Economy's Un-

“The expanded network of AIM 2020 enables inclusive growth providing long-term benefits to host countries in terms of job creation, enhancement of skill base, transfer of technology and increase in competitiveness”

dersecretary for Foreign Trade Affairs, said, "Attracting investments does not only link its spillovers to the local economy, it enables inclusive growth providing long-term benefits to host countries

in terms of job creation, enhancement of skill base, transfer of technology and increase in competitiveness."

Under the theme 'Investing for the Future: Shaping the

Global Investment Strategies', AIM will traverse the shifting investment landscape at the global scale and assist world economies to attract investment. AIM's flagship pillar, FDI,

will link municipalities, cities and countries with quality FDIs that match the necessary condition of their market and their existing infrastructure. AIM 2020 will also work toward narrowing the credit gap to benefit SMEs by providing a global platform to promote their products and services to genuine investors.

AIM 2020 will continue to support startups with expanded networking opportunities and focused discussions including mentoring sessions. A series of National Pitch Competitions will be held in 80 countries where top winners will be hosted in Dubai

to compete in the final AIM 2020 Startup Competition. Startup, now an AIM pillar, will take a prominent position at AIM 2020 to further build a growing interest in funding which has reached \$407 billion 2018, an increase of 23.3 per cent from 2017. The top sectors for funding were software and SaaS, fintech, medtech, media and entertainment, health and wellness which represented 52.7 per cent of total disclosed funding.



HE Abdullah Al Saleh
Undersecretary for Foreign Trade Affairs
UAE Ministry of Economy

Tune Protect, OQIC agents get together

Tune Protect and OQIC organised a get together for the top travel agents in Oman where over 50 travel agency managers, general managers and other stakeholders attended the event.



Accessible travel, a win-win for all

Lower costs for flying, budget holidays, and the ubiquity of the internet have contributed to more choices, greater accessibility and unprecedented demand. **Ernesto Sanchez Beaumont**, Managing Director of Amadeus Gulf shares insights on accessible travel with **TRAVTALK**.

TT Bureau

What do people with special accessibility needs seek while planning a trip?

While booking a holiday is as easy for many people as clicking through a website, the industry has yet to make the process as seamless or simple for the millions of people who have accessibility needs. People with accessibility needs want to travel as much as anyone. They also want the same level of independence when it comes to planning, searching, booking and purchasing their travel. It goes without saying that they also want a wider va-

riety of personalised travel services and destinations.

People with accessibility needs represent a large portion of society – one estimate suggests that a fifth of the world's population will have some accessibility need by 2050. In countries like the UAE, the government has already championed the needs of 'people of determination' as a priority for both public and private sector institutions. Including them is not only a step towards social equality, but an imperative if travel industry players want to remain relevant in a changing market, as they represent a relatively un-



Ernesto Sanchez Beaumont
Managing Director
Amadeus Gulf

tapped source of income. So, not only is increasing accessibility the right thing to do morally, but it makes good business sense, too. And that, however you look at it, is a win-win situation for everyone.

What are the steps taken by airports and hotels to ensure physical accessibility?

Many airports today have ensured that people who require assistance can

certainly a step in the right direction. It aligns with the facilities pillar of accessible tourism – one of the three that were identified by an Ambrose study in 2015. The other two, Informa-

proposition of the ideal accessible trip. These are effective communication, responsive service, standardised content, and personalised offers.

What can be done to build a more accessible travel industry?

By working together, players within the travel industry can tap into the golden opportunity of increased revenue from what is currently a massively underserved customer segment. The combination of social imperative and economic opportunity provides a unique incentive to build a more accessible travel industry. 🇦🇪

“By working together, players within the travel industry can tap into the golden opportunity of increased revenue from what is currently a massively underserved customer segment”

easily find or request the facilities and support they need. Hotels are also clear when they are able to accommodate certain accessibility requirements. This is

tion and Customer Service, require additional work. Inspired by the Ambrose study, Amadeus has identified four key elements that will build the value

Air Canada bowling escapade for agents

Appreciating the efforts of the travel agents, Air Canada hosted a bowling night followed by dinner to some of the leading travel agents from the UAE. **Deepu Cyriac**, Country Manager for UAE and GCC, Air Canada, and his team organised the event which was a special evening to further enhance the relationship between the agents.



Air India's domestic flights only on Travelport

Travelport confirmed that the company is now the sole Global Distribution System (GDS) provider of Air India's domestic flight content in India. The contract, which was awarded to Travelport following a competitive bidding process, came into effect in November 2018 and was fully implemented as of January 1, 2020.

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Travelport is now the only GDS provider through which travel agents in India can receive both Air India's domestic and international flight content. The company also continues to provide all domestic and international flight content from the carrier to its wide network of travel agents across the world.

As Air India is signed up to Travelport's leading merchandising solution, Travelport Rich Content and Branding, travel agents booking through its platform benefit from a graphically rich experi-

ence when searching for and booking the airline's branded fares, as well as greater access to its ancillary offers. The milestone comes just one month after **Meenakshi Malik**, Executive Director of Commercial Operations at Air India, revealed that the carrier had already seen growth of 22 per cent in operational profit and cut down cost by around ₹300 crore since it began changing its distribution strategy. Malik also projected a saving of ₹3,200 crore in five years.

Travelport has seen a rapid expansion in India in recent years and now has



Martin Herbert
Regional Managing Director for India and Sri Lanka at Travelport

an extensive agency partner network in the country.

Martin Herbert, Regional Managing Director for India and Sri Lanka at Travelport, said, "We're delighted to reach this landmark. Wide and cost-effective



Sandeep Dwivedi
Chief Operating Officer
InterGlobe Technology Quotient

distribution, coupled with impactful merchandising, are important to all airlines and we're proud we are now the sole GDS provider of these services to Air India when it comes to both domestic and international content in India.

The results the carrier has already achieved since it started adjusting its distribution strategy have been extremely positive. We now look forward to taking performance to the next level for the benefit of the airline and its customers."

Sandeep Dwivedi, Chief Operating Officer at InterGlobe Technology Quotient, said, "Since inception, this partnership between Air India and Travelport has presented impressive prospects. Now that we have had a glimpse of last year's performance, with respect to positive reflections

on growth, cost and savings for our partner, Air India, the future only seems bright from here. As the sole GDS distributor of Air India's domestic content, we are aiming at easing the process, cutting down unnecessary stages and offering value-added advantage in booking Air India branded fares and ancillary services, both simply and seamlessly."

FactFile

■ The carrier had already seen growth of **22 per cent** in operational profit and cut down cost by around ₹300 crore since it began changing its distribution strategy

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► ROTANA

Corporate Office Abu Dhabi

Rotana has announced that **Guy Hutchinson**, Acting Chief Executive Officer, has been promoted to serve as President & CEO to lead the company's next phase of growth. Hutchinson has held the position of acting CEO since January 2019. With 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, the seasoned executive joined Rotana as Chief Operating Officer in January 2014. Previously, he served various roles with Hilton Worldwide in markets as diverse as Japan, Australia, China, India and the UAE. Under the leadership of Hutchinson, Rotana has reached new milestones that bolstered its pre-eminent position in the industry.



► CITYMAX HOTELS

Dubai

Citymax Hotels announced with immediate effect, the appointment of **Raj Rana** as its new Chief Executive Officer. Rana brings over 30 years of international hospitality experience and has held leadership positions in the USA, Europe, and Asia. Most recently, he was the CEO of the Radisson Hotel Group for South Asia with the responsibility for the region's P&L and growth. Leveraging his vast experience in the hotel industry, Rana will take Citymax hotels to new heights of success. Rana is a US national, who spent his early years in India.



► TRAVELPORT

UK

Travelport welcomed **John Elieson** as its Chief Operating Officer. He will be based in Travelport's global headquarters in Langley, Berkshire, UK. Elieson will be responsible for Travelport's growth strategy, sales organisation and M&A agenda. Before joining Travelport, he was President and CEO of Radixx International, which was recently acquired by Sabre. Previously, Elieson enjoyed a distinguished 30-year career with Sabre and its former parent company American Airlines, including roles as the Leader of Global Sales for Sabre Airline Solutions and Sabre Travel Network's Leader of Global Accounts and Traveller Experience.



► MINOR HOTELS

Middle East and Africa

Nicola Buckley has joined Minor Hotels as Regional Director of Revenue – Middle East & North Africa. Previously, she was based in Dubai as Group Director of Revenue for JA Resorts.

With over 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry, she has worked for Thistle Marble Arch in London, Guoman Hotels in China and IHG in UK before relocating to Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts in Phuket, Thailand. Following her time in Phuket, Buckley moved within the company to Mövenpick Hotel Ibn Battuta Gate Hotel in Dubai where she managed the Revenue and Reservations Department.



► MILLENNIUM & COPTHORNE

MAKKAH AL NASEEM
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Millennium and Copthorne Makkah Al Naseem has appointed **Mohamed Abdel Fattah** as Cluster General Manager. He has an extensive international experience that extends over 23 years. He graduated from the American University in Cairo with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a master's degree from Hotehschool The Hague. Fattah accepted many senior assignments in various international hotel chains in the region including Accor, Hilton and Marriot.



► GRAND MILLENNIUM BUSINESS BAY

Dubai

Grand Millennium Business Bay has appointed **Abhishek Pandita** as Assistant Director of Sales. Joining Grand Millennium from Sofitel Dubai Downtown, Pandita brings over 12 years of experience in the hospitality sector. In his new role, Pandita will work on further developing the sales strategies to drive growth and productivity for Grand Millennium Business Bay. A graduate degree holder of BBA (Hons) in Hospitality Management from the International Institute of Advanced Studies in India, Pandita started his career at Crowne Plaza Gurgaon, India and has worked for brands like ITC, IHG Group, The Oberoi Dubai & more.



► MINOR HOTELS

Middle East and Africa

Minor Hotels has appointed **Hana Fuchs** as Regional Director of Marketing Communications – Middle East & North Africa. She joined the regional team from Anantara The Palm Dubai Resort, where she held the position of Director of Marketing and Communications since 2015. In her new role, Fuchs will ensure that the marketing activities in the region closely align with the brand values of Minor Hotels. With 16 years of experience in marketing and communications, Fuchs has previously worked for ten years in the region with properties such as Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Deira Creek and Grand Millennium Al Wahda, Abu Dhabi.



► AL BAIT

Sharjah

Al Bait Sharjah has appointed **Albert Meow** as Hotel Manager. He will be overseeing the daily hotel operations with special focus on sales and marketing. With over 20 years of hospitality industry experience, Meow's focus for Al Bait Sharjah will be growing its local, regional and global presence through developing strong relationships with global partners and markets, further establishing the GHM brand as a key player in the Middle Eastern luxury hospitality scene. He will also be actively promoting and preserving the unique culture of its destination, located in the Heart of Sharjah, a UNESCO world heritage site.



► THE H HOTEL

Dubai

The H Dubai announced the appointment of **Aafreen Shaikh** as Marketing and PR Manager. An Indian national, Shaikh brings more than 12 years of hospitality experience, garnered from working in India and the UAE, with hotel groups such as Mövenpick, Marriott Hotels & Resorts, and Address Hotels. In her new role, Shaikh will oversee the brand, marketing and communication strategy of The H Dubai. She will also take charge of the luxury hotel's PR, goals and budget, developing media strategies and aiming for top-tier placements in traditional, digital, and broadcast media.



Luxurious retreat at the waterfront

Located in the business precinct of Dubai's Business Bay area, Radisson at the Waterfront is one of the most purpose-built properties in the area. A short distance from the highest point of Dubai, the Burj Khalifa; and Dubai Mall; the hotel offers breathtaking views & luxurious charm.

Spacious rooms

The property has 432 stylishly designed spacious rooms and suites which offer views of the skyline of Dubai's Business Bay district. Some of the rooms include private balconies. The very special Burj Khalifa view room is one not to be missed out. The premium class rooms

have access to the executive business lounge.

Meeting options

Especially designed for the business traveller, the state-of-the-art meeting rooms are one of the key features in the property. Their spacious outdoor terrace is one of the most sought-after venues for many functions

in the area. The ballroom and 11 versatile meeting rooms add on to count specialised occasions and events – the total area includes 1,150 sq.m.

Recreation and dining

For the fitness buffs, the well-equipped gym overlooking the waterfront, is really a treat as you work

out. After a good work out, you can step into the spa and revitalise yourself with a therapeutic massage or

just go to the steam room or sauna for a few minutes. There are four restaurants, Abraj, Makar, The Larder and Fire Lake that cater to the guests for various dining options.



Nominations are open



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