In September 2013, Travel News Digest had carried an editorial An Open Letter to the Prime Minister, Union Finance Minister, Union Tourism Minister, the Chief Ministers, Finance Ministers and Tourism Ministers of States detailing how tourism receipts from foreign tourists in India could help solve India's Current Account Deficit (CAD) problems and also focussing on the taxes and controls which are impeding the sector's growth. It was heartening to receive a reply from the office of Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat, acknowledging the editorial. With a new union government knocking at our door, we are reprinting the editorial that evoked the response from the prime ministerial candidate of the leading opposition party.

An Open Letter

To
The Prime Minister, Union Finance Minister, Union Tourism Minister, The Chief Ministers, Finance Ministers and Tourism Ministers of States

Dear Ministers,

This letter is concerned about a long-term solution to the Current Account Deficit (CAD) problems of India, which has plummeted the value of Rupee to unprecedented levels.

Hon'ble Prime Minister being an economist himself would agree that the most effective solution to the CAD problem would lie in finding sources of foreign exchange income on a sustained basis, at least for the medium-term. India’s IT export is a good example of that, which is sustaining foreign exchange income of billions of dollar, touching around $76 billion last year and still growing a little over 10% annually. The growth story of IT exports from India seems to have matured and cannot grow at such a fast pace as to cover the CAD of some $90 billion.

So we need to find another source of regular income of foreign exchange, quite like IT. One can think of manufactured goods, but China is so far ahead that it looks unlikely that manufacturing exports can help us cover the CAD in the short to medium term. Then one obviously turns to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as a saviour, which was around $26 billion last year. Though it looks an attractive strategy to focus on increasing FDI, we know that investments by definition cannot be said to be sustained sources of income. Then, the FDI is subject to vagaries of investors' confidence and difficult to depend on, even in the short run. In short, a strategy focused at bridging CAD with Capital Account Surplus is not sustainable, as the recent experience suggests.

Contd. on page 2

 máxima envenenadores con una serie de eventos anuales

Tour operators cashing in on IPL 2014

TNZ and Singapore Airlines’ FAM trip for Indian travel trade

Poland focuses on more Indian travellers this year

Brand USA to launch major digital campaign

Reunion Island’s online training programme for India

Stage set for Arabian Travel Market 2014
The Travel & Tourism Economic Impact report 2014 published by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) says that the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to India’s GDP was $2,735.1 billion (0.9% of total GDP) in 2013, and is forecast to rise by 7.3% in 2014, and to rise by 6.0% pa to $4,550.8 billion (6.3% of total GDP) in 2024. The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was $7,651.6 billion (6.2% of GDP) in 2013, and is forecast to rise by 7.3% in 2014, and to rise by 6.0% pa to $17,083.6 billion (6.6% of GDP) in 2024.

Leisure travel spending (inbound and domest-ic) generated 78.6% of direct travel & tourism GDP in 2013 ($4,450.8 billion) compared with 21.1% for business travel spending ($1,289.7 billion, and rise by 6.5% pa to $2,419.6 billion in 2024. Leisure travel spending is expected to grow by 2.5% in 2014 and rise by 2.1% pa to 28,081,000 jobs (4.9% of total employment). This is expected to rise by 2.3% in 2014 and rise by 2.1% pa to 28,081,000 jobs (4.9% of total employment) in 2024. This includes employment by hotels, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services (excluding commuter services). It also includes, for example, the activities of the restaurant and leisure industries directly supported by tourists.

Visitor exports generated $5,110.6 billion (4.1% of total exports) in 2013. This is forecast to grow by 3.0% in 2014, and grow by 4.3% pa, from 2014-2024, to $12,148.2 billion in 2024 (2.1% of total).

Travel & tourism is interconnected with the entire Indian economy. These links exist through the supply chain to the tourism industry (indirect linkages) as well as through tourism-generated incomes as they are spent across a variety of other sectors. In this sense, the travel & tourism sector has many “beneficiary” sectors across the whole spectrum of the economy. For every $1 million in Travel & Tourism spend, 5,099,000 foreign visitors, generating a gross value added of $18,010,000, and rise by 6.3% pa to $38,983,5 billion in 2024.

Domestic travel spending generated 87.7% of direct Travel & Tourism GDP in 2013 compared with 19.3% for visitor exports (i.e. foreign visitor spending or international tourism receipts).

According to WTTC for every $1 million in Travel & Tourism spending, 407 jobs are supported (58 direct and 349 indirect). This compares favourably to the average of the economy, which generates 299 jobs per $1 million in spending. In 2013 Indian tourism industry supported 22,320,000 jobs (4.9% of total employment). This is expected to rise by 2.3% in 2014 and rise by 2.1% pa to 28,081,000 jobs (4.9% of total employment) in 2024.

In the above backdrop, this letter seeks to propose a policy that we can do to Tourism now? In few words: Give that it is pretty simple: Do what you did to the IT industry would venture to suggest today, as we have done to the IT industry. The problem may be that we can’t do it – we are supposed to be a country with advanced IT capability. The problem may be that we are unnecessarily fearful of the foreigner and raising false bogeys of internal security threat if we did that, which many countries are doing successfully.

To wrap up, this journal, speaking on behalf of the huge travel industry in India, which already contributes to one-tenth of the GDP and the work force, appeals to your government, to build a national consensus to reduce taxes and controls on tourism industry; and to unchain the vast untapped potential of foreign exchange earnings from foreign tourists. Primarily, it recommends a national consensus on tax holidays from Union and State governments, for the tourism industry, on the lines of IT industry. It also recommends removing online visas and visa on arrival facility for all with as few exceptions as possible.

With this, we can turn the threat of a weak Rupee into an opportunity, because foreign tourists will find India very attractive and affordable, only if the above steps are also taken.

With thanks and regards,

Sanjiv Agarwal
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Takes you beyond

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USTOA to promote India as a preferred tourism destination

The United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA) will promote India and its tourism offerings such as art, history, culture, cuisine, adventure, nature and tourism products. India has huge potential as a tourism destination, said Terry Dale, President and CEO, USTOA.

Recently, India Tourism and stakeholders in the industry hosted the USTOA 2014 annual Out-of-Country Board of Directors Meeting in Delhi, in which a group of 48 members from USTOA visited India for the meeting.

Rajeev Kohli, Joint Managing Director, Creative Travel and Vice President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), said, “The promotion of India’s tourism offerings in the U.S. is a great PR exercise.”

Uttarakhand set to launch ₹5,000 crore Tehri Mega Project

Under the Tehri Mega Project the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board has decided to improve the Tehri Lake in the Garhwal district of Uttarakhand. The ₹5,000 crore project will aim at improving the existing infrastructure in the area surrounding the lake. Along with that, the Uttarakhand government plans to develop the entire township along the lake to match it along the lines of other international lakeside destinations.

Dr Umakant Panwar, Tourism Secretary, Uttarakhand and CEO, Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, said, “The Request For Proposal (RFP) for the mega project under PPP (Public Private Partnership) mode has been published in newspapers and is garnering interest. The project would be completed in five to ten years and we see great potential in the destination, which is a three-hour drive from Dehradun. We are planning to include a number of activities along the rim of the Tehri Lake. There will be hotels, resorts, training institutes, adventure sports like speedboat racing, sailing and paragliding. These will give scope for local employment. We see the new township coming up as a throbbing mini-city with residences, educational institutes, leisure activities, local businesses, commercial activities, and a Tehri Adventure Center. We are also planning to include the concept of a floating restaurant (to open in mid-2014) and floating log huts.

We will promote India’s rich history, culture and interesting tourism offerings such as art, history, culture, cuisine, adventure, nature and safaris in the U.S. “India is the third emerging tourism destination, according to a study conducted by USTOA. The country has a rich history, culture and interesting tourism products. India has huge potential as a tourism destination,” said Dinesh Advani, President and CEO, USTOA.

The country has a rich history, culture and interesting tourism products. India has huge potential as a tourism destination,” said Dinesh Advani, President and CEO, USTOA.

IRCTC relaunched a 109-year-old steam engine

IRCTC relaunched a 109-year-old steam engine down the Kalka-Shimla heritage track carrying over 12 passengers, mostly foreigners on board. The 22 km distance between the two stations is already famous for its entry in the UNESCO World Heritage Site list.

“Considered to be an engineering marvel, locomotive KC 520, the only narrow-gauge steam engine that dates back to 1905, operated between Shimla and Kalka,” said Amar Singh Thakur, Commercial Inpector (Railways).

“The steam engine-hauled train, being handled by the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), a wing of the Indian Railways, with two chartered coaches was booked for ₹60,000, including taxes,” Thakur added.

IRCTC officials announced that further any company or individual will be allowed to hire a steam train comprising two to three coaches, accommodating up to 40 people between Shimla and Kalka at a cost of ₹80,000 plus 30% service tax. Food will be provided on board.

FTAs increase by 4.5% compared to 2013

Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) amounted to 6,69 lakh in March 2014, recording a growth of 4.7% from March 2013. Meanwhile Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEES) were ₹10,257 crore in March 2014, recording an increase from last year’s figures.

Reports from the Ministry of Tourism also show that the growth rate in FEES in rupees over the last year has been 7.4%, compared to 21.8% growth between March 2012 to March 2013. For FEES in U.S. dollars, on the other hand, was a negative growth of 4.4% between March 2013 and March 2014, in contrast to the increase of 12.7% in the previous year, between March 2012 to March 2013.

HRAWI urges Maharashtra to follow Goa’s tourism policies

Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) has urged the Maharashtra government to follow the significant key policies of the Goa government such as relaxation in tax burden to 60% during certain seasons in order to promote hospitality and tourism industry.

“The success of tourism in Goa is driven not by the beautiful beaches alone, but also by its tourism friendly policies. The Goa government’s decision to relax tax burden by 60% during off season is a visionary move. This will not only help hotels there to sustain during the slump and serve tourists better during the peak season, but will also encourage budget tourists to visit Goa during off season and increase absolute collection of tax,” said Dinesh Advani, President, HRAWI.

Sunil Kumar R is currently TAAI’s Acting President

Under the Order passed by the Bombay City Civil Court Judge, Honourable PD Ambekar, the duly elected Vice President of TAAI, Sunil Kumar R, is now the acting President of the Association.

Speaking on this, Sunil Kumar R said, “We will respect and abide by the orders of the Hon’ble Court. It is also time for us to refocus our attention towards our members and our image. Leaving all our differences and disputes behind, the time has come that we must join together and take TAAI forward. We must immediately address industry- and travel agency-related issues.”
"This is Thailand ...
Amazing Family Holiday Destination"

Abhinav Chaturvedi & Family
Andhra Pradesh to build Buddhist heritage theme park

The Andhra Pradesh (AP) government is planning to build a ₹22 crore Buddhist heritage theme park-‘Buddha Vanam’ in the state. The 279-acre theme park will be developed in Nagarjunasagar Hill Colony, District of Nalgonda, enroute to Amaravati.

Officials of AP Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) described the site as a land situated on left bank of Krishna River, which is divided into eight sections with an Artistic front entrance plaza that creates a setting of Buddhism, depicted by the various Buddhist motifs, symbols and the ‘Dharma Chakra’.

“The segments include Buddhachaitravananam, Bodhisattva park (Jataka park), Dhyanavananam (meditation park), Sputa park, Acharya Nagarjuna International Centre for Higher Buddhist Learning, Krishna Valley, Buddhism in Andhra Pradesh, and a Mahastupa (replica of Amaravathi), which symbolically represent the ‘Astangamarga’ propounded by Buddha,” the officials said.

Additionally, another 35 acres of land have been earmarked to establish a Vipasana centre and for other Buddhist organisations so that they can also build their respective monasteries here.

The theme park will be open to public on the occasion of the 2,558th Buddha Jayanti Day celebration on May 14.

Kerala urges for CRZ norms revision to boost beach tourism

The Kerala Tourism Department has asked the Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority (KCZMA) for modifications in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms which will make the way for fast development of potential ‘Beach Tourism’ in the state.

The proposal comprises of details of expected relaxations and the areas that will commercially benefit through the modifications have been forwarded to the central government.

The tourism department found out that although there is huge investment potential in the areas covering the 580 km of the coastline from Poovar to Bekal, the stringent regulatory guidelines of the CRZ notifications have affected this development.

The project report focused on modifying the CRZ norms and development of 13 beach stretches including Poovar, Anchuthengu, Kappil, Kollam, Thottappalli, Marari, Azhekkal, Cheral, Nattika, Kappekkad, Muzhappilangadu, Munnar and Bekal.

The department has also kept the case of backwaters in their proposal and asked for some ‘favourable’ relaxations in the existing norms, to open up new avenues and opportunities for the development of tourism and economy of the state.

Chinese connection to the Nilgiris to help promote tourism potential

Bringing the Chinese connection of the Nilgiris to the forefront can be expected to boost the tourism prospect for the area. Although the European heritage of the region is widely known, the involvement of Chinese prisoners in the region’s economy and culture is relatively unfamiliar.

It was in the 1850s, soon after the Second Opium War that a troop of Chinese prisoners first landed in the Nilgiris. This proficient group helped build the Lawrence School at Lovedale and contributed in cinchona cultivation development and the establishment of the very first tea estate. These prisoners were kept in the Naduvattam jail, which is still preserved by the Tamil Nadu Tourist Corporation. On being freed, the Chinese married local women and settled down in the region.

The year 2014 is the ‘India-China Year of Friendly Exchanges’ and as such it is the perfect timing for rediscovering such a historical past, according to Dharmalingam Venugopal, Director, Nilgiri Documentation Centre. This announcement came on World Heritage Day and the need for efforts in promoting Nilgiris’ tourism potential through public-private partnership was stated as being essential for the development of the region.
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Andhra Pradesh to develop 50 beaches to attract Indian and international tourists

The Andhra Pradesh government has selected several locations along its massive 972 km long coastline for developing beach resorts, under the plan of enhancing its beach tourism and boosting its popularity with domestic and international tourists. About 50 such beaches have been identified along the coastline with an aim to develop 50 beach resorts.

In last two years, the state tourism department has launched a development plan for the nine new beach resorts between Srikakulam and Nellore districts. Out of these nine beaches, two at Kalingapatnam and Mayapadu are complete and the remaining seven are scheduled to be ready in next four months.

TripAdvisor launches Holiday Rentals in India

TripAdvisor, one of the leading travel websites, has introduced the ‘Holiday Rentals’ tab on its website, through which travellers in India can now search and compare more than 550,000 properties around the world. These properties cover a wide range of residential styles and can accommodate single travellers up to large groups in villas, ski chalets, apartments, houseboats, castles, tree houses, etc.

“We are excited to introduce Holiday Rentals to our Indian audience as it will open a whole new world of accommodation options for the ardent Indian travellers, especially ones who love to travel with their family. According to our estimates, an average Indian family (two adults + two children) can save up to 57% in a destination like Venice by opting for holiday rental versus a regular hotel stay. We are confident that this new offering from TripAdvisor will see a tremendous uptake among the avid travellers in the country,” said Nikhil Ganju, Country Manager, TripAdvisor India.

“We’re thrilled to give Indians access to our vast and growing collection of holiday homes around the world. Travellers can now find pictures, reviews, descriptions and booking information on 520,000+ properties, while homeowners can list their properties for free and benefit from TripAdvisor’s unsurpassed audience of 260 million users per month,” added Dermot Halpin, President, TripAdvisor Holiday Rentals.

Goa Tourism to have a multilingual official website

Goa Tourism is planning to add five to six foreign languages including Arabic, German and Russian to its recently launched website. This initiative is being made to publicise the destination among foreign tourists. In the current season, Goa has already welcomed 5 lakh international tourists and hopes to increase this number further in the next season.

Although the current information on the site can be understood by non-English speakers using the Google translator, measures to introduce other languages are being taken so that any inaccuracies can be avoided.

According to a tour operator, along with the official website, visa-on-arrival facilities will make travel easier and thus help in attracting more tourists to the location.

Expedia releases what’s your hotel type ad campaign in India

Expedia’s new ad campaign in India, ‘what’s your hotel type’, focuses on an array of hotel options the customers can now enjoy within their budget. By showcasing itself as the one-stop shop for every kind of traveller, Expedia wants to establish its presence further in the Indian market.

Shayandeepal Pal, Group Creative Director, Lowe Lintas, said, “The idea stemmed from the fact we all have our favourite vacation spots. We also associate those vacation spots with the hotels we’ve stayed in. That red-roof cottage in the hills or the secluded bungalow on the beach. So it was a simple connection. Whatever is your hotel type, you get it all with a guaranteed discount, essentially a tactical message based on a simple travel insight. Also, we chose the illustration style based on a very simple observation. People are generally happy when they travel. So we deliberately kept the colours bright and solid. Also, we attempted a jingle approach in the track.”

AirAsia India gets ready to start commercial operations

As AirAsia India is planning to start commercial operations, the company is hiring more employees for its guest services division and security team. The interview for the guest services division and security team is open to only Indian citizens who are graduates in any discipline.

Although the airline has the permission to import 10 A320s in the first year of operations but AirAsia is planning to start off with two planes initially.

AirAsia has already received its first aircraft which is parked in Chennai. But, the air operator’s permit from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation as final flight checks is yet to be done. It is expected that DGCA will give the permit very soon.

Rajasthan’s tourism department conducts Gangaur Festival

The Gangaur Festival was recently held in Rajasthan, after 18 days of pujas and rituals and a two-day long musical extravaganza. The Gangaur Procession was the concluding part of the ceremony. The event was arranged by the Rajasthan Tourism department, particularly for foreign tourists. The Municipal Corporation of Jaisalmer also hosted a three-day festival at the Paundrik Garden.

As per the usual conventions, horses, camels and dancers wearing the traditional ornaments were part of the parade. The grand spectacle amazed both foreign tourists and locals alike.
Cox & Kings, Ezeego1 partner with G Adventures in India

Cox & Kings and Ezeego1.com along with Canada-based small-group adventure travel company, G Adventures, have launched the ‘Grab Your Dream’ contest for an interesting twist in adventure tourism and also to promote the idea of sustainable travel in India.

Karan Anand, Head-Relationships, Cox & Kings Ltd., said, “With adventure tourism being a relatively new concept in India, this alliance is a great opportunity to whet India’s appetite for adventure and make them feel passionate about it. We could not have found a better partner than G Adventures to bring this revolution to India.”

The contest, ‘Grab Your Dream’, which was launched on April 2, 2014, allows the travelers a chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to destinations across the world and will be across four seasons, with each having 12 winners.

To participate in the contest, as per regulations travelers have to register and send a video, photograph or an essay about their travel experiences and the winners will be selected via public votes and content quality.

Bruce Poon Tip, Founder, G Adventures, said, “India is a market keen on a product like ours and despite adventure tourism being a very niche market here, there is tremendous potential that we see for our products. We look forward to welcoming Indian travelers in our small group trips around the world.”

India provides improved visa facilities for Chinese tourists

India has recently announced a new visa policy whereby business and tourist visas will be processed within two days for Chinese tourists. This was done in order to encourage travelers from China as statistics reveal that while over six lakh Indians visited China in 2012, only one lakh Chinese travelled to India during the same time period.

This was announced by Ashok K Kantha, India’s ambassador to China during the release of a special logo for the ‘Glimpses of India’ festival being held across China this year.

The festival will begin with a dance performance by a troupe from Chennai’s Kalakshetra on May 11 in Beijing and will be held consecutively in 12 cities in China over 2014, showcasing local Indian dances, display of Buddhist artifacts and heritage and film festivals will all be part of the gala event.

Kantha explained, “We will have special focus on promotion of economic and commercial links and two-way tourism flows.”

Use of personal electronic devices now allowed on SpiceJet flights

SpiceJet has become the first airline in India to allow passengers to use personal electronic devices (PEDs) in non-transmitting mode during flights.

This has been approved earlier as electromagnetic interference from active radio transmitters such as mobile phones, walkie-talkies, portable computers created problems for the aircraft navigation and communication systems. Also the use of PEDs was considered to be unsafe during landing and take-off phases due to the increased risk of devices colliding with other objects at high speeds.

Although Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) currently allow the use of PEDs in airplane mode, this is restricted to heights above 10,000 feet. SpiceJet will also be following the same regulatory measures.

According to Sanjiv Kapoor, Chief Operating Officer, SpiceJet, passengers can now use their smartphones to watch movies, listen to music, compose emails and documents like customers who already do so in-flight elsewhere in the world.

Travelport introduces Travelport Smartpoint app in India

Travelport, a leading distribution services and e-commerce provider for the global travel industry, has recently introduced ‘Travelport Smartpoint’ application in India.

The app is an upgradation of the company’s point-of-sale service and will be distributed in India by InterGlobe Technology Quotient, the regional Travelport partner.

Anil Parashar, President and CEO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient, said, “Travelport Smartpoint is a smart technology that indicates the evolution of next generation of GDS, which provides flexibility of choice and ease of usage. The income of travel agents is declining or stagnating. The only way to stay relevant is to create revenue sources beyond the conventional booking fee. Upselling focuses on driving conversions from current customers and can be the largest and most profitable source of income for any business.”

“Travelport Smartpoint will enable a user to offer additional services while booking a ticket. For instance, a customer can avail of offers relating to lounge, wi-fi access, seats, meals, hotels, tours, cabs etc. Training costs will also decline by up to 50% as agents can operate this application on any GDS,” he added.

MICE offerings was the key focus of the second edition of Marriott’s M-Cube

Marriott Hotels India Pvt Ltd had recently arranged the second edition of “Marriott Meeting Matter” (M-Cube) to create greater awareness in the Indian travel trade community about its MICE services.

M-Cube 2014 was held at Jai pur Marriott Hotel from April 4-6, and included presentations from teams from Goa Marriott Resort and Spa and Hyderabad Marriott Hotel and Convention Centre among others.

Rajeev Menon, Area Vice President, South Asia and Australia, Marriott Hotels India, Ramesh Daryanani, Area Director of Sales and Marketing, South Asia, Kadambi Mittal, Regional Director Global Sales, India and Sub-continent, Marriott Hotels India were some of the speakers at the event.

Menon explained, “The objective of M-Cube is three-fold. It is about reinforcing tourism being a very niche market here, there is tremendous potential that we see for our products. We look forward to welcoming Indian travelers in our small group trips around the world.”

The Mumbai venue is designed to house India’s biggest convention centre with 18,730 sq mts of indoor space and 8,600 sq mts of banquet space. According to Menon, the company also has a target of opening 100 hotels by 2015. He further said, “Currently we have 24 operational hotels in the Indian market. Earlier this year we unveiled JW Marriott Bilaspur and by the year-end we will have another five hotels operational. In all we have around 45 projects in the pipeline.”
Indians bag third position in getting best value room rates

Hotels.com released the latest Hotel Price Index (HPI), which revealed that in 2013, at INR 12,400 a night Indian travellers stood third in terms of getting the best value hotel room rates domestically. However, travellers from Thailand bagged the first place at INR 5,160 a night and second place went to Malaysian tourists at INR 5,198 a night.

The report also stated that Swiss travellers paid the most on hotel rooms at home averaging INR 10,642 a night followed by travellers from Norway at INR 10,534 and Singapore travellers came third at INR 10,722 a night domestically.

When it comes to spending on hotel rooms abroad, Indian travellers were placed in the middle of the most generous travellers with average payments of INR 8,751 a night, a list topped by tourists from Switzerland with an average of INR 10,642 per night. The Argentines came in second, followed by the U.S. tourists.

Out of the 32 countries analysed, 24 paid more in abroad than at home. Argentinians topped this chart, followed by Thais and Indians. Chinese tourists. On the contrary, 7 nations paid more at home than away in which Singaporeans landed on the first position, followed by the Swiss and the Norwegians.

GoAir launches special offers to encourage Indian voters

This election season, GoAir has announced a special scheme in which customers can select their seats for bookings made on the days when the respective city votes for India’s next leader. The usual charges of INR 500 for seats with extra leg room and INR 500 for window or aisle seats will be put aside temporarily for that specific city departure on the relevant date. Thus, GoAir becomes the first domestic carrier to encourage people to avail their right to vote.

Sanjiv Kapoor, GoAir’s spokesperson, said, “We encourage the nation to vote and participate in the democracy. Our offer is a symbol of support towards motivating the citizens to exercise their right to vote as well as a celebration of our democratic process. On the scheduled dates of elections, bookings for all departures from that particular city will attract no seat selection charges as we offer our customers the freedom to choose their seat.”

Sanjiv Kapoor is soon going to be the new CEO of SpiceJet in few months as the airline expects to restart investment talks.

Kapoor joined the airline as COO back in November 2013, and now replaces Neil Mills, who quit SpiceJet to join Philippine Airlines as Chief Executive Adviser.

With a vast experience, London-based Kapoor has already worked as the CEO of Bangladeshi GMG Airlines, and further gave his service to North-west Airlines, Bain and Co., Temasek Holdings Pvt. Ltd. and Boston Consulting Group.

Ashok Leyland acquires $50 million contract from Zimbabwe

Ashok Leyland, the flagship company of Hinduja Group, has announced that it has recently secured a contract worth $50 million from the Government of Zimbabwe. This contract amounts to approximately INR 300 crores.

“The company has bagged a contract from the Ministry of Tourism and the hospitality industry, Government of Zimbabwe, for supply of 670 vehicles valued at approx $50 million. The order is planned to be executed in the financial year 2014-15,” representatives from Ashok Leyland explained.

Visa-on-arrival facility for South Koreans visiting India

The Indian Government is now allowing tourist visa-on-arrival facility with a maximum validity of 30 days for South Korean citizens. The External Affairs Ministry announced that these will be offered at the airports in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi and will be priced at U.S. $60.

The facility of obtaining a visa at the Embassy of India in Seoul will continue to remain for visitors who wish to get their visa prior to their travel. However this will not be applicable to envoys and other officials whose travelling arrangements will remain under other agreements as decided by the countries.

Yatra.com promotes destinations showcased in movies

Yatra.com has launched special summer holiday packages to destinations that have been featured in Bollywood movies. Places like Europe, Turkey, and the Himalayas are some of the areas covered in these holiday packages.

Speaking on this, Sharat Dhall, President, Yatra.com, said, “Picturesque landscapes seen in these movies evoke a desire in Indian travellers, who are increasingly leaning towards seeking different experiences and creating their own stories through their vacations. Leveraging this trend, Yatra.com is set to entice the escapist in travellers by offering unique getaways to enthralling locations across the world this summer.”

Yatra.com stated that recently Hindi movies such as ‘Highway’ and ‘Queen’, have increased the interests of travellers in regions like Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir and cities, such as Paris and Amsterdam.

Lavasa hosts Martial Arts Fest to promote sports tourism

The planned hill city in Maharashtra, Lavasa hosted India’s largest Martial Arts Fest in April. Leading martial art trainers from India as well as abroad took part in this workshop. Chitah Yajnesh Shety, President, Chitah JKD Global Sports Federation and Empty Hand Combat India, along with Sifu Cosmo Zimik, Director of Empty Hand Warrior – Juveniles Mentor Programme, USA and Coach for Olympic Games, Trainer at Law Enforcement agencies and military personnel, led a team of martial art instructors from six countries and 14 Indian states.

The three day fest-cum-workshop promoted Lavasa as a sports destination. Lavasa is planning to launch academies catering to rowing, hockey, tennis, badminton and golf over the next few years.

The workshop, which witnessed more than 125 participants, encouraged the practitioners to showcase their skills and talent in various martial art forms. It also provided the beginners and martial art enthusiasts with apt knowledge and brief session practice classes. Upon the completion of the fest, participants received certification.

Visa-on-arrival facility for South Koreans visiting India
Oceania Cruises launches exotic cruise packages in India

This summer Oceania Cruises is bringing the magnificent Baltic & Mediterranean - The Finest Cuisine at Sea cruise packages at stunning discount rates. Enjoy a memorable holiday experience be it honeymoon, family vacation, adventure, exploration or just relaxation...

Starting from June and lasting till September, these cruise packages give an array of options to choose the favourable destination, journey, itinerary, cost, etc. Covering Europe and Africa and Asia, the tours provide the options of choosing from 7-day and 12-day packages.

The cruise is well-equipped with all possible luxury comfort and safety. Fine dining, delicious cuisine and extraordinary wine selection will add the extra magic during the stay. Apart from that, on-board entertainment, more overnight visits and extended evening port stays, butter service in all suites, extraordinarily high staff-to-guest ratio ensures personalised service.

Choice Hotel India set to establish six more properties by 2015

The Choice Hotel India Group has declared its plans of opening six more properties in India, in addition to its 24 already functioning hotels.

"We plan to focus on extensive development resources on growing our presence in India. As we have last year expanded our presence with the opening of five properties: Clarion Hotel Chennai, Clarion Hotel Coimbatore, Quality Inn Kumabakonam, Quality Inn Bengaluru and Comfort Inn Ahmedabad. In addition we have signed another three properties—Comfort Hotel in Khanvel, Silvassa; Comfort Hotel, Abu Road in Rajasthan and Quality Hotel in Chennai. We are planning to add another three properties this year. By 2015, we will have about 32 properties," said Vilas Pawar, CEO, Choice Hotels India.

"India is an extremely important key market. In the near future we are looking at Tier-I and III cities for growth and we're looking forward to the great development potential that it holds for our brands and our hotels," he further added.
Initiatives by Gujarat Tourism to attract more visitors

Keeping in mind the increase in tourist arrivals during last year, Gujarat Tourism is all set to revamp its website, making it easier to navigate for the users. This website will be multilingual, and will be available in French, German and Japanese among others. Along with this initiative, it is also connecting with states such as West Bengal and Tamil Nadu to sign memorandums of understanding to further achieve its tourism goals. The ‘Khushboo Gujarat K’ campaign has helped in sparking the interest of tourists from these states. According to reports from Gujarat Industrial and Technical Consultancy Organisation Limited (GITCO), the state witnessed a growth of 13.4% between April to December 2013, as compared to the same period in the previous year. Subhash Goyal, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) said, “Gujarat has managed to record a good growth over a broader base. In comparison with the overall tourist growth 3.4 percent in the country, 13% growth is good.”

Projects undertaken in Mizoram to boost tourism

In Mizoram, 11 projects are in progress under the current Five Year Plan in order to strengthen the economy through development in tourism. These include Chakhang, Nawthiang, Chawngte, Convention Centre at Berawalhang, among others.

Additionally, the Ministry of Tourism has approved of the financial requirements for the establishment of the Institute of Hotel Management at Aizwal. This institute is expected to benefit the youth of the state through opportunities for human resource development and will conduct both degree and diploma courses.

Further, the Ministry funded three festivals in the year – Chapchar Kut, Thalfavang Kut and Anthurium Festival. These were held to attract more tourists and thus subsequently generate higher tourism revenues as well.

AudioCompass launches free mobile tour app

The recently launched free iPhone and Android mobile app, known as the AudioCompass Guide will now serve as a mobile tour guide, and immensely help to the tourism enthusiasts.

Now with just one click, the app provides easy-to-use and experiential tours of destinations in India. After selecting a destination, content related to that place gets downloaded onto their phones so that it can be accessed even if the phone is in ‘offline mode’.

Gautam Shewakramani, CEO & Founder of AudioCompass said, “The AudioCompass Guide is a leap forward in making cultural and heritage tourism accessible to all via their smartphones. In addition to serving travellers, our app will serve as an easily accessible resource for tour guides to enhance their offerings to clients.”

Parvez Dewan, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, speaking on MoT’s partnership with AudioCompass, said, “We are pleased to partner with AudioCompass for a mobile phone based audio tour platform. We believe that this innovative use of technology will help improve the tourist experience in India by allowing visitors to conveniently learn more about our cities, cultural sites, and monuments. It will add a completely new facility to our global Incredible India campaign.”

The AudioCompass Guide is available as a free download on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

Odisha all set to brand its tourist sites

Odisha’s tourism board has the goal of earmarking its famous tourist hot-spots and these plans will soon be finalised after consultation with collaborators including Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO), the primary hospitality organisation body in the state. A professional advertisement agency is also going to be brought in to help achieve this purpose.

Further policy measures to boost tourism in the region include development of infrastructure, land allotment at concessional rates, employment generation and supporting small and medium enterprises. Locations with high potential for tourism will be identified as ‘Special Tourism Zones’ (STZs).

The tourism department hopes that the goal of receiving 38 million Indian tourists and 400,000 visitors from overseas will be achieved by 2020.

Wind Oz and West Bengal Tourism to develop ecotourism in Dooars

Wind Oz, a community based eco-tourism and adventure Tour Operator, Department of Tourism, Government of West Bengal plan to collaborate together in developing Kadambari, Dooars as an ecotourism destination. The department will finance the ecotourism project, which is expected to be completed by 2015.

Wind Oz will offer training and guidance to tourism associates in Kadambari on maintaining hospitality and safety standards. It is also planning on constructing 30 home stays at villages in Kadambari, located particularly in wildlife sanctuaries such as Baikunthapur and Goru mara forests. These are designed to help tourists enjoy the wildlife, local tribe traditions and soft adventure activities.

Wind Oz is setting out to expand 60 destinations in West Bengal, with their main projects being in Darjeeling and Dooars. This will ensure greater connectivity, which will in turn, help in developing the tourism potential of the region. Other advantages to this also includes the lowering of the price of goods.

However, there is much concern about criminals entering the state easily. This could be kept in check though, as Inner Line Permits are required in gaining entrance to the state.

Rail services start in Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh is now part of the Indian Railway network, starting April 2014. It is the second state in the north-east after Assam to achieve this. The first train that came into Naharlagun, a town located close to the state capital of Itanagar, carried 10 passengers and two goods compartments and was powered by a diesel engine. It left Dekargaon, Assam at 7 am and reached the destination at 12.30 pm, completing a journey that was 38 km long.

Arunachal Pradesh was so far only accessible by road and by air, but that too to a limited degree. Public, power developers and tourist agents are looking forward to the commencement of the new rail services.
Thailand showcases new destinations to Indian wedding planners

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), New Delhi and Mumbai Offices, invited more than 40 leading wedding planners and event managers of India to visit and survey Thailand’s top destinations, venues, and services which are ideal for conducting weddings. The programme, known as the “Wedding Planner Trip and Symposium 2014”, took place in March, covering Samui, Phuket, Khao Lak, Krabi, Hua Hin, Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. A seminar was held on the topic “How to impress big fat Indian weddings” to better understand the demands of Indian wedding parties and manage them effectively. Many Thai tour operators, hoteliers and service providers participated in this seminar. The seminar was followed by a table top sales session to discuss business opportunities between the two groups.

TAT Governor Thawatchai Arunyik said, “Weddings and honeymoons are one of the most popular niche-market segments from India, which is already one of our top visitor generating markets. Hence, this symposium covers both the quality and quantity aspects of our marketing strategy for 2014.”

New mobile app for tourists in Taiwan

Professor Chong-Ming Huang from the National Cheng Kung University has created a mobile application to help tourists know more about the various historical sites in Taiwan. All they have to do is download the ‘DEH Mini’ app from Google Play.

The mobile application called ‘Demodulating and Encoding Heritage’ (DEH) is associated with the Chunghwa Telecom hicloud CaaS. So far it has a collection of 6,000 stories in its database but this is constantly expanding. Huang explains, “It applies a digitisation programme to organise the appropriate humanities contents into the information database. It uses Netcom information technology to develop cultural and historical stories, to be utilised in the Taiwan tourism industry and other innovative wireless mobile Internet applications and service industries.”

Myanmar promotes Inle Lake as an emerging tourist destination

The Inle Lake is the second largest lake in Myanmar with an estimated surface area of 44.9 sq m (116 sq km), situated at an altitude of 2,900 ft (880 m), and with an average water depth of 7 ft (2.1 m) during the dry season. During 2012, at least 200,000 international and domestic tourists visited the lake, and marking the number as a minimum base of visitors annually. The lake houses more than twenty species of snails and nine species of fish that are not found anywhere else in the world, such as silver-blue scale-less Sawbwa barb, the cross-banded dwarf danio, and the Lake Inle danio.

The local tourism sector recently held a meeting in the main gateway to the lake, Nyaungshwe, to further plan on the issue of tourism development in the area. In addition to that, special focus has been given on establishing a visitor forecast model, preparation of guidelines for sustainable tourism development, training in tourism planning and conducting the first detailed survey of tourists in the region.

The Institute for International Development (IID) Director Joern Kristensen also believes that providing training and employment for local people is also important for the overall tourism growth.

Singapore Airlines to introduce A380 on Indian routes from May 30

Singapore Airlines announced that from May 30 onwards, it is planning to introduce Airbus A380 aircraft on its major India routes, which will operate daily to both Mumbai and New Delhi from Singapore instead of smaller Boeing 777 aircraft. With the announcement, it became the first time that a foreign airline is commercially deploying the A380 on India routes. Singapore Airlines was also the first airline in the world to operate the A380.

“We have been keen to operate the Airbus A380 to India and are glad that the Air Services Agreement between Singapore and India now allows us to do so,” said Lee Wen Fen, Senior Vice President Marketing Planning, Singapore Airlines.

The A380s can carry 850 passengers in all economy class configurations and 525 passengers in three class configurations, whereas in comparison a Boeing 777 can carry 314 to 451 passengers only.
Malaysia welcomes tourists with a year full of splendid events

Malaysian government has been giving special attention to promote tourism in the country. Malaysia is blessed with nature’s splendid offerings, such as beautiful white sand beaches, lush rainforests, hills and one of the most bio-diverse regions, but now the manmade events are adding their own marvels in the tourism sector.

Apart from the recently concluded Malaysian Grand Prix, there was also the recent Putrajaya International Hot Air Balloon Fiesta, which showcased a spectacular fleet of free-flying hot air balloons of various shapes, colours and style from around a dozen countries. Spectators visiting the event also enjoyed helicopter joyrides, water zorbing and wall climbing.

The country is eyeing a record number of 28 million tourists this year, and has announced 2014 as ‘Visit Malaysia Year 2014’. General Dato Mirza Mohammad Tajab, Director of Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, who recently visited India, stated, "There is an aim to attract 100,000 more tourists this year.”

Cartoon Network to open Amazone waterpark in Thailand

Cartoon Network, world’s favourite kids’ channel is bringing the ultimate family entertainment in the form of Cartoon Network Amazone, the world’s first Cartoon Network themed waterpark in Thailand.

The waterpark is located in the flourishing resort hotspot of Bang Saray, near Pattaya, just 90 minutes south-east of Bangkok International Airport. Visitors can explore 10 entertainment zones and spend the day powering up with Ben 10 on all-new high-speed water roller-coasters, or exploring with Jake from Adventure Time, and much more. Guests of all ages can find the suitable rides they have been looking for, providing them the ultimate entertainment.

After an adventurous day, one can enjoy a hearty meal in Cartoon Network style, prepared specially in the Cartoon Network Foodville show kitchen. In the evening, dazzling live shows featuring acrobats and digital light displays will signal the perfect finish to an incredible family day out.

Bangladesh Tourism Board plans to develop new tourism products

To further strengthen the cultural and historic ties between India and Bangladesh, Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) has planned to develop new tourism products for the India market.

The tourism board is targeting all the segments and is working towards highlighting traditional festivals like Bengali New Year, Durga puja, etc. religious and historical sites, as well as showcasing ancestral houses of eminent personalities of India.

Pradip Ranjan Chakraborty, Joint Secretary, Director, BTB said, “Nowadays travellers are looking for experiential tours and hence we are working on creating new tourism products to cater to the needs of discerning travellers. We have lot of cultural similarities with the people of Kolkata. So apart from other foreign countries we are keen on targeting travellers from Kolkata too. Tourism has been increasing from the India market with the number of visa applications going up.”

“With our B2B focus we will look at attending all the important travel trade fairs, organise workshops, seminars, conduct FAM trips, etc. We will also work closely with the government to strategise on tourism promotion activities,” added Chakraborty.

Thailand promotes Muay Thai to attract more visitors

One of the hottest tourist destinations in the world, Thailand is something more than just beautiful landscape, diverse cultures, unique arts, and ancient traditions. A must-see attraction that a lot of travellers want to watch is Muay Thai, or Thai boxing. Many travellers come to Thailand to learn this special art.

Since Muay Thai is such an important component of tourism, the authorities are constantly stepping up efforts to promote this ancient art form and to attract more Muay Thai trainees and fighters. Special training programmes and packages, initiating more Muay Thai gyms in major tourist destinations of Thailand, and organising special and regular Muay Thai fights are some of the promotional campaigns being undertaken by the authorities concerned.

Cartath Pacific Airways, Dragonair workshops held in four Indian cities

Cathay Pacific Airways and Dragonair conducted workshops for the travel trade in Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi and Chennai between February and April 2014. The goals for these were to emphasise on the change in flight timings for the South Indian cities, and the modification made in the Delhi Flight schedule to provide daily non-stop flights between Delhi and Hong Kong.

Rakesh Raiyar, Regional Sales & Marketing Manager, South Asia, said, “These workshops aim to reach out to the front-line staff of travel agencies that sell and promote Cathay Pacific and Dragonair. The activities provide an opportunity to interact with the agency staff on an informal platform and update them on all the latest developments within Cathay Pacific and Dragonair. These sessions set the perfect blend of learning and fun and agents look forward to these workshops.”

Japan Tourism Agency to analyse tourists’ tweets for feedback

To enhance Japan’s tourism potential, its national tourism body is planning to analyse tweets by foreign tourists during their visits to Japan for their feedback.

According to the officials, the government hopes to understand the needs of foreign tourists, as their numbers are expected to increase due to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics.

Officials further added that the tourism body has hired a data processing company for analysing the tweets after purchasing data from the U.S. Company Twitter Inc. After analysing the data, the agency will plan effective measures to attract foreign tourists and provide information to local governments, travel agencies and other sectors.

“Making good use of Twitter has great possibilities since it allows us to check the effects of PR, find possible new sightseeing resources and so on. It should be possible to develop tourism more effectively if we combine the [Twitter] information collected with the GPS data,” said a senior official of the Japan Tourism Agency.
Indonesian hoteliers expecting greater revenues in the future

At the Driving Hotel Revenue Indonesia, Singapore, a survey showed that better operating processes and newer technologies such as digital booking, would build expansion of the hospitality sector. Growth rates are expected to increase by 10% by 2016.

"Hoteliers need to enhance their understanding and approach to revenue management so that properties are pricing themselves correctly. Given the current issues around oversupply, the government should look to curb new development until occupancy levels recover. More work also needs to be carried out to improve tourism infrastructure in general, including traffic management in the Legian area," said Adwien Dhanu, President, Jayakarta Hotels & Resorts.

Sri Lanka targets to attract two million MICE visitors by 2016

Sri Lanka’s convention and exhibition sector is extensively promoting the nation as a new and exciting destination for MICE and plans to welcome two million international travellers by 2016.

Since the last decade, Sri Lanka has been setting a strong foothold in the MICE tourism sector as one of the most desirable destinations for both domestic and international travellers. In 2013, Sri Lanka received 1.274 million international visitors, a number that has risen by 26.7% over 2012. Europe as a continent is Sri Lanka’s largest source market with 2,475,000 arrivals in 2013. Among countries, India became Sri Lanka’s largest inbound travel market with 209,000 travellers.

The Sri Lanka Convention Bureau, which is under the Ministry of Economic Development, has set the target to position Sri Lanka internationally as an ideal MICE destination and to receive optimum revenue from MICE tourism to contribute to the country’s economy.

Various facilities including immigration clearance at airports, hassle free taxi service at airports, trained tour guides, well-coordinated Tourist Police, and one that engages the person’s well-being and travel experience.

"While the Government takes on the planning, policy making role while providing common infrastructure and identifying new tourism areas, the private sector must identify and invest into new business opportunities, build capacity, train staff and improve service standard as well as continuously create value added products and market year-round capacity management," said Vipula Wanigasekera, General Manager, Sri Lanka Convention Bureau.

Chinese firms motivate employees through MICE travel

The attention of the Chinese firms has shifted from management to employees now, which will be beneficial for meetings and incentives. Due to more competition in Chinese business environment, private sector firms are fighting hard to stay cutting edge and keep their employees loyal and motivated. Thus, more number of meetings, incentives and team building retreats are being held in order to inspire and encourage the staff so as not to lose the good ones.

Benson Tang, Regional Director-Asia, Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE), stated that due to this evolution in business environment, MICE expenditure is also increasing, which in return is driving more companies to include MICE expenditure management as part of their corporate travel management policy.

"In the past, corporate travel was transient - travel to look for new business, hold one-on-one business discussions with partners, for training purposes, etc. Now, more corporates are bringing MICE into the travel programme," said Tang.

"Today there are events managers who not only do RFPs for meetings and incentives but look after travel experience. "China firms have become traveller-centric - before it was always the management’s point of view. This translates to a simpler policy today and one that engages the person’s well-being and travel experience. In more advance cases, there is even an ‘open’ travel management style," he added. “A more traveller-centric policy could be a strong incentive to gain staff’s support and loyalty.”

Myanmar to develop 38 tourism projects

As part of the Myanmar Tourism Master Plan 2013-2020, 38 new projects have been marked. These require a funding of U.S. $416 million so that tourist attractions of international standards maybe established.

Over seven million tourist arrivals are expected in 2020 and revenue from tourism industry should reach U.S. $10.48 billion as well. This is expected to attract tourism developers and investors from the Middle East as companies are attracted by the option of new open access.

The two most notable ventures include Qatar’s Ooredoo that has invested billions of dollars in Myanmar’s telecom infrastructure and Qatar Airways that has started direct flights from Doha to Yangon.

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TTF is India’s leading trade show for the travel and tourism industry. Since 1989, it provides an annual opportunity for organisations from India and abroad to showcase their products and services to a large cross-section of the travel trade and consumers, across major markets in India.

With more than 2300 Exhibitors from 76 countries and 35 Indian States / UTs, and more than 186,000 visitors combined, TTF is the largest network of travel trade show in India.

**Participation Package**

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- Add 10% for Corner, 20% for Peninsula and 30% for Island Stand.
- Add 25% premium for extra Upper View Area, if any.
- Add Co-exhibitor Cost: Rs. 5000/- per co-exhibitor.

* Service Tax & Educational Cess extra @ 12.36%

Payment is due at the time of booking

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Tour operators cashing in on IPL 2014

This Indian Premier League (IPL) season, tour operators are making the most they can with attractive tourism special packages for Indian visitors who plan to attend the matches taking place in Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi.

“Dubai’s hosting of the IPL is a significant boost to the Emirate’s fast growing tourism sector, enhancing our unrivalled destination offer as it also bolsters the local tourism and hospitality industry,” said Hamad Mohammed Bin Mejren, Executive Director – Business Tourism, Dubai’s Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM).

An example of special match tourism package is that at Lama Tours, travellers can stay for three nights at a hotel in Dubai, tour the city and major tourist spots, and then go on a desert safari and dhow cruise. In Abu Dhabi, meanwhile tourists can also tour the city and go on a desert safari, as well as visit Ferrari World Abu Dhabi. The Abu Dhabi packages are priced from U.S. $389-$555.

New web portal to promote Jeddah

This year the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) is focussing on developing and showcasing Jeddah as one of the most preferable tourist destinations in the Kingdom.

To further support the promotion, Sultan bin Salman, President, SCTA, launched a web portal, www.visitsjad-dah.com to popularise tourism in Jeddah at the Saudi Travel and Tourism Investment Market 2014 (SITTIM 2014), held at Riyadh.

“This web portal team has done an impressive job in promoting the tourism industry through digital channels, and particularly on its website dedicated to Jeddah with comprehensive information on the Bride of the Red Sea and its major attractions,” said Yaser Al-Abadi of SCTA.

Talking about the portal Mohammed Al-Amri, Director of SCTA, said, “The portal is one of the initiatives of the Jeddah Tourism Development Council headed by Prince Mishal bin Majid who encourages the use of the technology Theatre line-up for 2014 and effectively measure ROI,” said Mark Walsh, Portfolio Director, Reed Travel Exhibitions.

OTA sales in Middle East hit $2.3 billion in 2013

PhoCusWright announced that Online Travel Agency (OTA) sales in the Middle East has hit $2.3 billion last year, as this figure is expected to jump by 4% to 17% by the end of 2014.

“Around 60% of airline booking and ticketing in Dubai alone comes from e-commerce and with youth accounting for 60% of the GCC population the need for the tourism industry in the region to be at the forefront of digital development and connectivity is a given. Our Sabre Travel Technology Theatre line-up for 2014 is a ‘how to’ guide to grow your online business, connect with the trendsetters and effectively measure ROI,” said Mark Walsh, Portfolio Director, Reed Travel Exhibitions.

“The Travel Technology Theatre now in its third year and an established calendar feature, our tie-up with Sabre, an established global leader in this field, and the fact that we will welcome a record 72 travel technology-specific exhibitors to ATM, demonstrates the influence of online technology on all aspects of the travel cycle from planning and booking to recording memories and sharing experiences,” added Walsh.

The Arabian Travel Market (ATM) Travel Technology Theatre is being held from May 5-8, 2014 in Dubai.

Ras Al Khaimah TDA appoints India representative

Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority has assigned Heavens Portfolio with the role of being its representative in HK, India and China, in order to publicise UAE in these foreign markets.

Steven Rice, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, said, “Ras Al Khaimah is going from strength to strength as a tourism destination. We are in a fantastic position to attract investment which capitalises on Ras Al Khaimah’s accessibility to Dubai International Airport, its natural attractions of a temperate climate, rugged terrains and mountains, clean beaches and archaeological sites, coastal areas and desert to build the emirate’s tourism sector. Looking forward to 2014, Ras Al Khaimah’s tourism sector has a huge potential for continued growth, building on these strengths and the achievements of 2013.”

Talking about India, Rice further added, “India is among the top ten source markets for Ras Al Khaimah, and we are looking to strengthen numbers of visitors in the coming years with a definitive strategy to reach out to the market through various mediums.”

Dubai Government introduces Tourism Dinars

The Dubai Government has announced its plans of the commencement of the tourism fee for all hotel guests in order to support funding for the Expo 2020 projects. The fee, known as the “Tourism Dinar”, has become effective from April 2014. This additional amount, ranging between Dh 7 to Dh 20, is charged per night for tourists lodging at hotels, guest houses and holiday homes.

Most tourists feel that the fee has been set at an affordable rate. “If you’re staying in a 5-star hotel for a week I don’t think paying an extra Dh20 a night will make much difference to you,” said Rebecca Jones, a British citizen, who was travelling with her friends.

Although set at low rates, the fee will aid the Dubai Government in generating revenue for further investment in important sectors such as infrastructure.

On the other hand, other citizens expressed concern that such rates might be increased in the future. The advantage for the local citizens though is that this fee is not imposed on them, as otherwise this would prove to be a burden, adding to the already high cost of living and rent prices.
Jet Airways revises Sharjah flight timings

Due to the runway closure at Dubai Airport from May 1 to July 20, 2014, Jet Airways has decided to revise its flights operation timings during this period, to and from Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. However, the airline company assured that there will be no cancellation of any of its listed flights.

The new timings that have been regulated are as follows: Jet Airways daily flight 9W 532 will depart Mangalore at 23:05 hrs and arrive Sharjah at 10:55 hrs (LT). While returning, Flight 9W 541 will depart Sharjah at 13:20 hrs (LT) and arrive into Mumbai at 18:05 hrs. Jet airways flight 9W 538 on Sundays will operate from Mumbai at 13:45 hrs and arrive into Dubai at 15:25 hrs (LT). Jet Airways daily flight 9W 548 will depart Delhi at 19:20 hrs and arrive into Sharjah at 21:35 hrs (LT). On the return leg, Jet Airways flight 9W 547 will depart Sharjah at 22:55 hrs (LT), arriving Delhi at 03:55 hrs.

Oman promotes wedding, MICE and film tourism in India

This year Oman is focussing on promoting wedding, MICE and film tourism in the Indian market. Recently, the Ministry of Tourism of Oman and Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton hotel, invited a group of reputed wedding planners from India providing them the opportunity to experience Oman as an ideal wedding destination.

The capital city Muscat is promoting itself as a well-developed and perfect wedding set up which has many world-class hotels and resorts. It also has several Indian restaurants which are easily accessible for Indian travellers.

Lubaina Sheerazi, India Representative, Oman said, “Weddings in India are becoming larger than life and destination weddings are getting more and more popular among Indians. Oman has great potential to become a wedding destination and the feedback we got from the wedding planners after the FAM was very encouraging and positive. Oman will definitely provide the ‘wow’ factor most clients look for. It is a stunning destination with the most amazing and diverse topography which is perfect for an Indian wedding as you could have every event set against a unique backdrop. Moreover, Oman is close to India not only geographically but also culturally.”

Abu Dhabi roadshow held by Bonton Tours across 15 Indian cities

Bonton Tours Pvt Ltd recently conducted Abu Dhabi road show across 15 Indian cities including Kochi, Chandigarh, Madurai, Jaipur etc., from March 25 to April 4. The official sponsor for the event was Yas Island, while Abu Dhabi Tourism Board and Shangri-La Hotel were tourism and hospitality partners. The event was organised in order to inform clients in Tier-II Indian cities about the products and services of the Bonton Tours company.

The road show began with a presentation by the Bonton Group, followed by Abu Dhabi, Yas Island and Shangri-La Hotel. Lucky winners at the event also received travel packages to Abu Dhabi that included stay in the Shangri-La Hotel and Traders Hotel.

Lama Group and Carfare announce the largest merger in the hospitality sector

One of the largest destination management companies, Lama Group has announced its merger with Carfare, the leading privately owned comprehensive mobility solution group with an aim to achieve greater heights in the hospitality industry through this new company, which is worth Dh3.356 million.

“This merger gives us the advantage to create a truly global company, a market leader in providing complete travelling solutions for both individual and corporate clients,” said Jasbir Bassi, Managing Director of both the Groups.

To impart knowledge about this merger among their peers and business partners, both companies will be exhibiting in this year’s Arabian Travel Market (ATM), from May 5-8, 2014.

“The result of this merger will also enable us to offer a variety of innovative solutions related to travel and mobility industry, which in its essence will redefine the very concept of how business is done in these areas and will be true game changers,” said Fahim Aziz, Group General Manager.
One of the world’s most luxurious hotels, Burj Al Arab has taken romance and weddings to completely new heights—both literally and figuratively. Now one can arrange their wedding venue at 122 m, above the azure Arabian Gulf on the famous Burj Al Arab helipad.

This heavenly experience includes arrival at Burj Al Arab by air in Italian twin engine Augusta A109 or by road in Rolls Royce Phantom and exquisite accommodation at the hotel.

Guests can also enjoy private tasting sessions with Burj Al Arab’s award-winning Executive Chef Maxime Lavara, consultations on wedding cake design, structure, flavour and composition with Burj Al Arab’s Executive Pastry Chef, Johannes Bonin and beverage sampling and advice from Burj Al Arab’s Head Sommelier, Dimitar Dimitrov.

Apart from these guests can avail special beauty treatments and private sessions, specially designed wedding scents, shopping and styling sessions, exclusive access to Dubai’s best jewelers, private lessons in etiquette and dance, and several other facilities.

Burj Al Arab General Manager, Heinrich Morio, said, “We’re always looking for new and special ways to delight our guests. We believe a once-in-a-lifetime event deserves a one-of-a-kind venue and are thrilled to add this special location to our ultimate experience collection.”

Israel: Passover and Easter holidays attract record number of foreign tourists

Tens of thousands of tourists came to Israel for the Passover and Easter holidays. The Tourism Ministry estimated that some 135,000 foreign visitors landed in the country during that period.

Earlier, Tourism Minister Uri Landau called on citizens to take advantage of the Passover holiday and tour the country. “We are blessed with a country full of historical sites, magnificent natural landscapes and beauty,” he said. “The Passover holiday is a wonderful opportunity to tour the country, to marvel at its features and to fall in love with it all over again.”

According to Ministry Director Amir Halevi, many hotels in the north reached full occupancy and national levels spiked as Israelis opted for domestic tours instead of the traditional trip abroad to give a boost to their country’s tourism industry.

26,000 tourists arrive in Egypt during Easter despite travel alerts

Some 26,000 international tourists arrived at Egypt’s various airports to celebrate Easter and the spring festival (Sham El-Nasim) despite travel warnings. Tourist-friendly city Hurghada saw 18,560 tourists from mostly Russia, Germany and England. Some 43,000 tourists arrived in the South Sinai resort of Sharm El-Sheikh and Hurghada combined over the last two days. Egypt’s Ministry of Tourism had also announced plans to take a series of precautionary measures to bolster security in Red Sea touristic cities.

Lebanon to woo medical tourists from neighbouring countries

Michel Pharaon, Lebanon’s new Tourism Minister is looking to expand beyond the traditional Gulf tourists and one key area he is focusing on is medical tourism.

“In Lebanon, we have professionals in the health care industry that can bring in tourists from Yemen, Iraq, Libya and Algeria. We have a committee working hard on the project. An increasing number of Iraqis come to Lebanon for medical reasons. Health tourism has good potential for the country,” he said.

Last year there was a series of bombings due to the ongoing conflict in Syria, but Pharaon seeks to convince people of the relative safety throughout much of Lebanon, stating “70% of Lebanon has not witnessed a gunshot for the past 20 years.”

Iran is back on the tourism map

Iran, a country with spectacular cultural and architectural heritage is trying its best to increase its tourism numbers from the present four million tourists per year.

The country is trying to attract tourists by relaxing visa policies. Its prime markets are China, countries of Western Asia, and the neighboring states, and areas where major growth is foreseen are cultural, historical, nature, and medical tourism. Tailor-madeadventures.com, which creates itineraries for Iran, has seen an 80% increase in enquiries since the beginning of the year and said that the vast majority of interested customers have gone on to book. The company sent 24 customers to the country in 2013, and so far has had bookings for 50 people this year. This can be attributed to the change of government in Iran.

Tour operators have compared Iran’s future to that of Burma, which has been a top-selling destination since the election of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2012 and the subsequent change in stance on tourism in the country.

Air Arabia announces special fare for travel agents to attend ATM

Air Arabia announced special fares for travel agents to attend Arabian Travel Market 2014 from 13 online stations in India to Sharjah. The offer includes return airfare, UAE visa (subject to approval), 30 kgs free baggage allowance and all taxes.

The offer starts from ₹20,499.

This is the fourth year of Air Arabia’s participation in ATM, and the Sharjah-based carrier looks forward to showcasing its latest business developments and future plans during the trade fair.
Tourism New Zealand and Singapore Airlines conduct FAM trip for Indian travel trade

Tourism New Zealand and Singapore Airlines invited seven travel agency directors from India as a part of an exclusive ‘India Travel Trade Luxury Family’ across the South Island in the country. The eight-day FAM trip was hosted by Neha Bholia, Country Manager India, Tourism New Zealand, and it highlighted some of New Zealand’s most luxurious experiences for high-end FIT travelers. The trip included luxury lodges of Dunedin, Queenstown, Fiordland, Wanaka, Franz Josef and Christchurch. The aim of this trip was to promote New Zealand as a luxury destination.

Amod Thatte, Head-Productions, Head of Innovation, Outbound Division, Kuoni Travel India Pvt. Ltd.; Deepthi Mehta, Associate Vice President, FIT, Thomas Cook India Ltd.; Sunil Hasija, Executive Director, TUI India; Ratti Bhodapkar, Managing Director, Abercrombie & Kent; Ashis Kumar Das, Director, The Wanderers; Padmini Narayanan, Director, Akshaya India Tours & Travel, and Raghu Nath Padmanabhan, Executive Director, Pegasus Travels & Tours Pvt. Ltd., are the travel trade members who participated in the FAM trip.

During the trip the travel trade members experienced hot air ballooning in Canterbury, the Dart River Jet Sake skydiving in Queenstown, helicopter ride over the Franz Josef Glacier and the Glacier Hot Pools.

Fiji Airways, Etihad enter into major agreement

Fiji Airways has announced its plans to connect Europe, Africa, and North America with the Pacific holyday and visitors’ paradise Fiji, a step which will give a major boost to the tourism industry on the Fiji islands. Fiji Airways and Etihad Airways reached an agreement regarding this. This agreement will thus allow reciprocal sales from and to 12 cities in Europe, 17 cities in the Middle East, 5 cities in Africa, 5 cities in North America, 29 cities in Asia and 3 cities in Australia to and from Fiji.

James Hogan, President and Chief Executive Officer of Etihad Airways, said, “Fiji is a great holiday market and we are happy to offer Fiji as an additional destination in our global network. The agreement also connects the outer South Pacific Islands to our network which creates more opportunities for our worldwide sales force.”

Stefan Pichler, Managing Director and CEO of Fiji Airways added, “We are proud to be part of the global Etihad Airways network and this partnership will help us to put Fiji on the map in countries where we had no presence before. Etihad Airways will help us to reach out for new customers and to diversify tourism streams for our country. It is definitely a major step for Fiji Airways.”

Tourism Australia, British Airways come up with Visit Soon campaign

Tourism Australia has joined hands with British Airways and has come up with their new innovation campaign which focuses to inspire more reunions between the thousands of Brits living in Australia and their family and friends back in the UK.

The ‘Visit Soon’ advertisement features a real life film about Eamie Rowling, the eight-year-old daughter of English parents, now living in Bondi.

The film details Eamie’s day to day life in Australia, and how she longs to see her grandparents again. The next scene then jumps back to the UK, where Eamie’s grandparents are watching the short film about her daughter. The scene beautifully captures their surprised and nostalgic reaction after seeing their granddaughter.

They are then being flown to Australia to be reunited with the rest of the family again, thanks to British Airways and Tourism Australia.

The tagline of the campaign couldn’t be more apt: ‘Australia has everything except you’.

“Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) represents a large and valuable market,” said Denise von Wald, Tourism Australia’s Regional General Manager for the UK. “With the UK economy recovering, now is the perfect time to launch the campaign.”

“We’re delighted to be working with British Airways on this campaign which encourages people living in Australia to invite their UK based friends and family to experience our unique Aussie lifestyle and incredible tourism experiences,” she added.

Tourism Australia campaign highlights the delicacies of the nation

Tourism Australia is highlighting the local produce and picturesque countryside of Canberra through its new ‘Nosh’ campaign, which will be broadcasted in up to 20 international markets.

The ACT section of the campaign will further add other food-related stories from around the nation.

Tourism Australia said that they are planning to target key markets, such as Japan, Malaysia, Korea, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, India, Indonesia, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Solomon Islands undergoes full clean-up

The Solomon Islands Government and Meteorological Service stated that the destination has undergone full clean-up operations across the nation, after Mataniko River burst its banks. However, Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau (SIVB) CEO, Josefina ‘Jo’ Tuamoto announced that despite the damage caused to the capital city Honiara’s main hotels were relatively unscathed and are in full service.

“All international and domestic flights were back to normal and the roads in and around Honiara open to traffic. Although traffic is slow in and out of town due to the Mataniko Bridge having only one lane, there is a major infrastructure assessment already taking place to look at how the situation can continue to be improved,” he added.

“This was without doubt one of the worst natural disasters - if not the worst ever - to have hit this country but I amazed with the tenacity and the passion that the people have to support each other in this time of duress. It’s definitely not business as usual, we have a lot to do and it will take time but a huge amount of progress has already been made and its full speed ahead for the clean up,” Tuamoto said.

“The Restaurant Australia campaign was in response to the growing demand globally for food and wine to be part of the travel experience,” said Nick Baker, Chief Marketing Officer, Tourism Australia.

“The scenes at Poachers Pantry features an American couple sampling local produce at the restaurant, Smokehouse Cafe and Wily Trout Wines run by the Bruce family.

“Restaurant Australia is all about bringing together passionate locals, breathtaking landscapes and the freshest of produce to demonstrate to the world what makes Australia’s food and wine experiences so unique and distinctive,” Baker added. “The wonderful family-owned and run Poachers Pantry in the country certainly ticks all of those boxes and will do a great job of sharing one of many compelling chapters in Australia’s food and wine story.”

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Poland focuses on attracting more Indian travel agents this year

Trafalgar offers guaranteed stability for agents

Destination Wedding Planners Congress to be held in Athens

First of its kind gold shop at Frankfurt Airport opens

Atout France to start MICE online training course for India
Global Destinations represents UTS Travel-Russia in India

UTS Travel, a Russian DMC, with offices in Moscow and St. Petersburg, has selected Global Destinations as their Representative in India.

Expressing his views about this appointment, Pranav Kapadia, Founder, Global Destinations, said, “These are exciting times for Global Destinations having added one of the largest DMC in Russia as part of our portfolio. We are mainly planning to promote UTS’ business in India through a network of travel agents and tour operators by way of sales and training programmes. We will also be organising a Familiarisation (FAM) trip for the agents this year in order to prepare them for the upcoming tourist season in 2015. Leisure groups are showing much interest in Russia and despite the current political situation in the country, tourism has remained unaffected.”

Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Azerbaijan alliance to support tourism goals

Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Azerbaijan have recently signed an agreement for the creation of a single tourism package within the Great Silk Road, during the meeting of Summit of Tourism Ministers of the Turkic Council. This will enable the creation of the Tourism Association of Four Countries led by the Turkish Association of Travel Agents (TÜRSAB). This collaborative effort will help to organise and regulate marketing dynamics of the countries through sharing of experiences in the field of tourism. Other features that will also be included are annual single tourist festivals of ethnic sports and cultures.

The resolution will be presented to the Presidents of the countries, for their approval during the Summit of Heads of Tourism of Turkic-speaking Countries to be held on June 3-4 in Bodrum, Turkey.

VisitBritain to organise ExploreGB in 2015

VisitBritain has announced that it will start its largest yearly event, ExploreGB, in February 2015. This event will take the place of Hosted Buyers Marketplace that VisitBritain earlier conducted for three years. UKinbound, the tourism trade association will be collaborating with VisitBritain to publicise the event using its own forum.

UKinbound’s Chief Executive, Deirdre Wells said, “We’re delighted to support and be part of this significant event on the B2B tourism calendar. Working exclusively with VisitBritain on ExploreGB will mean we can focus our attention on generating as much new business for Britain as possible over the next decade, to align with the 2020 Tourism Strategy.” ExploreGB will provide a platform for British tourism suppliers and tour operators to network with as many as 250 international buyers from over 31 countries. The event will include seminar programmes, workshops and familiarisation trips. Keith Beecham, Overseas Director at VisitBritain explained, “Our goal is to make sure ExploreGB becomes the world’s largest and most influential business-to-business tourism event promoting a single destination.”

Conventional Tourism continues to rise in Turkey

Over the past decade, the number of international conventions in Turkey has increased resulting in greater tourism revenue for the economy. According to reports from the Turkish Association of Travel Agents (TÜRSAB), which has its 50 conventions held in 2004, this number grew to 196 by 2013. The majority of which took place in Istanbul.

Istanbul was among the top 10 cities globally to host conferences with over 500 attendees. With the large volume of tourists, it is speculated that revenue generation will rise to $1.7 billion.

"Convention tourism nationwide has been a large part of the tourism boom in Istanbul, which welcomed over 10 million visitors last year. By joining the ranks of the world's leading tourist cities such as Paris, London and Rome, the city has revealed its strong potential," said TÜRSAB President, Başaran Ulusoy in the report. The Efes Convention Centre in particular is a notable landmark as it opened recently and is currently the largest convention centre in the country, equipped to accommodate around 12,000 people.

Leading MICE travel agents undertake first Asia Trophy tour in Switzerland

A total of 45 leading MICE travel agents from 12 Asian countries recently conducted “Discover Switzerland”, a tour led by Kuoni Group Travel Experts and hosted by Switzerland Tourism.

The guests of the first Asia Trophy tour visited Appenzell, Bern, St. Gallen, Zurich and other significant destinations of eastern part of Switzerland. The tour acted as an important platform where buyers from the financial services, IT, telecommunications, consumer electronics and pharmaceutical industries met with the representatives from public sector agencies and leisure group wholesalers, and emphasised on meetings, incentives, congresses and events (MICE) tourism.

Reto Kaufmann, Kuoni Group Travel Experts’ Head of MICE Sales for South Asia said, “China’s powerhouse economy continues to drive international travel for business and leisure, while Japanese businesses have always seen the value in incentive trips for their employees. Increasingly we are seeing countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand invest in incentive trips as their business and economic fortunes prosper and in meetings overseas as they rise to meet the demands of international and can be experienced in a natural setting.”

Zagreb’s Museum of Broken Hearts becomes an instant success

The city of Zagreb in Croatia has developed a unique museum which is dedicated to broken hearts, and it has earned instant popularity.

“It is one of the most-visited museums in the Croatian capital,” said the Director of Croatia’s National Tourism Board in Italy, Dario Matijevic.

The Museum of Broken Hearts exhibits hundreds of objects and souvenirs that once belonged to couples who are now separated. Each memento carries a written testimonial from the donor about the object, important dates, places where the relationship started or ended and other annotations.

The museum hall displays objects, such as a lock of hair, a wedding dress, an unsent love letter and so on, and even objects like cell phone, an axe and a wooden leg are also on display: each telling a different love story and how it eventually ended.

The museum is the brainchild of a former couple, artist Drazen Grubisic and producer Olinka Vistica and their’s was the very first object that the museum exhibited back in 2006, in memory of a four-year relationship.

After touring several cities including Belgrade, Berlin, Flummi, London, Manila, San Francisco, Pola, Singapore and Skopje, the show returned to its permanent home in 2010.

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Tourism Ireland and VisitBritain to collaborate for future ventures

Tourism Ireland and VisitBritain plan to collaborate together to advertise their destinations particularly in the Chinese and Indian markets. Both agencies aim to share market data, research projects and sales missions to serve this purpose. Niall Gibbons, CEO of Tourism Ireland and Sandle Dawe, CEO of VisitBritain signed a memorandum of understanding in London to mark this agreement. Under this, Ireland andGreat Britain will be promoted together in a single holiday package to foreign tourists. Gibbons explained, “Given that visitors from these markets are travelling considerable distances, and often want to include more than one destination on their itinerary, it makes sense for Tourism Ireland to cooperate with VisitBritain – to target people travelling to Britain and encourage them to visit the island of Ireland as part of their trip, and vice versa.”

“We have ambitious targets to encourage record numbers of visitors to Britain from long-haul, high-spending markets such as China and India – as do our colleagues at Tourism Ireland,” said Dawe. “This new partnership aims to capitalise on opportunities by aligning our work and marketing activities in these countries where appropriate.”

Boom in tourism sector of Spain

TUI Spain handled 10% of the total number of tourist arrivals in 2013. Heading three areas of business: the tour operators TUI Travel, TUI Hotels and TUI Cruises, TUI is recognized as the pioneer of tourism consortiums in the world. According to the officials in TUI, Spain is one of their major destinations to manage as it is in high demand. The cultural diversity that the country offers is considered to be one of the main reasons behind the nation’s popularity.

Tourists from Britain and Germany frequent the country most often, contributing to one-third of the total expenditure by inbound tourists. In 2013, an all-time high figure in tourist spending, which reached up to €6.08 million, was observed. This trend was particularly visible over the Easter weekend, when hotel bookings increased substantially around the country. The Eden Mar Hotel in the southeast beach location of Guardamar del Segura in particular was completely booked. The hotel in order to meet the demands of the large number of tourists arriving in Costa Blanca for the holidays, also considered recruiting new employees for this reason. This was good news for the locals as the unemployment rate remains at more than 25% in the area.

Greece records increase in tourism revenues

There is good news for Greek Tourism as revenues have increased by 17.3% in the first two months this year, compared to the last and thus a total of €596.1 million was attained, according to the latest announcement by the Bank of Greece. Also reports released by Kathimerini online show that revenues from cruise activity have risen by 11.5%.

The highest expenditure levels that of 336.8%, reaching €133.3 million was observed to be from Russian tourists. While travel receipts further showed that expenditure from British tourists increased by 8.5%, amounting to €17.9 million while that from German visitors grew to 3.5% or €25 million.

Increase in foreign tourists for Macedonia

“‘GoMacedonia’ is offering ten tours in 2014, from countries such as Serbia, Latvia, France, Great Britain and Australia. The tour will consist of visits to the historical sites and lodging at four-star hotels.

Since 2013, Czech Republic has witnessed a growth in its medical tourism sector, with clients coming mostly from Germany, Russia, Austria and the UK. The most popular treatment is plastic surgery, which includes liposuction, abdominal work and eye surgery. Fertility treatments are also popular. The country offers low prices for the same quality of procedures and training of doctors, than elsewhere in the EU. Of late, however, there is price competition from clinics in the UK, especially for cosmetic surgery and dental care. However, the country maintains its comparative advantage in fertility treatments and as such can be expected to preserve its popularity with customers from Germany, Austria and Russia. A further attraction particularly for customers from these countries is that German is widely spoken in the area.

Franzensbad, in particular, is a spa town with facilities such as carbonated water and hot mud, which help to treat medical ailments ranging from digestive to cardiovascular issues. Other features such as Aqua Forum water centre, the four-star Imperial Hotel and facilities for hiking and cycling also makes the site popular.

Growth in medical tourism in Czech Republic

Increase in foreign tourists for Macedonia

According to the website, Exploring Macedonia, the number of tourists has risen in recent years. Most of them are interested in eco-tourism and in visiting the churches, monasteries and rural areas.

“Most tours we have lately are with guests from Turkey. They consist mainly from middle-aged people and we have special arrangements for them. Foreigners, in general, are mostly interested in visiting Skopje and Ohrid, where they usually stay,” said representatives from the Travel Agency ‘Filologi Travel’. 

They visit the entire Balkan region where there is a cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire. Their trips usually start in Thessaloniki and afterwards they come here and then go through Prizren, Kosovo and Sarajevo,” explains Dimitar Georgievski, Manager of ‘GoMacedonia’.

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Brand USA to launch major digital campaign

Brand USA is working on a project with MacGillivray to develop an archive of content-rich digital tools, and wants that the agents use it while promoting U.S. It will go on general release around the UK next year.

Jay Gray, Vice President of Global Market Development for Brand USA, said, “Around the film’s release we will host a red-carpet event for the trade, and after the initial distribution in cinemas, we will multi-pur- pose that content so agents can use the entire film and shorter clips as sales tools.”

Apart from this, Brand USA is also working with National Geographic’s digital nomad, Andrew Evans, on The Great American Road Trip, for his five different journeys of the year, which includes, Western Trails, Route 66, Mountains and Prairies, Northeast Corri- dor and Rhythms of the South.

Further, Brand USA is also leading a social media cam- paign around U.S. road trips, which will share content about the off-the-beaten-track trav- els of the bloggers and influ- encers from 10 different mar- kets, including the UK.

Colombia reaches out to connect business and leisure tourism

Colombia is going for a wider range of travellers and this time business tourism has caught their attention. Luis German Restrepo, Executive Director USA for Proexport Colombia and Camilo Duque, the Leisure Tourism Director, have shed some light on what led to this growth.

“With a growing middle class and decreased unem- ployment in cities, the coun- try’s economy has stabilised, leading to increased develop- ment and safety,” Duque said.

In addition to that, the Pacific Alliance free trade agreement is extremely ben- eficial for the travellers as it allows them to move between neighbouring countries with- out requiring an extra visa.

Colombia’s infrastruc- ture, which is growing stron- ger day by day, is another significant factor of the tour- ism growth. Major interna- tional hospitality companies, such as Hilton, Marriott, Star- wood, Radisson, InterCon- tental and Hyatt are open- ing alongside local businesses and boutique hotels.

In 2013, Colombia hosted 135 major events of 1,000 peo- ple or more, to which Ger- man stated that being the hub for the region, it is attracting more interest from interna- tional travellers. “Beyond the convention centres in major cities, less traditional ven- ures around the country also have plenty of appeal,” added German.

“We can reach out and connect people and follow the process through,” Duque explained about the thought of connecting businesses and business travellers.

Horseless eCarriages introduced in New York City

An electric car, speculated to replace the famous horse- drawn carriages in New York, City was presented at the New York International Auto Show. The “Horseless eCarriage” pro- totype was commissioned by NYCLASS, a non-profit animal advocacy organisation, which believes that it’s inhumane to have the horses toiling in an urban environment.

The prototype car is designed to look like 20th cen- tury vehicle and can carry eight people. Creator Jason Wenig of The Creative Workshop said the selling price could be between $150,000 and $175,000.

However, before the cars could officially make their way to the streets around Central Park, legislation banning the carriage horses would have to be passed. And the Central Park Conservancy, a non- profit that looks after the park in partnership with the city, was against the idea of bring- ing more cars in there.

“Increasing the number of people visit Central Park each year, includ- ing runners, bicyclists, kids and dog owners,” said Doug Blonsky, President and CEO, Central Park Conservancy, “Adding vehicles to the mix will make the park less safe for all of them and increase congestion.”

Toronto appoints AVIAREPS as India Representative

Tourism Toronto has appointed AVIAREPS as its Sales and Marketing Repre- sentative in India, giving it the responsibility to expand the exposure and promote Toronto as an ideal destination especially for Indian MICE travellers.

David Whitaker, President and CEO, Tourism Toronto, said, “Toronto has worked over many years to establish a strong reputation among visi- tors from India as a diverse and vibrant year-round destina- tion and now is the right time to build on these foundations to showcase the true depth of cultural experience that we offer. Visitors from India seek authentic, engaging and affordable city breaks and hol- idays, all of which and more they can discover in Toronto, as well as the surrounding region for which Toronto serves as a gateway.”

Joseph Fernandes, General Manager, India, AVIAREPS, said, “We are very excited to be appointed to represent Tour- ism Toronto in India. Toronto is one of the best cities in the world with fantastic tourism infrastructure and a strong Indian influence which makes it very unique. Toronto is the kind of city that Indian tour- ists and MICE groups are look- ing to visit. We are quite sure Indian travellers and MICE groups will love Toronto.”

Las Vegas develops exclusive LGBT ad campaign

Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority has devel- oped an exclusive LGBT spot in their “What Happens Here, Stays Here” ad campaign, highlighting the open atmosphere of Las Vegas.

Although other tourists destinations, such as Phil- adelphia, Mexico, Ottawa, San Francisco, etc. also focus on LGBT travellers and pro- vide information-specific sites along with welcoming ad campaigns, Las Vegas became the first destina- tion to show its support for the LGBT community in a national mainstream broad- cast campaign.

“The addition of an LGBT spot to the “What Happens Here” campaign was a nat- ural next step,” said Cathy Tull, LVCVA Senior Vice President of Marketing. “Las Vegas’ campaigns are based on adult freedom and encour- aging visitors to experience that freedom first hand.”
Brazil gets limelight at WTM Vision Conference, São Paulo

The latest research about Bra- zil's vibrant travel market was on display at the WTM Vision Conference in São Paulo, which is part of the World Travel Market Latin America, the leading B2B exhibition.

As the country is busy pre- paring for the FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, WTM Vision Conference provided the participants and delegates information regarding the tourism and travel industry forecasts.

Alexis Frick, Research Associate at Euromonitor International, said, “Business travel and aviation are key bright spots for growth in Bra- zil.” However, the country faces many challenges, including civil protests, the rush to com- plete infrastructure projects and a capacity shortfall, along with travel not being seen as a major spending priority by consumers.”

“Last year was a record for international tourist arrivals globally, which grew by five percent to 1,087 million. Brazil, which features among the emerging and exciting BRIC nations, saw substantial growth in outbound expenditure (+14%) in 2013. The country is also on track to meet its target of receiving seven million international tourists by 2016, up from an estimated 5.7 million visitors in 2012,” said Paul Nelson, WTM Press & PR Manager.

Orlando welcomes record 59 million tourists

George Aguel, President and CEO, Visit Orlando announced that Orlando wel- comed a record 59 million visitors in 2013, marking a three percent rise than the previous year 2012.

“We are so pleased to announce this incredibly exciting news on the closing date of 2013, when travel industry professionals around the world shift their sights toward next year’s IPW event in Orlando. Thanks to the strong global marketing and sales efforts of our team at Visit Orlando and the leadership of our tourism members and community leaders who share a common vision for our desti- nation, Orlando continues to lead the nation as its most vis- ited destination,” said Aguel.

Further, Visit Orlando has launched an enhanced Orlando Travel Academy to provide more destination information to the travel trade and also make them understand how to benefit these. By 2017, Orlando will be among the first destinations with on- airport intermodal facilities in the U.S. and the first air- port in Florida to support air- travel, ground transportation and rail.

World’s largest artificial reef project undertaken to boost Florida tourism

Naples, Marco Island and Col- llier County, have joined forces with the Collier County Foundation of Collier County and the Economic Recovery Task Force to undertake one of the world’s largest artificial reef projects which will have six 500-ton reefs the size of football fields, each containing six smaller pyra- mid-shaped reef modules 8 to 12 ft high. More than $3 million have been granted by the BPS Golf Tourism and Seabed Promotional Fund for the proj- ect, taking place Collier County, Florida.

“The benefits of a project of this scale and importance are far-reaching, both enenvironmentally and economically,” said Naples attorney Peter Flood. “Fish have to have to structures to live in. We need to increase our fish population. It will have an economic impact on the commu- nity by attracting more tourism.”

For the implementation of the project about 18,000 tons of recycled and donated concrete will be sunk 12 to 30 miles from shore.

According to statistics from the 2011 University of Florida Sea Grant report, this proj- ect will introduce diving as a tourism industry here and will attract fishing tournaments. It is expected that the area can generate $30 million by fur- ther boosting eco-tourism, hotel stays, dining, shopping, boating, fishing and div- ing trips, bait shop revenues and others.

Visit Florida organises FAM trips to strengthen ties with Indian travel trade

Visit Florida, recently organ- ised an experiential visit to the major cities of Sunshine State like Miami, Tampa Bay and Orlando, all in the effort to strengthen its presence in the Indian travel trade industry.

Major travel agents and lead- ing companies, such as Flight Shop, N Chirag Travels, Ambe World Travels, Dove Travels, Tristar, Veenaa World, TUI, and Carnival Travels took part this Familiarisation (FAM) trip.

The FAM was led by Seldon Tenzing, Account Director, Visit Florida with the focus on enhancing awareness among the participants and them about Florida and its offerings to discerning Indian travel- ers. Along with luxury shop- ping and fine dining options, the trip also included visits to theme parks, museums, and significant attractions such as Miami Zoo, Sea World, Uni- versal Studios, Walt Disney World Resort, Florida Aquarium, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, etc.

World Cup: Rio to introduce hovercrafts for tourist transportation

Rio de Janeiro has intro- duced another card to wel- come World Cup tourists to the city from the airport. the hovercraft.

“The state would like at least two such boats that fit around 80 people each and could make about four trips an hour,” announced Rio state’s Tourism Secretary Claudio Magnavita, after having a detailed discus- sion with Transport Secretary Tatiana Váz Carus on this new transport idea.

Mostly after landing at the Galeao airport on Governor's Island in Guanabara Bay, tourists often have to face the clogged highway for as long as an hour to reach their destina- tion. Thus, the city government has also announced three hol- idays to reduce traffic flow on match days.

“There’s a slitting prob- lem in Guanabara Bay where the island is, so it would have to be a boat with an air cush- ion,” Magnavita added. “If there’s a capable operator that is able to attend to safety, we will be operating for 30 days in that stretch.”

San Francisco: The ultimate stop for every tourist

San Francisco has always remained one of the favou- rite tourist destinations for its ability to satisfy every tourist’s different interests and likes.

Whether you are a business traveller who seeks some “me- time” for pleasure or a group on a holiday- San Francisco is a luxury to be explored in great detail.

San Francisco offers an extensive diversity in its hid- den marvels. Nature is at its best with breathtaking moun- tainous, water and architec- ture landscapes.

San Francisco is a culinary paradise. From local street food trucks loaded with deli- cious burgers with big chunk of meats or some tasty vegetar- ian dishes to the luxurious res- taurants with cuisines from all over the world, San Francisco is always ready to satisfy your appetite.

Apart from these, the destina- tion is also famous for its historical trails, such as the Alcatraz prison on the Alca- traz Island, the Golden Gate Bridge and the North Beach among others.

To add that extra spice in your holiday, San Francisco is a great place for shopping and enjoying nightlife. The Union Square market is the best place to shop, whether you are brand connoisseurs or on a budget, and also if you are a fine art collector.

And then for a fun night out in San Francisco, include Bay Area in your itinerary and visit to one of the city’s top dance clubs, where famous DJs and local talent spin the best dance music.
Holland America Line introduces new ships in South America region

Holland America Line will be providing four new ships – MS Statendam, MS Maasdam, MS Zaandam and MS Prinsendam – in the South American region. These will sail 20 trips along the west coast between Vancouver, British Columbia and Santiago, Chile. Departures would not only be from South America but also include ports like Fort Lauderdale, Florida; San Diego, California and Vancouver, British Columbia.

“South America is a big draw for cruisers because it is the most diverse continent in the world with extreme climates, dramatic landscapes and fantastic touring opportunities,” said Richard Meadows, Holland America Line’s Executive Vice President of Sales, Marketing and Guest Programmes. “In addition to featuring unique experiences like attending Carnival, seeing penguins in their natural habitat and rounding Cape Horn, the itineraries take guests to places that are best visited via cruise ship, such as Antarctica and the Amazon River.”

The ‘Inca Discovery’, ‘Amazon Explorer’ and ‘Inca and Amazon Passage’ will be starting an additional flight from June 30th. The ‘Amazon Passage’, ‘Amazon Explorer’ and ‘Inca and Amazon Passage’ will be starting an additional flight from July 20th.

Quebec gets first ever heritage lighthouse

Canada has welcomed its first heritage lighthouse, the Île aux Perroquets lighthouse, under Canada’s Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act. The lighthouse is located at the stunning site of Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve of Canada.

“I am proud of my government’s undertaking to preserve heritage lighthouses across Canada for future generations,” said Denis Lebel, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec and Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs.

Aeromexico: New flight between Shanghai and Mexico City

From July 1, Aeromexico will be starting an additional flight on Sundays, between Shanghai and Mexico City. The flight frequency will thus increase to thrice a week and this arrangement has been made keeping in mind the increasing demand from the passengers as well as the airline’s goal of further expansion.

Aeromexico is the only airline company in Latin America that has had China as part of its international destinations network for over four years and has also recently increased its flight frequency between Tokyo and Mexico City. It has played a great role in strengthening bilateral ties and serving the needs of various clients globally.

Jorge Goytortua, Aeromexico VP Corporate Sales, said, “We are aware that with the new services added, we will be able to cover the Asian market travel needs by offering more than 3,500 seats a week in benefit of all our clients and the bilateral relationship between the countries.”

Panama Metro, the first central American subway

The first subway system in Central America-Metro Line One of Panama opened last month. This line is 13.7 km long from Albrook to Los Andes, out of which 7.5 km lies underground, 4.9 km is elevated and 1.5 km is higher in trenches.

“Our challenge was to not only meet the timelines, but to have the adequate manpower for this kind of project because it was the first time a Metro was being built in Central America,” said Arturo Graell, Director of Institutional Relations of Odebrecht in Panama.

The metro rail system is expected to ease the current traffic problems and thus prove to be a great benefit for the local citizens. The time taken to travel between the north to the south of the city has been roughly calculated as 23 minutes and the total number of passengers that can be transported through the subway is over 15,000.

AVIAREPS becomes official representative of Visit Tampa Bay

Visit Tampa Bay has hired AVIAREPS as the Representative in India. Under this role, AVIAREPS will be responsible for carrying out sales, marketing and public relations activities in India on behalf of Visit Tampa Bay.

AVIAREPS will now work effectively to strengthen the tie between Visit Tampa Bay and Indian travel trade. AVIAREPS is planning to further conduct a number of seminars for the travel traded and organise Familiarisation (FAM) trips to the region while functioning as their press office in India.

Santiago Corrada, President and CEO, Visit Tampa Bay, said, “India is an important market for Tampa Bay and we are very pleased to appoint AVIAREPS India to help further develop this dynamic and growing market.” He added that it was a fantastic opportunity for Tampa Bay to be showcased to the world as the host city of IHFA Awards 2014.
Reunion Island Tourism launches online training programme for India

Reunion Island Tourism has launched a first-ever online training programme to impart knowledge about the destination among India’s travel trade fraternity. The online training programme will run till June 2014.

Alefya Singh, Director, Iris Rps, the India Representative of Reunion Island Tourism, said, “Through this training programme, we aim to reach out to as many agents as possible in Tier-II as well as Tier-III cities. While we continue our efforts to impart classroom training, this programme not only gives facts and figures on Reunion Island but also reasons to visit the destination, to discover the charm and warmth of the island. As may be evident from the programme, the list of experiences and activities for families, honeymooners and groups are endless and this is your opportunity to get an insider’s knowledge on Reunion to promote it.”

Singh further added, “This training programme is designed for people engaged in running businesses or employed in travel agencies or tour operating companies. Divided into three modules, Module 1 focuses on general information on the destination, Module 2 highlights the attractions on land, air and water and Module 3 provides information on Air Mauritius, the preferred airline. It is necessary to achieve a minimum qualifying score of 65% in order to be able to access the next module.”

South Africa gets huge tourist inflow from SADC region

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) revealed that around one million tourists visited South Africa during December 2013, out of which maximum number of tourists came from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. This marked an increase of 7.6% from the 871,774 tourists recorded in the same period of previous year. Statistician-General Pali Lehohla explained that apart from the SADC travellers, there were around 28% overseas travellers and about two percent from other countries on the continent.

Zanzibar to sign MoUs to enter the Indian market

Zanzibar Government looks forward to showcase itself in the Indian market as an exotic island in the Indian Ocean with diverse and high-end quality products.

Recently an official delegation led by Dr Ali Mohamed Shien, President of Zanzibar and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, visited India, with an aim to improve bilateral relationship and investment opportunities in Zanzibar, including the tourism sector. While interacting with major Indian travel trade associations like TAAI, TAFI, OTOAI, ETAA, in Mumbai, the President said that India is an important market and the government wants to sign MoUs with travel trade associations to promote the destination in India.

“While Indian arrivals are around 6,000 a year, the figure can be increased manifold as India is a huge market with great potential. We need your inputs and learn from your experience and we can work together in a mutually beneficial partnership. India and Zanzibar share a great connect both historical and cultural and for Indian visitors it is like home away from home,” said Dr Shien.

Air Austral launches Vanilla Islands Pass for greater tourism movement

Air Austral has recently introduced a special Indian Ocean Pass - Vanilla Islands for more connectivity and a greater movement between the islands of the Indian Ocean to develop tourism in the Indian Ocean region.

OM Tourism appoints new Country Manager for Mauritius

Vivek Anand has been appointed by OM Tourism as the Country Manager of Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA). He will lead a team promoting destination Mauritius to Indian agents and consumers, along with performing marketing and PR activities for MTPA.

Anand has more than 30 years of experience in the marketing, advertising, publishing and printing sector. He has previously worked with companies such as Publicis, Ajanta and Express and managed brands such as Jack Daniels, Musim Mas, Finlandia, Monte Carlo, etc. For his extensive contributions, Anand also received the Cannes Bronze for a social activation project known as ‘In Gandhi’s Shoes’, and a Cannes National Diploma for ‘Let Gandhi Talk’ campaigns.

The “Vanilla Islands Pass” can be availed by the travelers who have the Air Austral long-haul airline ticket, i.e. from Paris to La Réunion, to enjoy the twin-centre holiday approaches at much reduced prices on a number of destinations. Further, the “Vanilla Islands Pass” enables visitors to now fly from La Réunion to Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar (Tananarive, Tamatave&Nosy-Bé), Comoros, and also Mayotte. It also offers eight islands of the Indian Ocean for a €90 return ticket from La Réunion Island if the visitor already has an Air Austral Paris – La Réunion airline ticket.

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“With these new offers, Air Austral is contributing to the development of the Indian Ocean region, and it is showing the spirit of collaboration is beneficial for everyone. This has been the guiding vision and the objectives of the Vanilla Islands,” said Pascal Viroleau, the CEO of the Vanilla islands.
Barbados focuses on preserving its beautiful beaches

Barbados is taking important steps to protect its coastline as the threat of losing miles of beautiful and pristine white beaches is emerging. Tourism accounts for 15% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Barbados and beaches definitely play a significant role in this contribution. “We need to be able to preserve our coral reefs. We need to preserve the marine life of our country, which is part of what tourists come to the Caribbean for,” Ronald Sanders, a former regional diplomat explained.

Barbados is also planning to set up a fully functional Regional Climate Center (RCC), for which the nation is also getting major help of more than $6 million over the next three years. However Barbados is not the only Caribbean country which is facing the need of economic survival. Sustainable Programme Manager at the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, Gail Henry said that most of the Caribbean region has been seeing impacts of climate change for quite some time now.

Saint Lucia Tourist Board focuses on health and safety training

Saint Lucia Tourist Board joined forces with the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) to conduct health and safety training workshop seminars.

ABTA’s Destination Services Manager, Angie Hills said, “Hosting seminars such as these promotes good practice in health and safety management and refreshes and reinforces the commitment of destinations and suppliers – ensuring that holidaymakers can enjoy great holidays in Saint Lucia.”

The key topics around which these workshops were held included accommodation, health safety management and security, food and water safety management practices, safe guarding children and incident management.

Jean-Marc Flambert, Director of Marketing explained, “We wanted to demonstrate our commitment to the tourism industry and ensure that we support a range of our partners in Saint Lucia to develop and evolve their services in line with visitor’s expectations.”

Caribbean destinations take significant steps towards sustainability

Leading organisations are joining their forces to help and support the Caribbean and Latin America’s tourism sectors in protecting their natural and cultural assets from the adverse effects of climate change and unsustainable development. Along with that these organisations are also helping in developing communities and securing a vibrant regional economy.

Recently the Sustainable Destinations Alliance for the Americas (SDAA) was launched in Barbados, which is till date the largest effort by various public and private entities to focus on destination sustainability in the Americas. Seven destinations have been selected in the Caribbean and Latin America which will get major support from the SDAA. These destinations will evaluate their destination management practices to recognise areas of strength, and areas which have the potential for more improvement. Destinations can also get access to an online sustainable tourism course called Sustainable Tourism Professionals, to learn more about how to implement sustainability practices, and how to avail the destination sustainability monitoring framework called SMART.

The result from this effort is expected to leverage market advantage, and to foster greater understanding among destination decision-makers.

Saint Eustatius tourism develops a new symbolic logo

The Saint Eustatius Tourism Development Foundation has introduced a new logo that portrays the national spirit though use of all its symbols including the sun, the historical lamp post, and the diver in the sea, the Quill and the Morning Glory flower with a blue bead inside. Earlier these blue beads were used by slaves as a medium of exchange for buying goods. These are still popular and used as jewellery in the modern times.

The diver in the sea meanwhile depicts the location’s strength as a world-class diving spot and the Morning Glory flower was re-discovered in the island in 1994.

The Quill meanwhile refers to the tropical rainforest around the volcano at the southern part of the island.
WTM Latin America 2014 gets bigger with new features

The second edition of the World Travel Market Latin America which took place in April 2014 at the Transamerica Expo Center, in São Paulo, was bigger and better than the inaugural event, which saw more than 1,000 exhibitors from 60 countries taking part.

The introduction of a dedicated WTM Latin America Buyers’ Club facilitated networking, providing international and Latin American travel buyers with the opportunity to meet, greet and discuss business, leading to contracts being signed whilst expanding connections. The number of travel agents attending WTM Latin America had almost quadrupled for the 2014 event which can in part be accredited to the enhanced comprehensive events programme that covered a range of topics central to the growth of the Latin American industry.

WTM Latin America also included the 41st Braztoa Business Meeting, with an enlarged Business Meeting region, which was situated in the centre of the exhibition floor.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) discussed the economic challenges faced by the aviation industry in Latin America. And among other things, there was Sports Tourism session looking at the success of the London 2012 Olympics and looking forward to the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games (2016).

The Greek National Tourism Organisation was the Country Partner of WTM Latin America as part of its aim to increase overseas tourists to 18 million this year. Secretary General of the Greek National Tourism Organisation, Panos Livadas, said, “Greece as a tourist destination is growing in popularity in Brazil and Latin America. With this in mind, WTM Latin America was the perfect event to help us firstly cement and then further grow the interest in Greece from South America.”

Inaugural WTM Africa attracts participants from world over

The inaugural World Travel Market (WTM) Africa, taking place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) in May 2014 is bringing the world to Africa and promoting Africa to the world’s leading source markets. WTM Africa is attracting exhibitors from all corners of the globe including Africa, America, Asia, Middle East, Europe and the Mediterranean with product categories ranging from the accommodation sector, airline industry, destination management companies and many more.

World Travel Market Africa’s wider issues include responsible tourism during its WTM Africa Responsible Tourism Programme forming a key component of the education sessions taking place over the two days of the show.

As with the other four WTM Vision Conferences around the globe, it will feature up-to-the-minute market intelligence from Euromonitor International, a leading research specialist with an extensive network of strategic analysts in 80 countries.

The second session at WTM Vision Conference – Cape Town will be from Digital Tourism Think Tank, an initiative which aims to provide thought leadership to the tourism industry in digital marketing best practice.

Stage set for Arabian Travel Market 2014

The latest statistics from Arabian Travel Market (ATM) organiser, Reed Travel Exhibitions, indicate that demand from new exhibitors at ATM, which takes place at the Dubai International Convention & Exhibition Centre from May 5 to 8, 2014 has merited the addition of an extra hall (Hall 3) bringing total event floor space to 23,500 square metres - an increase of almost seven percent on 2013.

In addition more than 100 new exhibitors will make their ATM debut including Kenzi Hospitality, IMG Worlds of Adventure, Al Raiai Tours & Holidays LLC, Al-Futtaim Travel LLC, Kuwait Airways and Akhsar Gulf Travels of India, adding their voice to over 2,500 confirmed exhibitors ready to welcome an expected 21,000 trade visitors.

“An increasing number of homegrown hotel brands along with our spotlight on luxury tourism have contributed significantly to the five percent growth we have experienced in the hotel sector at ATM. Add to that our 120 targeted Hosted Buyers, who represent the luxury sector, cruise, medical and leisure markets, and we have the makings of an incredibly diverse event this year,” said Mark Walsh, Portfolio Director, Reed Travel Exhibitions.

The newly launched ‘Spotlight on Luxury’, which holds particular relevance for the region, will feature luxury-focused seminar sessions and invited hosted buyers directly responsible for this valuable market segment. High-end hotel and destination exhibitors will also showcase their luxury positioning with well-known hospitality brands, such as Anantara, Mandarin Oriental, Raffles, Oberoi, Bulgari and The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company taking part, along with luxury destinations such as Monaco, Mauritius, Maldives and the Seychelles. The Oberoi, Dubai, is the official luxury hotel for luxury buyers at ATM 2014.

Another new feature for 2014 is the centrally located ATM Live Wall, where participants will be able to view live streaming of industry interviews, seminar excerpts and other show highlights. This will be complemented by the introduction of an Exhibitor Showcase Theatre in the heart of the action on the show floor, and the location where exhibitors will be able to present their products and services at a 30-minute session.

The ATM 2014 calendar also encompasses more than 30 wide-ranging seminar and tech theatre sessions covering aviation, cruise tourism, mobile trends and the rising demand for wellness tourism. Some of the region’s most influential business leaders including Adel Ali, CEO of Air Arabia; Simon Lynch, Director of Business Development, Abercrombie & Kent; and Mohammed Al Dha- heri, Strategy & Policy Director, Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority will be speaking supported by an international line-up of respected industry experts.

Sabre, the technology solutions provider to the global travel and tourism industry, has been named as sponsor of the popular Travel Technology Theatre where 16 dedicated sessions will address key industry topics from hints and tips for building a brand online to how to find and work with travel bloggers.

Another new addition this year is the pecha kucha session. Pecha kucha is a simple presentation format where one shows 20 images, each for 20 seconds. The images advance automatically and the presenter talks along to the images. Aimed at travel agents this brand new session will see four companies showcase their destination or company through a pecha kucha presentation.

EVENTS
Uttarakhand promises a safe Chardham & Hemkund Yatra at Mumbai roadshow

At the Uttarakhand roadshow held in Four Seasons Hotel in Mumbai, Umakant Panwar, Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of Uttarakhand revealed the dates of the Chardham Yatra and other tourism initiatives for safety of tourists.

In a bid to attract traffic during the lean season, the Tourism Board is planning a Winter Chardham and a Winter Carnival for devotees who want to visit the deities when they brought down to lower lands during the cold season. The pilgrims can also enjoy winter sports activities, exciting views of Snow Clad peaks, and local cultural programmes such as fairs, festivals, Kaurav Puja, and dancing among others which would certainly help in introducing the local culture more closely.

To facilitate pilgrims and tourists, a special control room has been set up at the tourism headquarters in Dehradun. Telephone number of the tourist helpline is: 1864.

As part of the safety and keeping track all pilgrims visiting Chardham Yatra, the state government is making biometrics registration mandatory. Additionally, the services of private helicopter operators will be engaged to take passengers to Kedarnath.

Panwar said, “The state government’s main emphasis is to create parking, ghat and other infrastructure to facilitate tourists at various tourist places. New ropeway projects are coming up with Public Private Partnership (PPP) at Rambara-Kedarnath, Rishikesh-Neelkanth, Dehradun-Musoorie, and Surkanaddevi among others. The works of Jankichatti-Yamunotri and Thulagad-Purnagiri ropeways have already been awarded.”

Oberoi Group launches special offers for this summer in New Delhi

The Oberoi Group launched its ‘Special Offers’ for this summer in India at an event at The Oberoi, New Delhi. The ceremony started with unveiling of the special offers brochure by six experts from travel, trade and tourism industries. A special behind the scenes tour evenin session was conducted by Hemant Singhi from travel, trade and tourism industries.

The Oberoi Group launched its ‘Special Offers brochure by six experts from travel, trade and tourism industries. A special behind the scenes tour evening activities and weekend excursions. It not only combines the unique experiences such as Muay Thai, culture and winemaking here is full of contrasts between tradition and innovation, between energy and excitement, between flavour and refinement. We welcome you to taste this global superstar – The Argentine Malbec that will always delight you every time,” said Medha Sampat - India Representative for Argentine Tourism.

Thailand Travel Mart 2014 to focus on facilitating full recovery

Facilitating a complete recovery from the recent political unrest will be the primary focus of Thailand’s annual travel mart to be held between June 4 to 6, 2014, at the Exhibition Centre Hall, IMPACT Muang Thong Thani.

Preparations are under way for the largest B2B event, Thailand Travel Mart Plus Amazing Gateway to the Greater Mekong Subregion (TTM+). First organised in 2006, the TTM+ is designed primarily to help small and medium sized travel companies, producers and services in Thailand and the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) countries.

TTM Governor Thawatchai Arunyik said, “There is no doubt that small and medium sized companies were affected by the recent political crises, and it is important to help them protect jobs and revenue. We are now forging full-speed ahead with recovery plans. The TTM+ will be an ideal opportunity to bring business back for the rest of the year and help us meet our targets.”

“Designed to promote Thailand as a regional tourist hub, TTM+ 2014 expects to attract about 400 sellers and 400 buyers. This year, four major products will be highlighted in a special pavilion, namely, ecotourism, health and wellness, wedding and honeymoon, and ‘Experience Thai ness’.

At the TTM+ event, Thailand Director Sethaphan Buddhani explained, “Indian travel agents will also derive great value from the products in the special pavilion as the Indian market matures and demands novel experiences – Our new tagline ‘It Begins With The People’ is all about immersive experiences that focus on Thai ness. Tourism experiences such as Muay Thai, culture and festivals that are reflective of Thai ness can be explored by travel agents at the special pavilion.”

Argentina celebrates Malbec World Day in Mumbai

The Consulate of Argentina in Mumbai celebrated the majestic ‘Malbec World Day’, to commemorate the day when President Domingo Faustino Sarmiento of Argentina officially made it his mission to transform Argentine’s wine industry. Argentina is one of the wine capitals of the world and the birthplace of Malbec. The international celebration, enjoyed in over 50 countries is dedicated entirely to this flagship grape. “Unlike other wine-producing countries, Argentina offers a non-linear wine route which makes the wine tourism different and interesting. It not only combines the unique landscapes and diversity but also offers a fantastic list of vivid activities bundled with an interactive experience that adds to the fun of visiting an Argentine vineyard. Winemaking here is full of contrasts between tradition and innovation, between energy and excitement, between flavour and refinement. We welcome you to taste this global superstar – The Argentine Malbec that will always delight you every time,” said Medha Sampat - India Representative for Argentine Tourism.

PATA Travel Mart 2014 promises dynamic platform to trade travel

The PATA Travel Mart 2014 will be held at Diamond Island Convention and Exhibition Centre in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from September 17 to 19. Organised by the Pacific Asia Travel Association, the PATA Travel Mart (PTM) delivers great B2B value to buyers and sellers from different countries and regions.

With a dynamic programme and remarkable platform to showcase travel products and services from around the Asia Pacific region, the PATA Travel Mart brings together hundreds of international buyers and sellers in one dynamic face to face marketplace.

One of the highlights is the Micro-Enterprise Pavilion, first launched in PTM 2013, which serves companies or family business with five to 10 employees operating on U.S.$25,000 or less in start-up capital. Sellers can register for this special price package which makes it more economical to exhibit at PTM.

Cox & Kings unveils summer education travel programme

Cox & Kings has joined hands with LFC E.L.I.T.E.S to promote and sell combined educational and football programmes across India.

LFC E.L.I.T.E.S School of English & Football is a residential programme specially developed to provide the interested students a chance to learn to play the ‘Liverpool Way’ whilst also improving their English language skills and football.

Children and young people between 11 to 17 years old are eligible to attend the camp in England for anything from one week to 8 weeks. Each full programme is for two weeks and costs approximately £1750 (approx ₹1.20 lakh) per week. The programme is scheduled to take place in June and July.

The fees will include English language tuition, professional coaching from Liverpool Football Club coaches, on-site accommodation, all meals each day, LFC certification and graduation, evening activities and weekend excursions. A special behind the scenes tour to LFC’s home ground Anfield, as well as complimentary LFC E.L.I.T.E.S football kit will be given to the participants.

Ravi Menon, Vice President, Cox & Kings Ltd said, “It is heartening to see that more and more youngsters want to play the game beyond just a hobby. With this partnership, we aim to give these young Indian footballers an opportunity to hone their talent and train with those who inspire them.”

LFC E.L.I.T.E.S is a global education and training partnership between Liverpool Football Club and London School of Business & Finance (LSBF).
OTM is India’s leading travel trade show, in the biggest travel market in India – Mumbai

With attractive add-on option for Delhi, the second largest travel market of India, OTM provides you the most effective reach to a continent size market like India.

Mumbai (33%) is the largest source market of Outbound and Domestic tourists, followed by Delhi (26%). All the major International travel companies operating out of India, like Kuoni, Thomas Cook and Cox & Kings are headquartered in Mumbai.

Participation Package

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* Service Tax & Educational Cess extra @ 12.36 %
* Payment is due at the time of booking.
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To book your vantage stand at OTM please write to us at otm@fairfest.com or visit www.otm.co.in

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Attractive add-on for DELHI NCR, 10-12 Feb’15