

MICE INSIDERS

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SMART MICE

How innovation is driving
the way forward

MACAO

BREAKING THE POPULAR MYTH

Spotlight

SMART MICE

How innovation is driving the way forward

A cornerstone of sustainable growth in business, innovation today plays a very dynamic role especially to pull in more MICE business. As value-for-money moves to the top of the desirability index and logical factors continue to dominate 'emotional' considerations, it is evident that innovation is ranked as more important than greenness. Some of the biggest MICE players further explain how being innovative is carving out a way to success

By Sayanti Halder





Chander Mansharamani
Vice Chairman, India Convention
Promotion Bureau (ICPB)

"Innovation plays a very important role in promoting MICE business in the tourism industry especially when it comes to the incentive business. It is no longer that one visits a particular monument or tourist spot, it is the holistic experience that one perceives which makes incentive travel innovative as compared to leisure travel. India has a vast range of incentive tourism destination to offer to the world which has existed for over years now. The soft trekking of Himalaya, playing Golf at the altitude of more than 4000 meters in Himalaya, which can act as an aspect of the innovation. Wellness program, yoga, playing Polo on

camel-back or staying at the old Maharaja Palaces, all can deliver the sense of innovation in a monotonous business travelling.

Speaking of meeting and exhibitions, innovation is not only the infrastructure but also the knowledge economy whether it is IT industry, the scientific area or the medical division, all of which makes MICE a great innovation. We only need to market these ideas thoroughly through publicity and participation in the international trade fairs, hosted abroad as well as within India."



Amaresh Tiwari
Hony. Secretary, India Convention
Promotion Bureau (ICPB)

MICE industry, in India and overseas, has evolved with time. MICE strategy generate added value with new and latest technology. Although there is a growing recognition among the industry stakeholders, MICE makes a broader contribution to the host destination as compared to tourism benefits. As a consequence of this, the industry recognises and derives maximum benefits with innovative ideas in the MICE industry. Nowadays, most of the MICE innovation focuses on the generation of revenue by attracting more foreign income. Drive of innovation in convention and exhibition sustainability for each city makes

it self-sufficient through MICE with a thorough focus in sustainability for the welfare of society, community and environment. A modern use of modern technology to drive efficiency and support MICE, creating an eco-system for this segment of tourism, is needed. The challenges behind moving beyond the current tourism are the traditional setup of the MICE industry. Delivering innovation in a completely transparent manner is yet to develop. Inclusive activities to generate benefits for all stakeholders may uplift the current scenario to a certain.



Manheer Singh Sethi
Founder, Travkart.com

In the recent years, the development of infrastructure, public transport and the proximity to the airport have been a great advantage for pushing the MICE business in India and internationally. Yet, innovation plays a pivotal role in MICE business. There was a time when MICE business was limited to a lot of HI (Human Intelligence) for a successful tour. Today, this has changed completely and with 'Phigital' (Physical & Digital) organisations like Travkart, which has recently launched its MICE app

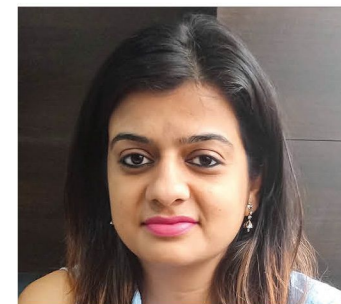
for the corporate travellers. Thus, innovation keeps you going with the flow and keeps your end-user updated. Innovation is a constant process and helps grow businesses and manage large MICE movements with ease. With notifications, large MICE groups can be updated about the next movement which helps to synchronise with the pre-planned itinerary for the group. What remains important is the fact that travellers would return back depending on their experience. Travelling has changed for betterment and a place such as Aerocity in Delhi is evolving with time. Also 'Cruise Tourism' is being promoted by the union government of India to attract more tourists and offer a wider range of activities. A large number of Indians are now looking for cruise experiences.



Anuj Wadhwa
Chief Operating Officer, Plan It! Meetings & Conferences

The new technologies that hit the market, over the past few years, enabled the organisers to track and manipulate a person moving through a tradeshow. It enables participants to network with others through social media channels and apps before, during and after an event. For organisers, the new technologies offer customised, seamless, integrated event management solutions that encompass registrations, abstract and paper management, content -

program and session management, exhibition management, on-site check-ins, access control, live polling, surveys, buyer-seller meets, hotel room inventory management, function tickets, seating, transportation, audio-visual equipment, customised post-event reports complete with intelligent analysis and complete financial management, to name a few. It is easier than ever before for organisers, partners and exhibitors to determine their Return on Investment. MICE needs to be taken up as an industry by itself and not just an off-shoot of tourism. Indian cities, except for Hyderabad, don't have a Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) and that is a major drawback. CVBs need to be set-up under PPP model in New Delhi, Jaipur, Agra, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Goa. A long-term policy to attract more MICE business needs to be formulated at the central level and implemented taking the states and the CVBs along.



Muskaan Gairola
Director, Vesna Tours

The MICE tourism has boomed in the last few years and there has been a drastic transformation in this segment when it comes to merging innovation in it. From easy online registrations to paperless conferences, with everything available on apps in the mobile phone, is the latest fashion. The Global Positioning System (GPS) enabled portable scanners are a new way to punch in the data of the people whom we meet, which can be downloaded later on to our mobile or laptops. We can

also track the people walking around us (thanks to technology!). There is an extensive range of tour operators handling MICE and the buyer, today, has an option to choose from multiple service providers. The key to crack businesses is not just to offer destinations but to offer experiences with a local touch to it. MICE overall is not just about meetings or conventions, it is about being able to cater to large international conventions as well. We still need to come up with more convention facilities such as larger venues, better infrastructure, greater inventory of sleeping rooms, large convention centres with state-of-the-art facilities and a high-speed working Wi-Fi, easily accessible anywhere and at any point of time.



Manpreet Bindra
Head, MICE, FCM Travel Solutions - Indian
Subsidiary of Flight Centre Travel Group, Australia.

Innovations are often a result of an attempt to fulfil a need gap or to address a problem. Over the last few years, we have observed that the meeting sizes are getting bigger in India. The need for a bigger space, well-equipped with audio-visual technology to hold meetings and conferences has led to many innovations. Some of these globally used innovations are the feasibility to use a cell phone as a microphone, using a watch as a room key, outdoor Wi-Fi, ability to network with others through social media channels and apps before, during and after an event and high quality live streaming with multiple audiences, across the globe. Corporates are looking to get more out of MICE; innovation in product and services give a competitive



Shikha Chaudhary
General Manager-MICE & Groups, TravelBullz

It has been found that business travelling improves corporate productivity, besides injecting dynamism into different, indirectly linked sectors such as tourism, retail and cultural destinations among others. Earlier, we used to see the MICE groups having one half-day or a full day conference or simply one gala night. The dynamics have changed and customers (corporates) are seeking newer venues such as beaches, yachts or cruise ships, to conduct their meetings. We, at

TravelBullz, have noticed people seeking for 'out of the box' ideas such as little known destinations and exciting adventurous ways to bond the employees to their companies, which takes into account different learning styles and creating a stimulating atmosphere through the use of bright colours and flexible furniture to help boost creativity, encourage active participation and enhance interaction among the delegates. The introduction of different cuisines also plays its part in a pleasant experience of a destination. The local tourism boards could come with some joint ventures and subsidies for more and enhanced flight connectivity with an aim to boost India's MICE business. It is important to realise that the MICE industry also helps promote trade, exchange, investment and business, matching while serving as an effective platform for knowledge and technology exchange.

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First EDWIN conquers Ladakh

The first Educational Destination Workshop-International (EDWIN) by Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) concluded recently in Ladakh. **Harmandeep Singh Anand**, Managing Director, GPS, shares how the first instalment of the workshop went and what are the key takeaways from it.

PRITI KHANNA FROM LADAKH

How and when was EDWIN conceived?

EDWIN BY GPS was conceived as early as 2009 when it was still a part of Jagsons Travels. At that time, we started taking travel agents associated with us on educational trips so as to give them a first-hand experience of the destination. These were small groups of about 10-12 agents. It was then we realised that pan India there are many such travel professionals who need hand-holding and destination education, enabling them to be a better professional seller of a destination to their clients.

How different is EDWIN from other Fam trips?

In addition to familiarising the agents with the destination, it also gives an opportunity to the local trade to get exposed to the agents from the Tier II and III cities PAN India, where the products and services from a particular region

may not have access to even though they may visit India for their product promotions. EDWIN includes a day of B2B interaction in addition to various hotel inspections, product orientation and experience by the participating attendees, who are referred as EDWIN'S.

What was the response to the first EDWIN held in Ladakh?

Within 24 hours of opening the registration for EDWIN - Ladakh, we received close to 200 registrations. It had an overwhelming response of 800 per cent as we had limited space for about 50 attendees only for the first edition of EDWIN to Ladakh.

Any reason to have EDWIN chosen Ladakh for the first EDWIN?

Yes. Being in India, we felt that it would be ideal to start off EDWIN from our home country itself. This is probably one of the most secluded and less explored destinations, but one of the most desirable ones in the world. Our partners in Ladakh—Tundup Dorjee from Over-



Harmandeep Singh Anand
India Travel Award winner and Managing Director, GPS

land Escape and Kamlesh Lalani from Ravine Trek, were very keen to get such a large attendance from various parts of India into Ladakh.

land Escape and Kamlesh Lalani from Ravine Trek, were very keen to get such a large attendance from various parts of India into Ladakh.

Both GPS and EDWIN target tour operators and DMCS in Tier II and Tier III cities. Do you find this sector more responsive and committed?

The purpose of GPS is to educate and empower the travel fraternity particularly from the Tier II and III cities and EDWIN in due course will create a level playing field for these professionals. Though the target is agents from Tier II and III cities, but we also take on board serious professionals from the metro cities exceptionally. The main intent is to qualify agents who have attended our GPS events.

What are your future plans and vision regarding EDWIN?

We plan to have at least six EDWIN destinations in a year, and are working closely with various entities, destinations and agents alike. The intent of EDWIN is to bring the travel fraternity of professionals closer and remove the territorial boundaries.

What are the key takeaways from the first EDWIN?

EDWIN participants have gathered a lot of knowledge about destination Ladakh and some existing myths have been cleared by being there in person. All attendees of EDWIN-Ladakh are now better equipped to sell the destination to their clientele, thereby not only selling a package to the client but rather a complete experience with a whole lot of information on do's and don'ts, as well as the precautions as Ladakh is not like any of our other destinations and needs special guidance and planning.

How do you think EDWIN will benefit tourism to Ladakh or any future destination you choose?

All EDWIN'S have pledged to promote Ladakh as a sustainable and responsible tourism destination, thereby retaining the serenity of the region. We also informed and educated agents on promoting Ladakh as a winter destination.

in addition to the current summer months, which lasts for only about five months in a year.

What were the major highlights of EDWIN-Ladakh?

We had CA Manish Gadia (GMJ & Co.) with us on this trip who interacted with the attendees on GST matters. We also did a session with the travel industry leaders, with regards to GST and its implications to the region of Ladakh as prior to July 8, 2017, there were no taxes applicable to the region. We were very well received by the people at large in Ladakh, as also the industry leaders of various organisations were present to interact with our attendees. We plan to do a larger EDWIN in Ladakh in April 2018 in association with the complete travel trade of the region. In the current edition, we had participants from about 18 states and 35 cities across India who qualified as Educational Destination Workshop International Specialist (LADAKH).

EDWIN: A true learning

Hari Kishan Valmiki, Founder and Managing Partner, Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions, talks about the experience at the first-ever EDWIN which was held in Ladakh.

TT BUREAU

Why did you choose to participate in the first EDWIN to Leh Ladakh?

When every other organisation is giving familiarisation through webinars, online tests and road shows, it's only EDWIN who came forward with the focus on first-hand experience by charging nominally and giving exposure to the destination of Leh Ladakh. The beauty of inviting local eminent personalities and getting them to speak about their own destination is another attraction, which I think was helpful.

Were the objectives met?

Definitely - as my objective is to get a feel of the product and experience the extreme cold weather with low oxygen levels. I had been told about acclimatisation, but have now come to understand it by undergoing one full day of doing nothing but acclimatising.



Hari Kishan Valmiki
Founder and Managing Partner
Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions

My objective is to get a feel of the product and experience the extreme cold weather conditions with low oxygen levels

Will this help you market Leh Ladakh better to your end customers?

Of course, at the end of the day, for the confidence to

sell such unique and niche products, you need personal experience. This cannot be read and understood over Lonely Planet or watching a travel channel on television. Since we have witnessed what is the peak when we travelled above sea level - 18,500 ft - by touching the Khardung-la, we have also understood what kind of challenges our clients can face. This will help us in guiding them in a better way.

Would you like to highlight any particular thing about this programme?

Yes - This particular product cannot be sold to each and every client. I will ensure that I educate and empower my fellow travellers to be responsible and help protect the destination under Responsible Tourism, followed by Sustainable Tourism as Ladakh does not need quantity but quality passengers.

NATIONAL TOURISM AWARD 2015-2016

Shri K J Alphons, Tourism Minister presenting the National Tourism Award 2015-2016 to Vesna Tours Pvt. Ltd.



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On this joyous occasion we extend our gratitude to our Partners, Associates and our dedicated members of staff who have made it possible

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