



**Jaal Shah**  
Group Managing Director,  
Travel Designer Group  
Founder, RezLive

## Indian travel industry large enough for all

One of the latest keywords in travel technology is 'global reservation system' and Indian travel industry is eagerly watching how the online travel solution providers are touching new heights. The conventional travel agents and tour operators are constantly feeling threatened by this digital boom.

**June Mukherjee**

### **There is a lot of hue and cry among travel agents and tour operators about the OTAs (Online Travel Agencies). Could you explain the scenario?**

Indian travel agents and tour operators have been panicking about the OTAs, but I don't think it's that affected, as we see new travel agencies are opening, and not a lot of them are closing. We are seeing the travel volume from India is increasing. So, I don't see it as an immediate threat, but yes the global reservation systems have changed the travel behaviour of people. What I found a major change is that people are not booking their tickets and hotels together. The technology and connectivity help them to distribute the budget with precise options which conventional travel agents could not do right over an email or on a phone.

### **Do you think social media actually influences travellers when they are making a booking choice?**

It depends on what segment of travel we are talking. If you are a conventional travel agency and you work with your relations and friends, the family circle, community business, I think social media will help you to do a post-sale and pre-sale engagement. But if you talk about the audience at large, they definitely look for information and if they see better content then it does influence their buying behaviour.

### **What's the latest trend going around**

### **as far as integration with the retail sellers and the travel agents and tour operators is concerned?**

We are completing 10 years in 2017. As far as distributing online is concerned, we have come a long way from what we used to do in 2007. People were apprehensive about booking online then, and now they prefer to book online. It was difficult not only for us but for others as well to reach out to Tier II and Tier III cities. India has overcome all of that. For example, someone from Kolhapur will now book Maldives online, there were bookings for Maldives from Kolhapur earlier as well, but it used to be booked through someone based in Mumbai.

### **What are the changes that you see have gone a bit negative also at the same time?**

I think one of the big negative sides is that people change their decisions frequently as they have more options right now - so cancellations have increased. Earlier, if you wanted to book Mauritius and Dubai, you would have to go to two different travel agents, but today you can do it on some of the systems with multiple clicks and as you know that one of them is going to materialise and you can easily cancel the other.

### **As a B2B integrator, you have access to an immense amount of personal data focused on the travel behaviour of clients. Do you conduct any kind**

### **of market study or research to understand the tourism trends?**

Because the general tourism data does not affect the business directly, we try to follow is our own organic data. But we still depend on the trade shows, associations, meetings and conferences because these platforms give us the trend which is very difficult to find from any historical data. We keep reading and analysing the available information on the cloud. The tourism boards share a lot of insights which are very helpful for us to understand which way the trend is going.

### **Where does RezLive go now, after completing 10 years of a successful journey in B2B online travel solutions?**

What we have been very excited about since the last couple of years is that we want to upscale a lot of our products. We have invested in more activities and we have invested more on offering transfers. We're trying to bundle them to do a semi-dynamic packaging so that we can cater to the offline-online kind of business which consumers want. Our travel agents want to book the packages on a click, so we are trying to heavily develop ourselves. Apparently, the changes may not be seen on the screen because the look stays the same, but a lot of backend process is going to change. We are also working on revenue optimisation for an overall benefit to everyone. ■