
Features : We see an immense potential in the online travel market in India

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US-BASED ONLINE FARE AGGREGATOR AND METASEARCH APP, KAYAK, WANTS TO MAKE IT BIG IN INDIA DESPITE STIFF COMPETITION FROM THE INDIGENOUS PLAYERS IN THE MARKET. THE TRAVEL PORTAL HAS TASTED SUCCESS IN US MARKET AND AIMS TO REPLICATE THE SAME HERE IN INDIA.

Why KAYAK, when we have other options as well?

ABHIJIT MISHRA, COUNTRY DIRECTOR, KAYAK INDIA, SPOKE WITH **HAIDER ALI KHAN** ON THE VARIOUS FEATURES OF THE APP AND THEIR PLANS FOR INDIAN MARKET. What's different about KAYAK is that we do all the hard work for you, by searching and comparing hundreds of travel sites so our users don't have to. And we do this across flights, hotels, cars and packages - And our App is very helpful, it's like having your own personal travel assistant to plan and manage your whole trip. Everything is in one place; we help you organize it all in one App. Our strategy is to deliver comprehensive, accurate and fast results to our users.

Where does technology become a catalyst for you and a traveler?

We believe we have the strongest technology team in the travel industry that could bring value to travelers. As a global tech company, innovation is a priority, that's why we have a dedicated team that focuses on site technology and innovation. Our travel tools like Trips, Explore, Price Forecast etc. were designed to make travel planning and managing trips easier and our users love them.

For example, Trips organizes and manages your travel itineraries and notifies you when "your flight departs in 3 hours". Also, Price Forecast recommends whether to "book now" or "wait", so you can book with confidence, once travelers start using these tools, they are hooked, and cannot travel without us anymore! For me, KAYAK has always been my personal favorite travel tool because its

makes travelling much easier. When travelling becomes easy, naturally you will find yourself always on the go.

Have you been able to taste the success in India as you did in US and European Countries?

We see an immense potential in the online travel market in India, with increasing internet penetration and smartphone adoption, India stands at the cusp of an internet revolution. While the online travel space has witnessed a boom, over the years, today, there are hundreds of players in the same space vying for consumer's attention. However, more than being a challenge, we see this as an opportunity for the industry and for consumers.

Having pioneered the category globally, the onus of simplifying travel for Indian customers is a priority for us at KAYAK. Our tools and technology will help Indian travelers search, plan and manage their trips more easily. What sets KAYAK apart from other travel search engines and online travel agencies is the comprehensiveness of our search results and the travel tools we provide.

Did this boom in smartphone users across the world help your cause to get the maximum traction and hence revenues?

Increasing smartphone penetration has enabled almost every mobile application, including KAYAK, to do more. Mobile is a key strategic priority for KAYAK; we want our users to not only use us for travel planning but to allow us to assist throughout their trip. Our KAYAK mobile app has more than 60+ million downloads, and one-third of our traffic is mobile and that number continues to grow.

What are the trends in India while choosing a flight, hotel or destination? Do people still opt for more discounts offering platforms?

Our latest KAYAK "Travel Addicts" survey tells us that 62% of Indians check flight prices every day before booking, and 47% of Indians open multiple browsers to compare prices - meaning that Indian travelers are really keen in finding and securing cheap travel deals.

This also tells us that KAYAK is highly relevant for Indian travelers because we search hundreds of travel sites at once and we offer comprehensive search results, so users don't have to spend time in doing the hard work anymore.

What would be your business plan for India?

India is a rapidly growing travel market and has continued to show impressive growth over the past several years. We see an immense potential in the online travel market.

We will continue to educate consumers about our brand and the suite of travel tools that we offer. We hope that with KAYAK, travelers can spend more time looking forward to their travel plans and leaving the stress from travel planning behind. We are not focusing only on mobile, but an all-rounded seamless experience across platforms, throughout their journey.

As we penetrate further into the Indian market, we want our app and website to be a one stop travel solution for all Indian travelers.

Do you also need a face to promote KAYAK in India like many do?

For us, the quality of our proposition is what we believe will attract users. At this stage, we are looking to familiarize consumers with using travel meta search engines, because for years, Indian consumers have been booking their trips through travel agents or OTAs. We will continue to educate consumers about KAYAK and the many travel tools that we offer.

How beneficial has the facility of e-Visa been for a traveler and an online portal like KAYAK?

e-Visas have immensely eased travel for people across the globe, because it enables last-minute travels. E-Visas will not only benefit travelers, but also give an opportunity to travel portals to tap into the frequent flyers looking to fly last-minute.

Someday, you might leave for a trip with just your mobile device - because your boarding pass, passport, key to your hotel room and wallet - could all be accessible from your smartphone.

Tags : Abhijit Mishra, Kayak India