

'Business travel is not going to be as big as earlier'

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Corporate travellers who spent good money on the best airline seats and five-star accommodation may not come back in a hurry post the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, said Glenn Fogel, president and CEO at Booking Holdings and CEO at Booking.com, the world's largest travel e-commerce business. In an interview, he said India will need to promote itself to bring back international tourists who watched the country go through the severe covid wave earlier this year. Edited excerpts:

Is the Omicron variant affecting the travel industry?

When governments make

changes... there are restrictions, or require certain types of testing or quarantines in different countries, that certainly puts a damper on enthusiasm to travel and cause some people to cancel.

There are always some people who are going to travel no matter what, but the country says you can't come no matter what. So, that definitely is something that is going to impact travel.

Obviously, we are all extremely concerned reading the news about Omicron. We have had variants before and there will be new variants in the future, too. One thing that's very encouraging is that scientists are working faster and faster nowadays, discovering variants and coming up with ways to deal with them.

What about India as a travel



market?

India is going to be for a very long term a big, growing travel market. As the country and economy continue to grow, people get more money and want to travel more as well. We see this across the world.

It's not only the very large number of Indians who travel, but also India is a great place to travel to. But what we have to

do is when the pandemic goes down, we have to make sure that people know that India is a great place to travel to and get people to come there.

Unfortunately, India had a terrible time with the pan-

demic some months ago and that was seen by the world. People were so empathetic but also concerned about India. So, it may be a while for in bound

travel to come back.

Providing great value to travellers and showing the great places to go to in India will absolutely help get people to come. But it's going to take some time because memories

about how terrible the pandemic has been is going to inhibit all international travel for a little while.

When will business travel revive?

As the world's economies continue to grow, come back, eventually, someday there will be business travel again and it will be a larger amount of total travel than there was in 2019. But business

travel, I think, will be a smaller share of all travel going forward. So, business travel is not going to be as big a thing as it used to be.

(For an extended version of the interview, go to www.live-mint.com)



INTERVIEW

Glenn Fogel
CEO, Booking.com