

MakeMyTrip plans \$5 mn expansion

Plans to expand both US and India operations

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Travel portal MakeMyTrip.com is planning to expand its operations across the country, with heavy investments planned for strengthening its technology back-end.

Speaking to *Business Standard*, MakeMyTrip founder and CEO Deep Kalra said the company would invest around \$5 million (approximately Rs 20 crore) over the next twelve months, to expand both its US and Indian operations.

Launched in 2000, to cater to the 'USA to India' travel market, MakeMyTrip initially provided travel consultancy support in the US. It commenced its India operations in September 2005 to provide bookings of flights, hotels, holidays and car rentals.

MakeMyTrip crossed a turnover of \$125 mn (Rs 562 crore) during fiscal 2006-07, and is expecting a significant jump this fiscal. Its principal investors include Helion Ventures Pvt Ltd, Sierra Ventures, Tiger Global and SoftBank Asia Fund.

According to Kalra, the company will invest in strength-

ening its technology back-end across the country. They also plan to set up branch offices in Kolkata and Mumbai.

"Although ticketing forms a major part of our revenues, real stickiness around a brand develops from offering good holiday packages," Kalra said. "Booking holidays through a site is a huge leap of faith on the customers' part and we ensure that they are not disappointed," he said.

MakeMyTrip now intends to focus on 'group departures' for families or groups of 10 or more people who prefer to travel together rather than as individual units. "Several families wish to travel along with friends and relatives, and take their food along if they are vegetarians. Once we put together a certain number of people, we send an escort along with the group to cater to their travel needs," he said.

Apart from flight bookings, hotel reservations and packages, MakeMyTrip.com offers business-to-business (B2B) services as well. Travel agents can access its services through their extranet, IndiaAhoy.com. "We plan to reach out to more local agents within the coun-

try and power their websites with our technology," Kalra said. He added that a beta version of a password-protected B2B site is likely to be launched by November this year.

The company also enjoys corporate relationships with 20-odd companies globally, including IT majors Infosys and Satyam.