

# pop

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## Why the time is right for flypop

We talk to flypop's Founder and CEO Navdip 'Nino' Singh Judge about why now is the perfect time to launch a low cost, long haul airline for South Asia's second cities.

### Why is now a good time for flypop?

The main reason is that the South Asian market is opening up to the rest of the world through the second cities. Whereas back in 2003 when I first thought of this idea it was impossible to get slots because they went to incumbents, now there is much more of an open sky environment.

The other factor is that the partition of India 70 years ago meant that the diaspora that flypop is aiming to serve migrated. However, a lot of Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis have worked really hard and now moved back home to spend their twilight years there. So, they're now going back and forth quite regularly with children and grandchildren flying to see them and vice versa.

### Isn't there already a route serving these people?

Not specifically for them. It's fragmented, and they have to stop via many hubs. flypop is the only airline that has recognised that VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) traffic is actually the same for the whole of South Asia. This is why we think flypop is different and better than any other attempt at low cost long haul, because it's underpinned by VFR traffic all year round. On top of this we're aiming to add the tourists and business markets with special travel bundles.



Navdip  
Singh Judge  
(Nino)



## Are any other companies flying into Stansted from India?

Air India has just started flying into Stansted from Amritsar which has proven that that route is needed. There are also three flights from Birmingham to Amritsar but those are legacy flights from premium carriers.

## What you're saying is now we've got the proof the route is needed, you're going to offer that route at a cheaper price?

Exactly. Sometimes it's better to follow than lead, right, and Air India has now put London Stansted on the radar for all Punjabis in UK and India. We're going to do the low cost offering which is around 80% of the Domestic Indian market. I mean, everyone was a little bit shocked about Air India doing this, but I was over the moon because they're flying Monday, Thursday, Saturday and we want to fly the other days so we're not going head to head with them.

We're going to be flying to Amritsar first from Stansted but we also plan to fly to Ahmedabad, and other cities in India and South Asia, and ultimately to North America, Africa and the Caribbean.



## What about prices? Will flypop fares be affordable?

Our focus on second cities means not going head to head with any of the larger carriers in their expensive hubs. I think that's key to bringing out costs down, so we can pass that onto our customers. Our ticket pricing will be fair, transparent and innovative.

Even though we will use the pricing algorithms, flights will start at £350 (return inc. tax) with the most expensive costing less than £750. The steps up will be also be very transparent, so customers will know how many tickets are available at a certain price point. We're aiming to be between 30% cheaper than Air India and 50% cheaper than Virgin, which is the most expensive Premium airline in the region.

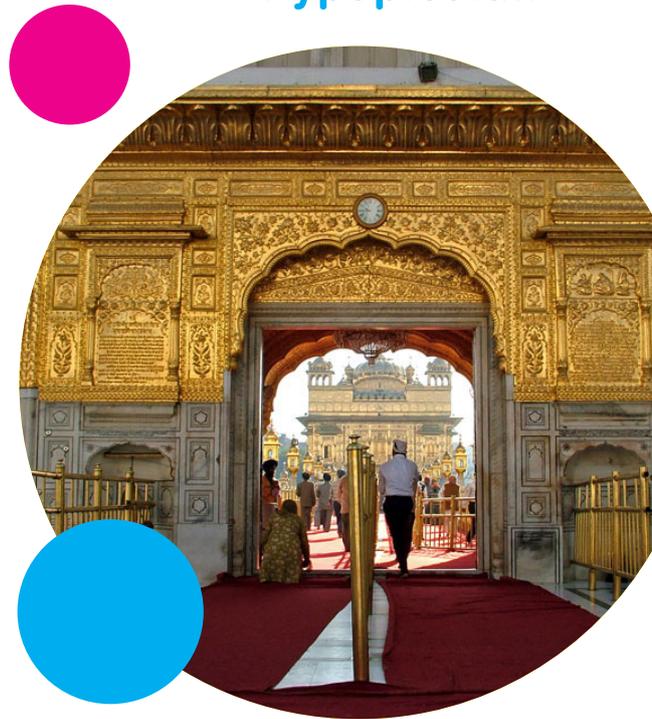
## How important are feed agreements with partners?

Feed agreements are crucial to our success. We already have a verbal agreement with a low-cost carrier based at Stansted and one with a low-cost carrier in India. We're going to start with mature aircraft, including Airbus 330-300s which are used by Air Asia X. We're using the mature aircraft so we can pass the lower costs on to customers.

We'll also have a completely unbundled, all economy product with around 21 seats in the front offering extra legroom. Because flypop never flies less than six hours we don't take on the other huge low-cost carriers in Europe like Ryanair, Easy Jet and Wizz. We fly more than six and less than ten hours every day, so the aircraft returns back to base at the end of every day for maintenance.

## What guarantees can you offer customers?

We're going to sell with an ATOL equivalent, called Scheduled Airline Failure Insurance (SAFI). This helps with our cashflow and gives our customers the confidence to book up to six to twelve months in advance because they know that their bookings are essentially guaranteed. Importantly we're not at the behest of credit card companies which take the bookings and keep the money.



## What about other benefits to customers?

We will offer great value authentic food. Instead of a sandwich and an orange juice, customers can actually have proper Indian food including Asian biryanis and samosas. We're also offering carbon offsetting with one tree per passenger. It might not be the full carbon offset, but it's a tangible, verifiable offsetting.

Last but definitely not least, despite being a low-cost carrier that takes its lead from Ryanair, we will have great hospitality: British-Asian hospitality. Because we are hosting them in the plane for eight hours, we can't afford to be rude to our customers.

## Just how big is the South Asian market?

It's huge, growing rapidly and our business model doesn't take into account anybody buying tickets from the east flying west, and there's 600 million middle class people in South Asia whose number one aspiration is to visit the west. That's bigger than the population of all of the EU or all of America.

Also, although we are focused on VFR market, the icing on the cake is the tourism business which is a huge opportunity. Currently, Thailand has 30 million tourists a year, Singapore 15 million, Malaysia 13 million, and India only has three million real tourists. It's bonkers. Although there are twelve million passengers coming into India, it's all currently VFR and this includes two million Bangladeshis flying into Delhi and making their way to Sylhet. One of our future destinations of course.

The numbers are there, the need is there. We're just joining up the flypop dots. ●

