

Nishanth Rai

15+ YRS EXPERIENCE

HEAD OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

☎ +971 50 669 4639 📞 +971 50 991 5084 ✉ nishanthrai@gmail.com

🌐 linkedin.com/in/nishanthrai 🌐 https://nishanthrai.com 📍 Dubai 🇨🇦 Canadian

UAE & CANADA

AED 2M+

NET PROFIT DELIVERED
EXPO 2020 PROGRAMME

AED 3M

ANNUAL BUDGET
ACROSS 2 BRANDS

AED 300K

AVERAGE ANNUAL
SPONSORSHIP REVENUE

2 BRANDS

OPERATING ACROSS
4 COUNTRIES

PROFILE

Marketing and brand leader with 15+ years of multi-industry experience across Canada and the UAE, currently heading marketing and communications for two well-established destinations brands, operating as the Middle East arm of a global travel conglomerate owned by Fairfax Financial Holdings Limited. Driving cohesive brand and marketing strategies with proven commercial impact, from securing multi-million dirham project bids and large-scale client proposals to building sponsorship revenue programs from the ground up. Now rebuilding the marketing function around AI-assisted production, reducing proposal turnaround from days down to hours, and shipping sophisticated revenue-facing web tools that are produced entirely in-house.

EXPERIENCE

Desert Adventures + Gulf Dunes LLC (A Subsidiary Of Fairfax Financial Holdings Ltd)

Two well-established Middle East B2B destination brands operating across the UAE, Oman, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Desert Adventures, operating since 1997, delivers inbound leisure, luxury and FIT programmes; Gulf Dunes, operating since 1995, delivers MICE, corporate events and incentive programmes. Both companies form the Middle East sector of a global travel conglomerate managed by Thomas Cook (India) Limited and owned by Fairfax Financial Holdings Limited (Canada).

DUAL CONCURRENT BRAND LEADERSHIP | DUBAI, UAE | SEP 2016 – PRESENT

● Head of Marketing & Communications | Oct 2022 – Present

Reports directly to group CEO. Leads a team of four across brand, digital, product marketing and commercial support. Owns an AED 3M annual budget covering marketing, partner-hosted programmes and commercial event travel.

- Rebuilt creative production around AI-assisted workflows, cutting RFP and pitch deck turnaround from days to hours and allowing a four-person team to scale output on an agency level
- Independently built and shipped web-based tools using AI-assisted development (Claude, Codex), including a product package builder with dynamic pricing, and interactive online product decks, capabilities the team had not produced in-house before.
- Built and sustains a partner sponsorship programme averaging AED 300,000 in annual revenue across three consecutive years, owning commercial negotiation, partner delivery and programme P&L.
- Directed a hired social media specialist to grow Desert Adventures & Gulf Dunes social media channels from approximately 4,500 to over 23,000 total followers in the span of three years, a 400%+ increase, while quadrupling annual impressions to over 350,000, prioritizing qualified B2B engagement.

- Led the full rebrand of Gulf Dunes end to end and entirely in-house, from brand audit through new identity system, messaging framework and creative rollout across digital, print and experiential touchpoints.
- Built the brand strategy, identity and go-to-market positioning for GD+, a new professional congress and events subdivision, from the ground up, and supported its growth into an active commercial line.
- Develops senior stakeholder pitch material for government and destination authority partnerships, and manages relationships with tourism authorities across Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Ras Al Khaimah, Oman, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.
- Acts as brand guardian across both brands, owning narrative frameworks, tone of voice and visual identity standards, and defining content architecture and product taxonomy for a custom B2C e-commerce platform in development covering 300+ SKUs.
- Manages content operations for a B2B transactional booking portal serving 5,000+ tour operators with approximately 1,000 daily logins, live since 2019.

● **Marketing & Product Manager | Jul 2021 – Oct 2022**

Promoted across both brands. Took full ownership of Gulf Dunes marketing output while leading the most significant commercial project of the period at Desert Adventures.

- Authored the winning bid that appointed Desert Adventures the sole official tour operator of Expo 2020 Dubai, then delivered the programme across the full six-month global event, generating AED 2M+ net profit with the existing in-house team and no incremental marketing budget.
- Led tour development, visitor storytelling, guide scripting, training frameworks, pavilion coordination and bespoke VIP and corporate experiences end to end, scaling delivery to 70,000+ guided tours at Expo 2020 Dubai.
- Designed and delivered three exclusive Expo 2020 private tour programmes for Cartier's highest-value global clientele, including celebrities and members of royal families, providing privileged pavilion access no other operator could offer; formally recognised by Cartier as an exceptional client appreciation programme.
- Built the luxury and VIP segment for Desert Adventures into a core revenue driver, developing premium positioning for high-value travel propositions.
- Expanded the marketing team and took on ownership of client event management, trade show participation and commercial travel budget across both brands.

● **Senior Marketing Specialist | Sep 2016 – Jul 2021**

Joined as lead marketing resource across both brands during a period of corporate ownership transition, managing distinct requirements for each from day one.

- Redesigned core sales collateral, destination presentations, product sheets, brochures, and client-facing materials across both brands.
- Supported international sales teams with tailored proposals, market-specific campaigns, trade show materials, and RFP submissions.
- Strengthened visual identity and brand consistency across offline, digital, and trade-facing channels for both brands.

Czar Media

Experiential marketing agency delivering IP-licensed brand activations for global entertainment, gaming and consumer clients.

TORONTO & MONTREAL, CANADA | OCT 2010 – JUN 2016

● Experiential Campaign Manager | Dec 2012 – Jun 2016 | Toronto, ON

- Planned and executed 11 high-value experiential brand activations with budgets of USD 70,000 to 120,000 within globally licensed IP frameworks for Ubisoft Canada, across the Assassin's Creed, Far Cry and Splinter Cell franchises.
- Retained as one of only three agency partners following Ubisoft's full agency roster refresh, a competitive review that replaced the majority of incumbents, selected on campaign performance, commercial efficiency and executional reliability.
- Translated game worlds, client objectives and campaign briefs into live activation concepts, pitch decks, creative treatments and on-ground execution plans, competing against far larger agencies on creativity and delivery rather than spend.
- Collaborated with agencies including Publicis, Edelman, BleuBlancRouge and North Strategic on large-scale campaign production, event delivery and media activations.
- Managed creative, logistical, technical, supplier and client coordination to deliver each campaign on strategy, budget and timeline; produced post-campaign KPI reporting that refined future targeting and activation design.

● Business Development Strategist | Oct 2010 – Nov 2012 | Montreal, QC

- Supported business development that brought 25+ new clients to the company's digital signage advertising network.
- Wrote and designed sales presentations, proposals, and marketing materials; produced animated ads and promotional video for experiential campaigns.

SKILLS & EXPERTISE

Strategy & leadership

Brand strategy • Brand governance • Creative direction • Commercial marketing • Product marketing • Team leadership & mentoring • RFP & proposal development • Budget management • Agency & supplier management

Campaigns & Content

Large-scale event delivery • Digital Marketing • Campaign Planning • Experiential Marketing • Copywriting, Digital Content • AI Marketing • Trade Show Management • Partnership & sponsorship programmes • Print & Web Design

Brand & Communications

Brand storytelling • Visual identity • Brand rebranding • Tone of voice • B2B communications • Partner & stakeholder communications • Sponsorship management • IP brand compliance

Markets & Languages

Canada, UAE, Oman, Jordan, Saudi Arabia
English (native), French (conversational), Arabic (basic)

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com.), Marketing | Concordia University, Montreal, Canada | 2010

[View My Work Portfolio](#)