

HOTELS & RESTAURANTS INDIA fhrai magazine

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A MONTHLY ON HOSPITALITY TRADE
By DDP Publications



**BRAND
SIGNINGS
in 2020**

**CLOUD
KITCHEN:
An alternative**

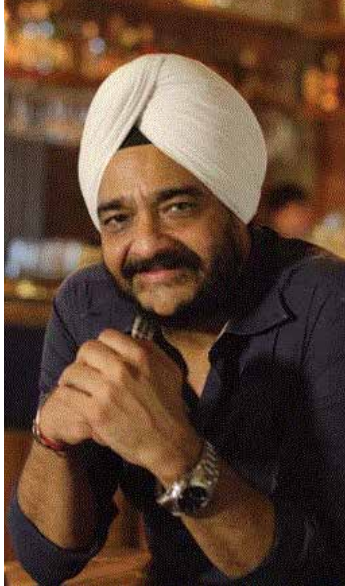
IN THE GRIP OF SECOND WAVE

Wondering where this is?



Crystal-clear Lake Tahoe is the jewel of Nevada and a water-sports paradise all through the year.

Lake Tahoe



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President
FHRAI

“Strict protocols of ‘Break The Chain’ have spelt the death knell for the industry causing huge loss of jobs and revenue”

Dear fellow members,

As we face the most unprecedented situation this industry has faced ever, the second wave of COVID infection, it brings in new measures and restrictions. We are facing an all-time high in active cases equating and/or far surpassing it to numbers six months ago. We are also unaware of the second wave totally, when will it peak? Has it already peaked? How high will the number of cases go?

While we battle this unprecedented infection, governments of various states have undertaken new measures. We have been in constant touch with the various ministries in the Central and state governments and reiterated our request to treat hospitality as frontline workers and essential services and therefore vaccinate these workers on priority. We have also requested the Central government to first ensure all its citizens are vaccinated and only then, consider exporting the vaccine. The strict protocols of the latest Break The Chain announcements have spelt the death knell for the industry causing huge loss of jobs, revenue and the spirit of enterprise. We had survived the first phase of an almost a year-long lockdown. Knee-jerk reactions have led to instructions to even stop food deliveries after 6 pm in certain states and after 8 pm in others.

FHRAI's regional arms have been in a constant dialogue with their respective state governments, to make them see reason and revert to the food delivery timings, that is back to original timings. Thankfully many states have complied and states like Maharashtra immediately reversed their decision of an 8 pm deadline on deliveries and no deliveries on weekends at all, to make food deliveries available round-the-clock, via aggregators or the restaurant/hotel's own delivery personnel.

In states like Maharashtra the FHRAI, HRAWI, NRAI, AHAR and other local bodies came together and launched a campaign on April 8

to protest against the knee-jerk and uncalled for COVID restrictions specifically targeting the hospitality Industry, called #MissionRoziRoti.

Having said that the second wave is uber infectious, we therefore need to play an ever important role in ensuring this does not spread. While we are all aware and follow strict protocols set for us by the MHA, Central government, FSSAI, state governments, municipalities and various local bodies, we wonder how we could even be considered as a spreader, leave alone a super spreader. Anyways, we need to get back to the mode we were in six months ago, not ruling out the possibility that people do become callous as the numbers go down. I would request all to ensure we do not get complacent regarding this pandemic, the last of which we may yet not have seen.

However, we need to be positive, do our bit as a mature and responsible industry which has been reduced by at least 30% due to the last pandemic and do our bit to ensure the pandemic ends, if we do not want the industry size to reduce by another, similar number. This industry will rise again and the Federation is doing everything to ensure that happens as fast as it can.

Take care, stay positive and be safe.

Note: The April 2021 edition of the FHRAI magazine will be available as a printed version on request. And, the e-version of the same shall be available on the FHRAI website and circulated to all members as broadcast on registered email.

With kind regards,
Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI

APRIL 2021

PROMOTING TOURISM

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Arvind Singh, Secretary, MOT talks about the initiatives being taken post-COVID, Atmanirbhar Bharat Package, and what is being done to promote domestic tourism.

COVER IMAGE:
ITC GRAND BHARAT, GURUGRAM



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FHRAI EC members opine that in the wake of the second wave of COVID the hospitality industry is again looking at a year of low occupancies and less than expected revenues.

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Hoteliers talk about their plans to revive business post the pandemic, new offers and incentives for guests, and the need for priority vaccination of hospitality workers and support from the government.



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‘Another complete lockdown’

HRAWI has stated that Maharashtra government’s recent ‘Break The Chain’ order is equivalent to another complete lockdown and the industry needs govt support.

The new restrictions imposed by the Maharashtra government have spelled definite doom for the hospitality industry in the state. After having suffered unprecedented damage after last year’s lockdown of over eight months, the hospitality industry is staring at another year of similar or even worse consequences. Over 20 per cent of the hospitality establishments haven’t opened fully even after the lockdown was lifted and 30 per cent of hotels and restaurants in the country have shut down permanently due to financial loss. The rest continued to operate in losses and revenues are below 50 per cent of the pre-COVID level.

The new ‘Break The Chain’ guidelines introduced by the state government will force almost 90 per cent of restaurants to shut down completely. According to the Break The Chain order, restaurants are to be totally shut except



Sherry Bhatia
President, HRAWI



The industry has not received any relief from the government



Pradeep Shetty
Sr. Vice President, HRAWI



Food delivery contributes only 5-7% of the total revenue



is no way that the industry can survive another lockdown,” says **Sherry Bhatia**, President, HRAWI.

The HRAWI has stated that the Maharashtra government’s latest ‘Break The Chain’ order is equivalent to another complete lockdown. Maharashtra has around 10,500 hotels and 210,000 restaurants. The hospitality industry especially, the small and medium hotels and eateries are in deep financial trouble. “With the latest conditions laid down by the government, restaurants will choose to not open at all for the month. With the work from home (WFH) culture, earnings in the day are next to negligible and food delivery contributes only around five to seven per cent of the total revenue. Approximately 70 to 80 per cent of a restaurant’s weekly turnover is generated through weekend business and approximately 80 per cent revenue is generated in the evenings from dine-in customers. Restaurants are popular for dine-in services, for the ambience they offer, and food delivery is only a supplementary service. To keep an establishment open just for deliveries is not at all viable. Under such a scenario, shutting down the business entirely is the only choice,” says **Pradeep Shetty**, Senior Vice President, HRAWI.

for take-away, parcels and food delivery between 7 am and 8 pm on weekdays and on weekends, only food deliveries are allowed. On account of the new guidelines and losses suffered by the industry in the aftermath of the previous lockdown, HRAWI has appealed to government to compensate employees engaged in the industry and their families for the loss of income, and also support hoteliers and restaurateurs by waiving off all statutory fees,

taxes and utility bills. “Even after one year, the hospitality industry has not received any relief from the government. Of the approximately 30 lakh employees engaged in the industry directly in the state, 40 per cent have faced job loss and the figures are only increasing. Many employees, who have just returned from their homes, will have to be compensated to ensure that their families are not made to suffer all over again. There

FHRAI reaches out to states



To save the hospitality sector and its workforce from an imminent collapse the FHRAI has written to the Chief Ministers and the Chief Secretaries of all the states in the country.



S K Jaiswal
Vice President, FHRAI



**Hospitality sector has
been found as a soft
target by govts**



D V S Soma Raju
Hon Treasurer, FHRAI



**We plead restrictions be
effected based on the
situation**



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI



**We are requesting
state governments to
extend their support**

Con the back of rising COVID-19 cases in the country, several states have issued restrictions on business operations to control the spread. The hospitality sector, one of the worst affected as a result of the last lockdown has once again come under stress. To save the hospitality sector and its workforce from an imminent collapse the FHRAI has written to the Chief Ministers and the Chief Secretaries of all the states in the country. The association has requested the Heads of the states for a facilitative environment for the survival and revival of the hospitality sector. It has asked that the policy of imposing blanket ban or selective restrictions on hospitality establishments be abolished and under restrictions, establishments be given relaxations or waiver of statutory payments such as electricity charges, property taxes and excise license fees, among others. "Hospitality sector has been found as a soft target by respective

governments and local administration while enforcing restrictions under the COVID-19 guidelines. Hospitality establishments have always maintained high quality and hygiene benchmarks. Yet, the sector almost always is the first to be asked to shut shop when there is a rise in cases. Night curfew orders issued by various state governments made it evident that all other businesses and sectors are entitled to get long business hours except restaurants. Hospitality gets singled out every time due to its specific nature of business and demand," says **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, Vice President, FHRAI.

"With the prevailing restrictions and WFH arrangements, restaurants have no significant business during the day and imposition of night curfews is tantamount to closure of business for the sector. Under such circumstances, it is really impossible for the

hospitality sector to survive. We therefore request the governments of respective states to abolish the policy of imposing blanket ban or selective restrictions on hospitality establishments and even in extreme circumstances, we plead that the restrictions be effected based on the situation," says **D V S Soma Raju**, Honorary Treasurer, FHRAI. "To avoid undue trouble and harassment, we are requesting that the states do away with the practice of obtaining the permission of local administration and authorities. Most importantly, we are requesting the state governments to recognise the service of hospitality workers as that of frontline corona warriors and recommend them for priority vaccination. We are requesting various state governments to extend their support in our fight for survival," concludes **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.



Pradeep Shetty
Jt. Hon Secretary, FHRAI



The night curfew has brought the restaurant sector to its knees



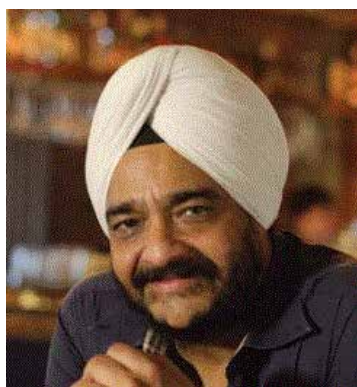
Plea to relax night curfew

FHRAI & HRAWI have written to the Hon'ble CM of Maharashtra requesting for waiver of excise license fees and property tax along with relaxation of curfew timing for restaurants.

India's apex hospitality association - Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) along with its regional association representing Western India - Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) have written to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Uddhav Thackeray requesting for urgent facilitative measures for the hospitality sector in the form of waiver of statutory payments including excise license fees and property tax along with relaxation of curfew timing for restaurants.

The associations have stated that actual business for a restaurant starts after 8pm and a night curfew imposition from 8pm is tantamount to closure of business. Due to the prevailing restrictions and WFH arrangements, restaurants have no significant business in the day. The FHRAI and HRAWI have also pointed out that all other businesses and sectors are entitled to get long business hours even under restricted timelines but restaurants are being singled out due to its specific nature of business and demand.

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, FHRAI, said, "The impact of COVID-19 is all pervasive in our economy but its impact on



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI



30% of hotels and restaurants have shut down permanently



the hospitality industry has been extremely disruptive. The hospitality sector is the biggest causality of the pandemic, the first one to fall and the last to recover. The industry had lost all its business after the lockdown came into effect. As of today, 30 per cent of hotels and restaurants in the country have shut

down permanently due to financial losses. Over 20 per cent of hotels and restaurants haven't opened fully after the lockdown and the remaining 50 per cent continue to run in losses, and revenues are below 50 per cent of the pre-COVID levels. Tourism and hospitality account for close to 10 per cent of India's GDP and support around 90 million jobs. Under the present conditions, non-viability will lead to the closure of hotel and restaurant business in the state and massive job losses. We request the Hon'ble CM to kindly take into account these repercussions to the industry and relax the curfew timings for restaurants."

Pradeep Shetty, Joint Hon Secretary, FHRAI and Senior Vice President, HRAWI, said, "The new order from government of Maharashtra imposing night curfew from 8pm to 7am has brought the restaurant sector to its knees. It will really make the sector's revival an impossible task. We therefore request government of Maharashtra to come out with some urgent facilitative measures for the hospitality sector in the form of waiver of statutory payments including excise license fees and property tax along with the relaxation in curfew timing for restaurants to save the sector from crumbling down."

Campaign #MissionRoziRoti

Hospitality associations across the state including the FHRAI, HRAWI, NRAI, AHAR have initiated campaign #MissionRoziRoti to highlight their desperate bid for survival.

The latest restrictions imposed by the Maharashtra government has put the final nail in the coffin for the hospitality industry in the state. As per the Break The Chain order, restaurants are to be totally shut except for take-away, parcels and food delivery between 7 am and 8 pm on weekdays and on weekends, only food deliveries are allowed. Additionally, the state has mandated all food delivery personnel to be either vaccinated or undergo RT-PCR tests to test negative for COVID-19 at intervals of every 15 days.

Hospitality associations across the state including the FHRAI, HRAWI, NRAI, AHAR and other local associations have formed the United Hospitality Forum of Maharashtra (UHF) and have initiated campaign #MissionRoziRoti to highlight their desperate bid for survival. The UHF organised a silent protest outside of all hotels and restaurants in the state on April 8, 2021. The associations have stated that hotels and restaurants are in deep financial trouble and without the government's consideration; the industry will be staring at a catastrophe.

"The impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry has been extremely disruptive. Our businesses are under immense financial stress and the latest 'Break The Chain' order is equivalent to another complete lockdown. We assure the government that the industry is committed to following all the health and safety protocols and has our unwavering support towards the various efforts to combat the pandemic. We humbly request the government to look into this genuine request of the hospitality industry and extend support in our fight for survival," says **Pradeep Shetty**, Jt. Hon Secretary, FHRAI.

"Barely six months ago restaurants were allowed to reopen. For close to eight months, on government orders, restaurants remained closed but did not receive any support or relief against losses accrued by these businesses. There are around 10,500 hotels and 210,000 restaurants in Maharashtra. The smallest of restaurants employ eight individuals whereas an average restaurant and hotel employs 20 to



Pradeep Shetty
Jt. Hon Secretary, FHRAI



We request the govt to extend support in our fight for survival



Sherry Bhatia
President, HRAWI



Food delivery is only a supplementary service to dine-in



30 heads which include waiters, cleaners and cooks, accountants, managers, delivery boys, security and gardeners. Of the approximately 30 lakh employees engaged in the industry directly in the state, approximately 40 per cent are just from the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. A restaurant is a place where patrons prefer to dine not just for the food but for the ambience it offers. Food delivery or parcel service is only a supplementary service to dine-in and it contributes only five per cent to a restaurant's earnings," says **Sherry Bhatia**, President, HRAWI.

"With no means to sustain another lockdown, we request that the government completely waives off all statutory fees and taxes, and also remunerates hospitality establishments, its owners, its employees and their families for the loss of incomes caused by the decision. Today, several establishments are in massive debts. We request the government to either allow us to continue operating until 12 am with the mandated SOPs or permanently shut us down, rather than keep us half alive and in a state of misery," says **Shivanand Shetty**, President, Ahar.

HRANI, IRCTC for hotel integration

HRANI in association with IRCTC recently hosted a webinar on hotel integration to update association members about the benefit of reduced commission and waiver on integration.

Hotel and Restaurant Association of Northern India (HRANI) recently hosted a webinar in association with the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) on hotel integration.

The objective of the webinar was to update association members about the benefit of reduced commission, waiver on integration fees and simplified process of empanelling their room inventory for sale as online accommodation partners through the IRCTC tourism website and its associate portal.

The webinar was graced by Rajni Hasija, Chairman & Managing Director of IRCTC as Chief Guest. L Ravi Kumar, GM Tourism and Dr. Achyut Singh, Joint General Manager, Tourism and Marketing along with his team of Senior Officials from IRCTC attended the webinar. The session was moderated by Garish Oberoi, Former President HRANI & FHRAI, and General Secretary UPHRA.

The web meeting witnessed the presence of industry leaders Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, President, HRANI & UPHRA and Vice President, FHRAI; Prasad Iyer, Vice President – Digital, E-commerce, Distribution & Rewards, Lemon Tree Hotels; Akshay Thusoo, Vice President – Sales, Sarovar Hotels; Nikhil Sharma, Regional Director Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts along with Renu Thapliyal, Secretary General, HRANI.

HRANI has been the first hotel association in the country which signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IRCTC expressing interest to work together in distribution.

The association had signed a MoU with IRCTC last year. The objective of signing the MoU has been to



The initiative will help to reduce customer acquisition cost

promote domestic tourism and reduce the customer acquisition cost.

In order to make the proposition more attractive for hotels, HRANI through representations and virtual meeting had requested IRCTC for reduced commission and waiver on integration fees which was acceded by CMD IRCTC. The waiver of the initial integration fee till July 31, 2021 including reduced commission was announced by Rajni Hasija during the webinar.

As per the MOU between IRCTC with HRANI, IRCTC has allowed to offer a 5-10 percent commission from the listed Member Units of HRANI along with complete waiver of integration charges. The members can directly integrate with IRCTC. Enclosure of current HRANI membership certificate is mandatory to avail the benefit.

While addressing the webinar **Rajni Hasija**, Chairman & Managing Director, IRCTC, stated, "Our commission model is very reasonable. We have a very simple integration

system for hotels interested to join our platform. Around 7,200 hotels have already got integrated into the IRCTC hotel distribution platform".

She further stated that the registration process is quite simple and requires minimum documentation. Once the scrutiny of the documents is completed, the integration process gets completed.

A presentation explaining about the process and documentation for hotel integration was given by Dr. Singh.

"We are thankful to Madam Rajni Hasija, Chairman & Managing Director, IRCTC and her team for acceding to our submissions especially when the industry is going through tough times," stated **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, HRANI and Vice President, FHRAI.

"I firmly believe that this initiative of HRANI will help our hotel members to reduce the customer acquisition cost in a big way and will create a win-win situation for both the hoteliers as well as the end consumers," added Jaiswal.

‘A welcome relief for industry’

FHRAI has cited the Supreme Court’s recent order on waiver of compounded interest on loans above ₹2 crore as a positive sign for the hospitality industry.

The Hon’ble Supreme Court’s recent judgment concluding that the government’s scheme to restrict the waiver of interest on interest or compounded interest to loans worth only up to ₹2 crore as irrational, has come as a major relief to the hospitality industry. A highly capital-intensive business, loans largely borrowed by players in the hospitality industry are above ₹2 crore. FHRAI has cited the order as a positive sign for the hospitality industry and plans to continue engaging with the government for sector-specific relief.

"Paying interest on interest for the duration of the moratorium period, especially at a time when revenues are below 50% of the pre-COVID levels is impractical and unreasonable. The judgment by the Hon’ble SC has come as a welcome relief for the hospitality industry. It’s over a year since the pandemic hit the country



Pradeep Shetty
Jt. Hon. Secretary, FHRAI

“**The industry is in dire need of a sector-specific package**”

and the hospitality industry is still reeling under the after-effects of the pandemic-led lockdown. Being the first sector affected by COVID-19 and the last to revive, the hospitality sector in the country is waging a battle for its existence. The industry is in dire need of a sector-specific package,” says **Pradeep Shetty**, Jt. Hon. Secretary, FHRAI.

“Throughout the last one year, the FHRAI has held a series of meetings with several Ministries for sector-specific packages for the industry but not much has come through. The industry’s grievance however, is mainly with the execution of the government’s relief by the banks. Financial institutions have been biased against the hospitality industry and relief meant for the industry has been difficult to come through. The FHRAI will continue to engage with the government for hospitality sector-specific relief,” concludes Shetty.

‘Allow takeaway & home delivery’

HRAWI & the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Gujarat (HRA-Gujarat) have requested permission for takeaway and home delivery services till 12 am in the state.

HRAWI and the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Gujarat (HRA-Gujarat) have submitted a representation to the Hon’ble Prime Minister – Shri Narendra Modi to allow takeaway and home delivery services till 12 am for hotels & restaurants in the state. The associations have expressed agreement with the Gujarat govt’s decision to impose restrictions, however, taking into consideration the industry’s year-long crises, have pleaded for some leeway. The associations have stated that there are over 35,000 hotels, restaurants, small food eateries and cafes across the state that provide direct employment to 10 to 12 lakh people. With the current restrictions, most of these people will be rendered jobless. “Many families survive on the single



Narendra Somani
President, HRA-Gujarat

“**Allowing takeaway & delivery services will help industry to survive**”

income of delivery personnel. Many migrants depend on food delivered to them from restaurants and eateries. Also, there are several households where all family members have fallen prey to COVID-19 and they too are dependent on food ordered in. Allowing takeaway and delivery services will help the industry to survive and will also ensure that the government is not burdened with granting any major reliefs,” concludes **Narendra Somani**, President, HRA-Gujarat & Executive Committee Member, HRAWI.



Promoting tourism

Arvind Singh, Secretary, MOT talks about the initiatives being taken post-COVID, Atmanirbhar Bharat Package, and what is being done to promote domestic tourism.



Nisha Verma



Arvind Singh

What initiatives have been taken by MOT post-COVID?

A robust information system/comprehensive database of various accommodation units throughout the country viz, National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry (NIDHI) has been created for registration of all unclassified accommodation units. NIDHI is an initiative towards Atmanirbhar Bharat to use technology to empower our businesses and will enable the hospitality industry to access services such as COVID-19 related protocols through SAATHI, classification and re-classification services, listing on incredible India web portal and mobile app, skill development and capacity building programmes etc. The Ministry has developed an initiative called SAATHI (System for Assessment, Awareness & Training for Hospitality Industry), for effective implementation of guidelines/SOPs issued with reference to COVID-19 and beyond for safe operations of hotels, restaurants, B&Bs and other units.

MOT has modified the guidelines of the Marketing Development Assistance (MDA) Programme, under which financial assistance is provided to tourism service providers, state governments and UT Administrations to promote tourism in the overseas markets. The government has also revised incentives for MICE events under Champion

Services Sector Scheme (CSSS), in order to boost MICE tourism in the country.

How will the Atmanirbhar Bharat Package benefit the tourism sector?

The government announced various fiscal and relief measures under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Package, which are expected to benefit the tourism industry. In this package, ₹3 lakh crore collateral free automatic loan has been made available for MSMEs. The loan will have a 4-year tenure and a 12-month moratorium. Under this package the definition of MSME was revised by which the differentiation between manufacturing and services sector MSMEs has been removed. This will benefit the tourism sector, as 70-80 per cent of the units in this sector fall under MSMEs.

What is being done by the Ministry to promote domestic tourism?

Domestic tourism witnessed an encouraging trend and to sustain & promote the same, the Ministry has undertaken several activities which include Dekho Apna Desh webinars; aerial photography of key cities and cultural assets (Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Udupi, Aurangabad, iconic tourist sites) across the country during lockdown; regular consultations with industry stakeholders on issues related to opening up of tourism sector; handling of tourists, protocols of safety and security, service standards etc.; Domestic Tourism Promotion Campaign through webinars, social media and other digital platforms.



In the package, ₹3 lakh cr collateral free automatic loan is for MSMEs



84% decline in hotel investment trade

JLL states that hotel investment volume in 2020 saw a 60% global decline vis-à-vis 2019, & in India the decline in hotel investment trade was 84% in 2020 as compared to 2019.

Hotel investment volume in 2020 witnessed a 60% global decline in comparison to 2019 and in India, the decline in hotel investment trade was even sharper at 84% in 2020 as compared to 2019, according to JLL. India-wide hotel performance registered a decline in RevPAR by approx. 55% over the previous year, closing at a RevPAR of INR 1,675. Whilst performance of business hotels has yet to fully recover, leisure markets led by domestic travellers showcased some resilience in the last quarter of 2020.

As a result of the pandemic, hotels were compelled to reset their business plans. Standard operating procedures were drastically transformed with adaptation of available technology to encourage social distancing and increased focus on health safety and hygiene practices. New hotel developments slowed down, and most hotel openings were deferred by at least six months, according to JLL.

According to the STR data, Delhi's hotel market witnessed a 32% PP* (absolute percentage change) decline in occupancy and a 24.1% decline in Average Daily Rate (ADR), resulting in a 57.3% decline in RevPAR, in 2020 over 2019. Additionally, Bangalore's hospitality market witnessed a 39-pp decline in occupancy and a 23.1% decline in ADR, resulting in a 67.7% decline in RevPAR, as compared to 2019.

Brand signings in the country decreased by 38% over last year with 125 hotels and over 12,000 keys. The year saw a revival of demand firstly in the leisure destinations, with the maximum volume of signings in Tier-III cities. "The post-pandemic world is bound to see more changes. Realignment of source markets, guest preferences, physical space planning will all be more dynamic and will be discussed more often in board rooms and team meetings. Capital assistance has emerged as the focal point and will remain the need of the hour to help hotels sustain till demand picks up," says **Jaideep Dang**, Managing Director, Hotels & Hospitality Group, JLL India.

HOTEL INVESTMENT OUTLOOK

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the near zero cash flow environment made asset valuations very challenging



*Exchange rate – INR to USD estimated 2020
Source: JLL



Capital assistance is needed to help hotels sustain till demand picks up



also resulting in difficulty of obtaining debt financing. As a result, acquisitions were largely on hold in 2020. Hotel investment volume in India reached a record high in 2019 registering investment sales of USD 762 million.

Investment activity has been on a pause since March 2020 post the nationwide lockdown. As the country gradually opened up with the unlock measures in phases since June 2020, the sentiment for evaluating hotel assets gained a little traction.

The preference for assets in leisure markets increased given the strong recovery of leisure travel across the country since the third quarter of 2020. Investors were also keen on evaluating distressed opportunities in key markets, given last years' decline in corporate travel and its slow and steady recovery has impacted operational cash flows. Investors are mostly inclined to evaluate operational assets in key markets rather than greenfield or brownfield developments.

COVID19 RELIEF FUND

Demands ignored

Regional Presidents opine that policy makers have failed to consider the specific problems of the hospitality sector whose business is impacted by a host of external factors.

Neha Rawat



Sherry Bhatia
President, HRAWI

A GRAVE SITUATION

Unfortunately, the Centre has not extended sector-specific relief to the hospitality industry. In fact, the latest Union Budget reduced the budget allocation for the Ministry of Tourism by 19 per cent. This has come at a time when the sector is facing the worst crisis for tourism. In the absence of a sector-specific stimulus package, at least 30 to 40 per cent restaurants and 20 to 30 per cent hotels in the country are facing imminent

Maha government has rolled back the 15% annual fee increase for the year 2020

shutdown of business, resulting into millions of job losses.

EXPECTATIONS FROM GOVERNMENT

The industry's expectations in terms of reliefs from the government in the year 2021 include waiver in electricity bills, water bills, excise license fees and other statutory fees; industry and infrastructure status be given to hotels, resorts and restaurants across the country.

RELIEF MEASURES

The Hon'ble Supreme Court's recent judgment concluding that the government's scheme to restrict the waiver of interest on interest or compounded interest to loans worth only up to ₹2 crore as irrational has come as a major relief to the hospitality industry. A highly capital-intensive business, loans largely borrowed by players in the hospitality industry are above ₹2 Crore.

The Maharashtra government has waived off the excise license fee on pro-rata basis and has also rolled back the 15 per cent annual fee increase for the year 2020. This has come as a substantial relief for the players in the industry. Unfortunately, other than this, the industry has not received any relief at all.



Sudesh Poddar
President, HRAEI

NO SECTOR-SPECIFIC STIMULUS

We have been vociferously advocating for some real relief measures to help the tourism and hospitality sector come out of the biggest crisis. Despite our numerous

Govt is losing annual GST revenue of ₹2,937 crore due to denial of input tax credit

representations over the last 12 months and multiple meetings with the highest echelons in the government, the hospitality sector has been blatantly ignored. It did not

even find a mention in the Union Budget 2021 presented by the Finance Minister. Additionally, the budget knocked off 19% from the budget allocated for the MOT which has come as a severe blow to the revival efforts of the tourism industry.

GST REVENUE

Restaurants must be given the option to choose a higher GST (12%) rate than now levied (5%), but with the right to claim refund of the tax paid on inputs. Restaurants are now levied a 5% GST, but they can't claim the input tax credit against the tax they paid on raw materials and other expenses like rent. Food service providers were sourcing close to half of their inputs from unregistered, non-tax paying suppliers to reduce their operating cost. In other words, when ITC (input tax credit) is denied, it nudges a restaurant to go illegal. Those who don't want to claim the input tax credit be levied 5% GST and those who are ready to pay 12% be allowed to claim the refund. This is not only affecting those in the food business but the govt is losing annual GST revenue of ₹2,937 crore due to denial of input tax credit.



K. Syama Raju
President, SIHRA

MAJOR CONCERNS

The hospitality industry is among the first ones hit due to COVID-19 and the last one to recover. Every forum in tourism and hospitality including SIHRA / FHRAI appealed to government for support but unfortunately the government did not give any direct support to any industry including hospitality. Moreover, we are forced to pay all taxes and fees including property tax, bar license fee, EB charges



on maximum demand for the lockdown period in 2020. Hoteliers have reopened hotels with a positive attitude. But the second wave of COVID-19 is dampening their enthusiasm.

Various governments have imposed restrictions which has made the hotel occupancies to single digits again, a major concern for every hotelier.

CASH LIQUIDITY

Hotel industry expects the state and Central government to refund various license fees and taxes levied during lockdown considering the employment generated. Because we are forced to pay huge taxes and fees for the lockdown period it has affected our cash liquidity, whereby none of the hoteliers are able to support the employees and their families.

When it comes to the choice of either paying the fees on time without penalty, we are forced to obey the government orders from time to time. We also expect support from the government to reduce the GST slabs for hotels whereby we are



The government did not give any direct support to hospitality industry



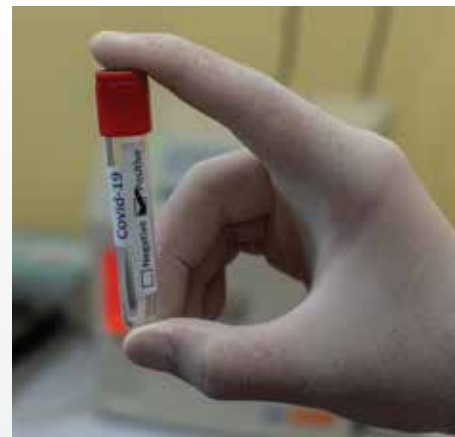
Surendra Kumar Jaiswal
President, HRANI

INADEQUATE RELIEF

The tourism and hospitality sector was the first to be affected by COVID-19 and subsequently the lockdown and will be the last to recover from the crisis. Though the Government of India claimed to have provided relief packages to the sector through various Ministries and RBI, but the reliefs were inadequate.

PROBLEMS OVERLOOKED

Since there were no significant reliefs provided by the government through its earlier financial packages, the hospitality sector was pinning its hopes on the Union Budget 2021 as the last resort, for some respite. But it has come as a rude shock to the industry that that budget allocation for the Ministry of Tourism was slashed at a time when the sector was facing the worst generational crisis for tourism in India. Sadly, the policy makers have failed to consider the specific problems of the hospitality sector whose business is impacted by a host of external factors such as the policy of work from home gaining popularity even post lockdown, depressed customer sentiments, reduction in business travel and general reduction in discretionary spending on leisure and social



The hospitality sector was pinning its hopes on the Union Budget 2021



spending, prevailing restrictions, uncertainties and protocols imposed by the government with respect to issuance of tourist visa, quarantine norms and other COVID-19 protocols and more importantly disruption of international commercial airline operations.

MEASURES NEEDED TO REVIVE INDUSTRY

We wish our government would study what other countries have done to ensure tourism, the worst-hit sector, is kept alive. Tax holiday for one year for hospitality and tourism establishments, waiver of property tax and other levies, relaxation in electricity charges and excise fee, review of the Kamath Committee recommendations, classifying hospitality under the RBI infrastructure lending norm criteria, industry status to hotels, restaurants, and resorts across the country and including hospitality and tourism in the concurrent list needs to be considered for the recovery of the industry.

Indian hotels' brand signings in 2020

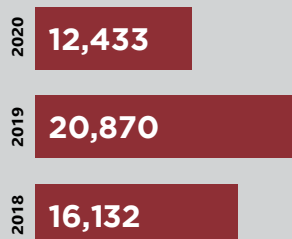
Due to the uncertain market conditions, only 100 new hotels with 9,757 keys were signed in 2020 compared to 170 new hotels with 16,349 keys in 2019.

SIGNINGS

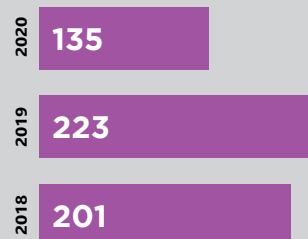
Brand signings by keys witnessed a y-o-y decline of 40% in 2020. During the year, 100 hotels with 9,757 keys entered the branded hotels market, while an additional 35 hotels with 2,676 keys were rebranded.



By Keys



By Properties

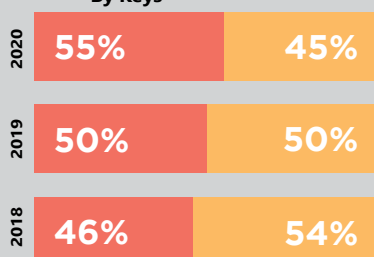


BRANDS

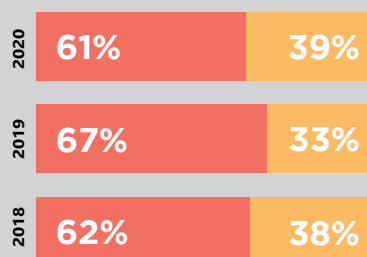
Domestic hotel operators increased their share by signing more properties (61% of the total signings by property) than their international peers, with an average key count of 82 keys during the year.



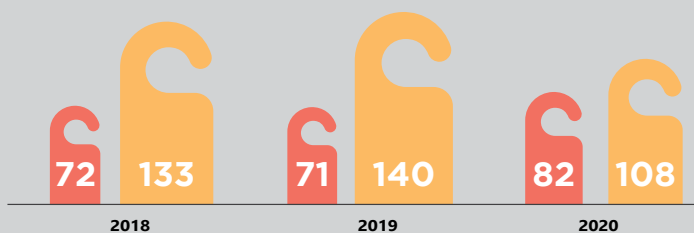
By Keys



By Properties



Average Room Count



Domestic
International

*As reported by 24 hotel operators as of 31st January 2021 for CY2020 & media reports 2019 numbers have been updated as per new information reported by hotel operators

BY CONTRACT

Management contracts continued to be the preferred form of brand signings, accounting for 80% of the total signings by keys in 2020. Franchising accounted for 17% of the signings by keys in 2020.



By Keys



Managed
Franchised
Leased
Others

^ For 2020, Others has been clubbed with Leased since it accounted for less than 0.5% of the total signings

Source: HVS Research

BRAND SIGNINGS BY KEYS

In the aftermath of the ongoing pandemic, brand signings by keys in India witnessed a year-on-year decline of 40% in 2020. Signings were especially low in the first half of the year, due to the uncertain market conditions and challenges related to closing deals on virtual platforms because of the COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions. As a result, only 100 new hotels (with 9,757 keys) were signed in 2020 compared to 170 new hotels (with 16,349 keys) in 2019. In addition to this, 35 hotels (with 2,676 keys) were rebranded in 2020 compared to 53 hotels (with 4,521 keys) in 2019.

As for top destinations (ranking by state), Maharashtra led the scorecard in terms of brand signings by keys (17 properties with 1,886 keys) in 2020.

DOMESTIC VS. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL OPERATORS

Domestic hotel operators signed more properties (61% of the total signings by property) than their international peers, with an average key count of 82 keys during the year. In a shift in strategy, international hotel operators also showed a keenness in signing smaller properties in 2020, as they adapted to the changing market dynamics and looked at increasing their footprint in smaller cities. Consequently, the average key count for international hotel operators declined to 108 keys in 2020 compared to 140 keys in 2019.

MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS

Management contracts continued to be the preferred form of brand signings, accounting for 80% of the total signings by keys in 2020. However, franchising is steadily strengthening its position and accounted for 17% of the signings by keys in 2020 compared to 14% in 2019. Leasing and other forms of contract continued to lose their charm over the year.

BROWNFIELD VS. GREENFIELD PROJECTS

In the year marred with uncertainty, hotel operators preferred to sign projects that are less risky and have a higher chance of completion vis-à-vis greenfield projects. Several greenfield projects were also put on hold due to the COVID impact. As a result, brownfield projects grabbed the pole position in terms of number of properties signed, accounting for 45% of the total signings by properties in 2020, while greenfield properties accounted for only 29% of the signings by properties.

REBRANDING LIKELY TO GROW RAPIDLY

Hotel rebranding or conversion is also gaining momentum in the country and accounted for 26% of the total signings by properties in 2020. Rebranding is likely to grow rapidly going forward as more and more independent hotels seek brand affiliation to gain from the 'safety' shield perceived for brands by travellers.

DECLINE IN BRAND SIGNINGS

"Brand signings by keys witnessed a year-on-year decline of 40% in 2020 in the aftermath of the ongoing pandemic. During the year marred with uncertainty, 100 new hotels entered the branded hotels market, while an additional 35 hotels were re-branded. Domestic hotel operators continued to sign more properties vis-à-vis their international peers, but in a shift in strategy, international hotel operators were also keen on signing smaller properties, as they adapted to the changing market dynamics and looked at increasing their footprint in smaller cities," says Mandeep Lamba, President – South Asia, HVS ANAROCK.



Mandeep Lamba

MIDSCALE IS THE MOST PREFERRED SEGMENT

Midscale hotels remain the market leader with respect to the number of properties signed in 2020. The upscale hotels have also increased their share substantially from the previous years. These two segments continue to be the sweet spot for upcoming development and are driving the growth in the sector. In terms of keys, midscale segment is the most preferred segment in the country, accounting for 41% of the total signings by keys in 2020, followed by upscale (37% of total signings), economy (11% of total signings) and luxury (11% of total signings).

LEISURE DESTINATIONS PICKED UP PACE IN 2020

Though commercial destinations continued to witness the majority of signings (49% of total signings by keys), leisure destinations picked up pace in 2020 as hotel companies renewed their focus on increasing footprint at such destinations in the post-COVID era. Approximately 41% of the total hotel signings by keys in 2020 were in leisure destinations compared to 30% in 2019.

Hotel operators also continued to increase their footprint in Tier-3 and 4 cities, which accounted for 46% of the total signings by property during the year. The share of Tier-1 cities continues to decline as these markets have limited sites left for hotel development.

Goa continued to be a resilient market and featured in top five cities in terms of signings. Other leisure destinations such as Shimla and Mussoorie have started to grab the attention of hotel brands.

Note: HVS research is based on data received from hotel brand companies for Jan-Dec 2020.

In the grip of COVID's second **WAVE**

FHRAI EC members opine that in the wake of the second wave of COVID the hospitality industry is again looking at a year of low occupancies and less than expected revenues.



Neha Rawat



Param Kannampilly **Chairman & Managing Director, Concept Hospitality**

IMPACT OF SECOND WAVE

The hospitality industry has not even partially recovered from the onslaught of COVID's first wave. The movement of business travellers was starting to pick up. The entire industry was optimistic that the worst is over, and things were going to move towards a positive outlook from now on.

However, all of a sudden we find ourselves under the grip of the second wave of COVID which seems to be even worse than the first, if the sharp rise in cases are taken into consideration. It has already started impacting the industry. Travel plans are getting shelved.

and digital menus to the presence of service staff dressed in protective equipment, hotels are going all out to reassure guests of a safe stay during the pandemic. Robust standard operating procedures (SOPs) are in place to ensure that the chances of an infection being transferred from one guest to another is very low. Hotels are also taking all the precautions which are mandated by the government.

Like everyone else, hoteliers are also optimistic that the ongoing vaccination programme is going to fetch desired results. With every single day passing, millions of people are getting inoculated.



Param Kannampilly



Occupancies are witnessing a huge hit. Business hotels which were already bleeding are going to suffer major losses. With weekend curfew imposed in Maharashtra, the leisure segment will also suffer. Almost all the states have announced night curfew. The states have also closed malls, eating places in the evening. The restaurant industry which was limping back to normalcy is again staring at huge losses. Jobs are going to be reduced and the impact will be bad for the industry.

COPING WITH THE CRISIS

There is no specific thing or initiative which a hotelier can take. All the hotels have ramped up their hygiene standards. From contactless check-ins



The restaurant industry is again staring at huge losses



As more and more people take injections, the threat of the virus will reduce immensely. The government has offered nothing in the budget. I don't think they are even going to think about the hospitality industry now. The industry has to do whatever it can to cope up with the pandemic. The industry has survived the first wave and I am sure it will survive the second wave as well and emerge triumphant.



Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar

Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar Executive Director, HRH Group of Hotels

ANOTHER YEAR OF LOW OCCUPANCIES

Yes, quite distinctly the second wave of the pandemic is upon us. There is no doubt about the cancellations and tentative bookings that are showing in our reservations. It is unfortunate but true. We will have to face another year of low occupancies and less than expected revenues while having to implement more safety and security measures for our guests. Indeed, a very challenging situation.

TACKLING THE SECOND WAVE

According to an article in one of the leading dailies in India, "The second wave of COVID-19 in India appears to be ascending faster than the first wave that peaked in mid-September last year. It is crucial to note that the number of COVID-19 tests being conducted daily during the second wave is much higher than the first.

Currently, the positivity rate (cases found per 100 tests) is still lower than that in the first wave in many high burden states. Nevertheless, India is already leading the world in terms of average daily cases detected and registers the third-highest average daily deaths. A significant drop in

already low testing levels after the first wave and a weakened contact tracing system as the pandemic advanced, besides a surge in public mobility, could be the reasons behind the second wave."

In my opinion, we have to follow and adhere to the guidelines set down by the local, state and Central governments. There is nothing that we as individuals or enterprises can do. We have to work towards ensuring the safety of our cities, the working population and the public health measures have to be completely in place. Every enterprise will have to find their own ways of coping; yes, if the industry associations and elders can develop new mechanisms to help each other, and certainly the smaller players, it shall be a welcome move.

GOVT MEASURES & INITIATIVES NEEDED

The governments need to take a holistic and comprehensive view. The entire economy has been shrinking and the small and medium enterprises have taken the brunt of the downturn. Yes, there is a need to look into the present-day issues but also keep a wider and longer view of how we can move ahead. Financial and fiscal relief is only one of the ways the government can help; there are social and other commercial means that can be deployed to make an improvement in this pandemic era. We hope it will happen in 2021.



Government can help through financial and fiscal relief



Vineet Taing President, Vatika Hotels

A MAJOR SETBACK

The current situation is very unfortunate. The second wave of COVID-19 is creating a huge impact on industries across India and the hospitality sector is getting the worst hit.

The hotels had yet not recovered from the impact of the first wave and with the resurgence of the pandemic, things are likely to worsen. With travellers fearing to go out and lockdown like situations arising, the hotels in tier-1 cities are likely to suffer a major setback.

City hotels are currently running at a very poor rate of 30-50% occupancies and offering lower rates, which is pretty much likely to dip further. Till February, the hoteliers were expecting a recovery to come in, and the occupancy rates to reach around 50-60% but with the second wave, the hopes of occupancy rates rising seem to be fading out.

Almost all hotel chains are expected to close FY21 with heavy losses and that too despite taking severe cost-cutting measures vis-a-vis the past year.

GOVT SHOULD SUPPORT HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

In the current scenario, the industry is observing a puny international inbound travel which plays a key role in generating sustainability and profitability. This year shall be challenging from a sustenance and employment generation perspective especially for city hotels. This is the time when the government should support the hospitality industry.

FHRAI has already been pushing a lot of recommendations and is continuously following-up with the Ministry to revive the tourism and hospitality industry. The top recommendations being: extension of term loan repayment by five more years, reversal of GST input, reduction of fixed charges in the electricity bills, a rebate of trade license fee by 50% and a waiver of liquor fee for hotels and restaurants, but nothing has happened to date.

TACKLING THE SECOND WAVE

Commenting on what can be done to deal with the second wave of COVID, Dr VK Paul, Member-Health, Niti Aayog, said, "The situation of the pandemic has worsened and the speed of increasing COVID-19 cases is higher than last time. A large part of the population is still susceptible to the virus.

The tools to fight the pandemic remain the same. COVID-appropriate behaviour, containment measures, testing have to be implemented more efficiently, medical infrastructure has to be ramped up and vaccination drive intensified.

People's participation is vital to control the second wave. COVID-appropriate behaviour like wearing masks, staying away from crowds have to be followed in a campaign mode."



Vineet Taing



Almost all hotel chains are expected to close FY21 with heavy losses



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Government of India



Ministry of Commerce
& Industry



Quality Council of India



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Hospitality education in the **new normal**

Hospitality education should emphasise on case study and problem-solving strategies, says **Ranjit Chaudhury**, former Principal of Institute of Hotel Management, Kolkata.

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 was beyond the imagination of anyone. According to World Tourism Organization an estimated 75 million hospitality jobs are at risk and there has been 20-30% decline in tourist flow worldwide. The hospitality and tourism sector is one of the hardest hit, but due to its relevance it has to be again the main driver for upturn in the global economy and recovery of labour market (one out of 10 jobs are in the tourism sector worldwide).

After an initial phase of corona crisis management, the big question now is, what next? In its Lausanne report *Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne-EHL* highlights that consolidation and fragmentation are cyclical & successive phenomena. Both dynamics co-exist in the hospitality industry, depending on which market one explores. Re-thinking loyalty, imagining new collaborative platforms & hospitality clusters could be vital for future business success. The report states that threats resulting from climate change, safety and security issues as well as unprecedented migration streams are tomorrow's game changers. The main challenges for the hospitality industry are the lack of predictability and the magnitude of such events and how fast the industry can react and adapt. Hybrid operations might be one of the hospitality industry's possible response to increased risks.

Concepts such as crowdsourcing, crowdfunding, peer-to-peer and sharing hospitality have their origins in the relationship between individuals and/or communities. A decisive element for the hospitality industry's future will be its ability to integrate the demands of individuals, communities and networks. The report emphasises that high tech trends will shape our hospitality business. The balancing factor will be high touch: the ability to provoke and track emotions. By 2030, many cities will be embedded in so-called smart city clusters. New mobility concepts can be introduced and deployed. Hospitality experience will be part of the destination experience. The report also points out that there are four pillars on which hospitality will build its future – people, business, technology & the environment. Hospitality will continue to be about guests & hosts. It will remain a guest-centred industry – with its eye safely on the three Hs: hands, head & heart.

IMPACT OF COVID ON TOURISM EDUCATION

The pandemic has disrupted tourism and its allied industries. Many studies have been undertaken to analyse the impact on industry. Unfortunately, not much is known about the impact of COVID-19 on tourism education. Studies are essentially focussing on the industry, forgetting that tourism is also a field of study. While discussing the impact of COVID-19, one should keep in mind that whatever happens in the industry also has an impact on education and vice-

versa. As of now, the growing need for sustainability in the tourism industry will lead to change in curricula and pedagogy approaches.

It is stated that tourism is the hallmark activity of contemporary times, and tourism education is believed to be the backbone in supporting the industry. Teaching and educational services are a part of professional services which have also witnessed a rapid digital transformation taking place. Conducting classes on Zoom, Google Meet, and other online meeting platforms are common during the pandemic. The online form of education has helped the teachers to gain experience for the 'new normal' in educational institutions. As social distancing norms become mandatory, and Google classrooms become the new virtual environment for teaching, appropriate strategies for lecture planning, dissemination of subject knowledge and assignments, redesigning curriculum are a pre-requisite for effectiveness.

In the post COVID-19 era, hospitality education programmes should emphasise more on case study and problem-solving strategies. To prepare future aspirants in hospitality as successful leaders, hospitality management curriculum should offer subjects that teach a range of soft, hard and digital skills including analysis, robotics, technology, management, organisation and cross culture activities.

THE FUTURE

Building a career in the hospitality industry and maintaining a customer-centric mindset is both demanding and extremely rewarding. To become a successful leader in hospitality one must not only have an excellent education but also master a range of essential skills including organisational and financial management, proactivity, communication and interpersonal skills, problem-solving acumen, dedication to detail and cultural empathy. Tomorrow's hospitality leaders must also learn how and when to creatively utilise innovative technology to enhance the customer journey and lead impactful disruption in order to best serve their guests and teams. Top hospitality management programmes should offer their students opportunities within the curriculum to study digitalisation, robotisation, software and hardware technologies, disruption and innovation. These educational initiatives not only provide students with the critical tools they need, by teaching them how to strategise, analyse challenges and source solutions, but also give them a clear advantage when entering the competitive job market and making career choices.

(The article has been written by Ranjit Chaudhury, former Principal of Institute of Hotel Management, Kolkata, the views expressed are the author's personal views)



Ranjit Chaudhury

The growing need for sustainability in tourism industry will lead to change in pedagogy



CLOUD KITCHEN:

A viable alternative

Hoteliers talk about how cloud kitchens are taking over the restaurant industry with a bang due to advanced technology, easy delivery & low capital investment.



Neha Rawat



Debaditya Chaudhury

Debaditya Chaudhury
Managing Director, Chowman Hospitality

A WELL-ACCEPTED CONCEPT

When it comes to cloud kitchens, we were probably the pioneering brand to introduce the cloud kitchen module at Jadavpur, Golfgreen in Kolkata way back in 2010, when many people were unaware of the term itself. I had implemented the cloud kitchen years back to spread authentic, best Chinese in every nook and corner of the city. Today, our 10 years of success have witnessed a grand evolution of cloud kitchens in various parts of Bengal & Bangalore. Of course, cloud kitchen has its limitations in terms of the profundity that dine-ins offer, but it is one of the most well-accepted concepts that is taking over the restaurant industry with a bang.

LUCRATIVE BUSINESS

Cloud kitchen has now evolved to be one of the most

lucrative forms of business. We can somewhat address it to be a 'cult' in the domain of the food & beverage industry. We need to understand that the pandemic has become a conduit for cloud kitchens to sprout in every part of the world. And with cloud kitchens becoming so popular, even if, in the next few years the pandemic is wiped out from the face of this earth, cloud kitchens will continue to reign with their advanced technology, easy delivery and a more compact form of business module both from the seller-consumer perspective.

MODIFIED DELIVERY SERVICE

We look forward to soon expand Chowman throughout the nation. And when it comes to cloud kitchens, we are about to open a few more in Bangalore within the coming months along with four fine dining restaurants in the next 12 months. We will soon be expanding to Mumbai, Delhi and Hyderabad as well. We are working on taking our cloud kitchen service a step ahead with an exclusive 'app' service that will be specially built for the local users. The app will bring in a modified delivery service with exclusive offers and exciting discounts.



We are working on an exclusive app service built for our local users



Himanshu Bhandari

Food and Beverage Manager, ITC Grand Bharat, Gurugram

ORDERING FOOD THROUGH APPS

The food industry has undergone a tectonic shift which is likely to continue in the near future, the option of ordering food through apps has become extremely prominent during the course of the pandemic. Many of our patrons missed coming to the retreat and we felt that through the cloud kitchen we could bring a little bit of ITC Grand Bharat to them.

Sanitisation, health and hygiene norms now play an important role when people order food and as part of ITC Hotels' WeAssure programme, we have worked toward ensuring that the hygiene norms are followed while preparing and delivering the food.

We believe that the concept of a cloud kitchen is here to stay. Online ordering is a convenient and quick option for many people along with being a contact-light way to offer food in present times to guests.

Additionally, with a cloud kitchen integration, restaurateurs can offer the best food, as they must only focus on the quality of food and the packaging.

BIRYANI AND PULAO COLLECTION

There is no doubt that biryani and pulao have permeated every region with their universal appeal and the Biryani and Pulao Collection by ITC Hotels is an ode to the legendary dishes, crafted by the master chefs of ITC Hotels for diners to enjoy from the comfort of their homes. Our Biryani and Pulao Collection was very well received

nationwide and we thought of introducing these culinary delights to the residents of Gurugram through the first cloud kitchen launched by ITC Hotels. While we have recently launched this offering in Gurugram, we look forward to introducing many more signature delicacies that are representative of ITC Hotels' tradition of culinary excellence.



Himanshu Bhandari



With a cloud kitchen integration, we can offer the best food





For a modern kitchen

EssEmm Corporation's registered trademark engineered for its range of products – Cosmos – has created a revolution in the commercial kitchen machines industrial segment.

EssEmm Corporation was established in 1997 in the industrial city of Coimbatore. The company is promoted by **M. Sathish Kumar**, B.E, M.B.A., who has decades of industry experience. The company started its operations in a small way, catering to the needs of hotels, restaurants and industrial canteens and established itself as a prominent player in the industry in a short span of time.

Cosmos, the company's registered trademark promoted and engineered for its range of products, has created a revolution in the commercial kitchen machines industrial segment. In its own branding area, the company makes Cook Wok, vegetable washers, vegetable cutters, multi utility grinders (MUG), potato peeling machines, dough kneaders, cutter mixers, Chapati making machines and coconut scrappers. Some of EssEmm major products include.

COSMOS TILTING MULTI-UTILITY WET GRINDER

This helps to grind substances more effectively and delivers more volume in terms of batter. It can make idli & dosa batter, masalas, coconut & onion chutneys, ginger garlic paste and tomato purees.

COSMOS CVW30 - VEGETABLE WASHER

Cosmos Veg Wash has been designed to wash hygienically both fresh & frozen vegetables, fruits and

meat products. It uses clean water which is pumped in a circular wave motion.

COSMOS ZETA A8 - MULTIFUNCTIONAL VEGETABLE CUTTER

The Zeta A8 is an advanced vegetable cutting machine which can cut all kinds of vegetables including beans, guards and greens.

COSMOS COOK WOK - COOKING MIXER

COSMOS Cook Wok has been a revolution in bulk gravy and curry making for banquets and catering functions.

Cosmos products are widely used in all leading hotels, industrial canteens and catering companies. These products are also exported to the Middle East, Singapore, USA and Australia. In the area of import distribution, EssEmm Corporation represents some of the world leaders. The imported range includes pressure fryers, combi steamers, dish & utensils washers, vegetable processing machines, meat processing machines, fryers, boiling kettles, meal delivery systems, to name a few.

EssEmm Corporation has a technical team and offers services pan India. The Quality Management System of EssEmm Corporation complies with the requirements of ISO 9001:2015 and is certified by TUV and CRISIL rating MSME.

“
Cosmos Cook Wok has been a revolution in bulk gravy & curry making for banquets
”

The cutting edge

The World Tourism Forum Lucerne is an annual event where leaders in travel & hospitality meet the next generation of innovators. We speak to one of the finalists – Ecowrap.



Hazel Jain

These challenging times call for a pandemic pivot. Travel and hospitality companies, regardless of their size, must take cue from the new normal and re-invent themselves to adapt to the new world order. Small start-up companies are already disrupting businesses and it will serve us well to take heed or risk irrelevance.

One such platform that is putting the spotlight on new businesses who have innovative products to offer is the World Tourism Forum Lucerne (WTFL) through its annual Start-Up Innovation Camp. It received over 400 applications from more than 90 countries, covering a broad spectrum ranging from digital solutions and gastro-guides to mattress rental. The scale of innovation and creativity is vast. Of these, 15 finalists were chosen under five categories. From India, it received more than 50 applications! This proves that innovative spirit is alive and well, despite the ongoing global pandemic. That's why it is more important than ever to connect the driving forces behind it with established sources of knowledge and expertise, in order to shape the future of tourism together.

We highlight Ecowrap – one of the 15 finalists that eventually made it to the Start-Up Innovation Camp 2021, which will culminate in a hybrid festival dedicated to innovation in tourism on April 29-30, 2021 in Andermatt, Switzerland.

Nothing in this world is scrap, everything has a price, says **Angraj Swami**, Head of Execution, Ecowrap. The company is a waste management cum FMCG supply chain platform for hotels, restaurants, and cafes sector. It offers free waste bins to users to segregate different types of waste at source. Once the waste is collected it is resold to various recyclers and manufacturers. Ecowrap is an end-to-end integrated channel. To promote waste segregation at source it provides infrastructure and training to the hotel staff. Its unique business model incentivises waste generators for segregating waste at source. It currently has more than 100 HORECA partners and have managed to skill-train and employ 24 underprivileged women.

Currently, the company is based out of Jaipur only, but it is planning to expand into Delhi-NCR in the next 12 months. "We are collaborating with aggregators like OYO and Zomato to reach out to hotels. These aggregator platforms have all their offering for the customer side

and suffering from lack of offerings for property owners. There is an opportunity to fill this gap. Collaboration with an aggregator is part of our strategy to scale fast and to acquire HORECA units. This will also help us cut down our sales and marketing expenses. Our service will easily be accessible on the platform of aggregators," Swami shares. Ecstatic about being one of the finalists at the World Travel Forum Lucerne Innovation Camp, Swami says, "We are directly connected to the impact sector and addressing the challenges like climate change, environment, women empowerment and gender inclusivity through waste management. These all are complex problems and HORECA units are major stakeholders in our solution, without their efforts it would not be possible. HORECA is the most efficient sector to lead the change or bring the culture of waste segregation at source.

Ecowrap has a very straightforward and down-to-earth business model. Ecowrap's technology and products do not need to be fancy but the execution is the key. Waste generators need to be educated one by one, waste collection needs to be on time once booked, up-cycled products need to be better looking and useful. The end market is big enough although the penetration may take a longer time than internet business."



Angraj Swami



Our service will be accessible on the platform of aggregators



Expansive interiors

Madhav Sehgal, General Manager, Hyatt Delhi Residences, the latest entrant in the Aerocity district in New Delhi, shares how it will offer a new hospitality experience.



Nisha Verma



Madhav Sehgal

Please tell us about the Hyatt Delhi Residences, the newest Hyatt property in the city.

Located at the Aerocity, Hyatt Delhi Residences provides an all-new luxury experience. Curated for the discerning traveller, it includes 124 well-appointed apartments, divided into bedroom apartments and duplex townhouses, with spacious interiors paired with Hyatt's signature service excellence. Residences offer the best of comfort and luxury, ensuring the guests feel at home while travelling for work.

Which market are you targeting?

Along with high income households, Hyatt Delhi Residences targets groups of people ranging from guests looking for relocation, single female travellers, corporate travellers, families, expats, medical tourists, embassies and project-related businesses, or anyone who is looking for a luxurious experience at our property.

With most of the hotel brands present in the Aerocity cluster, including one of Hyatt brand as well, what would Hyatt residences offer in the area?

Hyatt Delhi Residences, being a branded residence, is perfect for travellers that are seeking more than just a hotel room. It provides the luxury of a hotel with the warmth of home, with more space and additional amenities to make the entire stay convenient, as opposed to a regular hotel. Ideal for an extended stay with family and friends, or even for work purposes, Hyatt Delhi Residences it offers a unique and chic experience to the guests. With exclusive privileges and a wide range of facilities, it provides trendy contemporary styled apartments perfect to relax or host friends, family and colleagues for a long duration. Guests can choose from all-inclusive apartments or duplex townhouses that are fully-serviced, fitted with elegant wooden flooring, practical kitchens, bathroom amenities and walk-in wardrobes, with spectacular views from the private balcony, patio and terrace.

How are you planning the promotions and marketing for the property?

Hyatt Delhi Residences, keeping in mind an ideal stay for the guests, offers various stay packages which include staycations, bed and breakfast, long stay deals and a lot more which are perfect for corporate travellers or guests that are looking to unwind and relax at the property. We are engaging with online travel partners for leisure business, whereas we have long-staying offers and deals uploaded on the hyattdelhiresidences.com website.

Are you also looking at combining the properties -- Residences and Andaz for groups and weddings?

Hyatt Delhi Residences and Andaz Delhi cater to different target groups. However, if a guest staying at Hyatt Delhi Residences would like to opt for a service or experience available at Andaz Delhi and vice-versa, we would be happy to facilitate the same.



Guests can choose from all-inclusive apartments or duplex townhouses



Eco-friendly Ecoleen

Solid waste management with Ecoleen automatic composting machine is a switch-start technology towards a greener earth as the waste is converted into compost in 24 hours.

Synergia Metier, based in Chanalon, Mohali in Punjab, specialises in designing & developing automatic composting machines offered under the brand Ecoleen. The basic function of this machine is to convert wet organic waste into compost which is immensely useful for canteens, restaurants, hotels, housing societies, theatres, malls, offices, hospitals, municipalities and several other places.

The ISO 9001:2015, QCI Certified, GeM registered company manufactures easy to operate and energy efficient machines with the ability to change organic

- Disposal is done at the site. All the transportation cost and dumping area space is saved.
- The machine is user-friendly.
- It lets your 'Waste Earn' for you. The compost produced in 24 hours by Ecoleen composting machine is an organic fertiliser. So the money spent on disposal of the waste is saved and the compost so produced can be sold in the market or used in gardens.
- The manure thus formed is good in organic carbon, nitrogen and other essential elements and minerals. This saves you from using artificial fertilisers & pesticides, paving the way for good health.



Dr. Shekhar C Jindal



waste into compost in just 24 hours. The Ecoleen automatic composting machine is used for solid waste management, which is a social responsibility since it affects our society, surroundings and environment. Solid waste management with Ecoleen machine is a switch-start technology towards a greener earth, free from all solid/wet waste. Solid waste is converted into compost in 24 hours under a given set of conditions.

The Ecoleen automatic composting machine offers the following benefits:

- When every inch of space cost is so high, the compact machine Ecoleen answers the issue effectively. No pits are required and space for landfills or dumping grounds is saved.
- There is no mess by rats, maggots, flies, mosquitoes, leading to clean environment and good health of the society/organisation/community using Ecoleen composting machine.

"Only when Solar Energy-Ground Water Harvest-Solid Waste Management with automatic composting are installed you can have the 'Complete Green Project Zone' in your establishment, says **Dr. Shekhar C Jindal**, Director, Synergia Metier.

Ecoleen therefore works silently to clean your waste and thus the environment. It is available in 25 kg, 50 kg, 100 kg, and 200 kg regular models and higher capacities as per specific requirements. Cleanliness, a habit and a social responsibility, is now a switch-start concept due to Ecoleen automatic composting machine.



Ecoleen works silently to clean your waste and thus the environment

On the revival PATH

Hoteliers talk about their plans to revive business post the pandemic, new offers and incentives for guests, and the need for priority vaccination of hospitality workers and support from the government.



Neha Rawat



Kush Kapoor CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts

POST-COVID STRATEGY

Due to COVID-19, the whole industry is facing a unique and challenging situation, and the signs of recovery shall be seen only when majority of the population is vaccinated. As of now people shall be apprehensive to visit crowded places, hence we have brought around certain changes in the way we operate so that there is a trust factor with the guests. Some of the measures undertaken are providing kitchen access to the guests and customers via camera. Also, we have initiated a touchless campaign which ensures minimum touch points for the food delivery.

Post-COVID we are certain to excel based on the measures taken, for instance, hygiene & transparency with the customers is the key to gain market share & we are confident about achieving the same. We will continue enhancing our offers to ensure our guests get value return on their investment & time with us.

REVIVING BUSINESS

Hotel business is a guest-oriented business and hence we are bound to get affected due to the outbreak. Yet

Hospitality industry is already undergoing a tremendous pressure to survive, best possible measures shall be taken as and when the situation normalises. Benefits & incentives include flexibility in check-in, check-out timings, upgrades to room categories, packages suitable to the individual need, personalising the guest room, upgrading our offerings with better value return, flexibility in cancellations / amendments of bookings & even giving credit for future visits.

EFFECT OF SECOND WAVE

While our hotel business will definitely be impacted, we are confident that this time recoveries will be sooner due to the aggressive vaccination drive. In the wake of the night curfew in Delhi, we have started serving early dinner. Also, ceremonies will now be held on timings adhering to government norms.



Hygiene, transparency is key to gaining market share



Kush Kapoor



certain measures are being taken to ensure survival; some of them are – manpower optimisation, inventory utilisation of stores, emphasising more on word of mouth publicity, driving business through online food aggregators to deliver food from our restaurants. Four of our restaurants Kheer, Chi Ni, Del & Roasted by Roseate are now delivering food at home where even guest gets more confidence in delivery from the hotel end.

EXPECTATIONS FROM GOVT

As hospitality is one of the worst impacted industries, we request the government for industry status, lower taxes to attract more business, change in excise policy, one-stop window for approvals, online processes, short-term interest free or low interest loans for rebuilding business. In addition to this, immediate cash relief must be given to avoid mass lay-offs of employees.



Rahul Joshi

Rahul Joshi **General Manager, Taj Hotel & Convention Centre, Agra**

A SAFE EXPERIENCE

At the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL), the safety and well-being of our guests, associates, partners and other stakeholders has always been our utmost priority. As a part of Tajness – A Commitment Restrengthened, IHCL hotels have undertaken a host of initiatives that reflect our commitment to assuring a seamless and a safe experience. We are following measures strictly, which include: non-invasive thermal screening of all entrants including our guests and associates; mandating use of statutorily prescribed protective equipment by our guests and associates; redesigned seating arrangements at guest areas including restaurants and banquets in accordance with the physical distancing norms; use of proven disinfectants for regular and deep disinfection of all hotel areas; use of digital technology for payments and dining experiences. Menus have been digitised and are easily accessible simply via scanning QR codes. The redesigned menus at our hotel have a greater emphasis on wellness-oriented food sections for healthier meals and to boost immunity levels.

NEW OFFERS

We have introduced new offers based on guest demand. The growing demand for staycation, workcation and dining out, in a safe, warmly serviced

and trusted ambience, is clearly visible in the booking trends that we have observed. Our staycation offer, 4D initiative and Urban Getaways ensure a seamless and memorable stay. Dream, Drive, Discover, Delight – our new offering – gives guests the perfect opportunity to drive with families and friends to unwind at our luxury hotel in Agra, with an experiential itinerary to keep them engaged.

From the time of reopening, we have experienced an upward swing in the business. It has been a privilege to welcome back guests to our hotel for their personal and business requirements. Our new offers and well-crafted initiatives have yielded results. With a focus on domestic markets through strong performing offers such as 4D, we will expand the outreach and our strategy in future will be to reach out to the markets which become more accessible by air. Our stringent safety and hygiene protocols remain our focus and we continue to monitor the evolving situation. MICE has been a strong segment for our hotel; we hope to see more recovery and confidence on this front.

SEAMLESS SERVICES

With the launch and phased implementation of I-ZEST, IHCL's Zero-Touch Service Transformation, we will bring a suite of digital solutions across our hotels. From zero-touch check-ins and check-outs, digital invoicing, online payment options and QR codes to digital menus in restaurants, I-ZEST's digital features will further ensure social distancing for both, guests and associates, while maintaining secure and seamless services.



I-ZEST will ensure social distancing for guests and associates





Subhankar Bose

Subhankar Bose **General Manager, Kochi Marriott Hotel**

SAFETY AND HYGIENE PROTOCOLS

With the current second wave of the pandemic hitting the country, as a hotel we would continue to focus on Marriott's Commitment to Clean – heightened safety and hygiene protocols to ensure all our guests continue to find us as the safest haven for business or leisure. Our focus on staycation offerings will be enriched considering customer feedback and preferences we have received and what has worked well for us. Home delivery, food and beverage offerings and DIY menu has been further enhanced under the umbrella of 'Marriott on Wheels' and our wedding packages will take the center stage to cater to all social and wedding events in the city.

Currently while the country is going into fresh restrictions once again and the vaccination drive is also ongoing, we will continue to evolve with fresh strategies to deal with the changing situations, which seem to be quite unpredictable. The vaccination drive has been steady across the country, however the government directive clearly states that we need to be mindful even after vaccination by continuing to wear a mask, observe social distancing and opt for regular sanitisation. We need to explore business opportunities carefully keeping in mind the safety of both our guests and associates. Safety would be our utmost priority and business revival will depend on the situation and government directives.

ONE-OF-A-KIND STAYCATION PACKAGE

In addition to benefits and incentives, we are doing our best to safeguard the health of our guests. Our sanitisation protocols as per Marriott's Commitment to Clean guidelines would continue to be our focus areas. Most families visit our hotel to relax and visit Lulu Mall for shopping as our hotel is situated within the campus of the mall. As of now, we are working with the mall team to provide them with excellent shopping offers and discounts by following all COVID-related protocols. Our one-of-a-kind staycation package



Home delivery, F&B offerings have been further enhanced



comes with excellent inclusions including a value add-on Lulu Shopping Mall voucher.

FOCUS AREAS

The situation is still unpredictable, we still do not know the intensity of the second wave, our industry's core is travel. Our sustenance and future depend largely on the travel fraternity, hence until then our prime focus will continue to remain on our products such as Marriott on Wheels, Marriott staycations and contactless food and beverage offerings at our F&B outlets.

NEED FOR PRIORITY VACCINATION

The nature of work in hospitality is selfless services and during the pandemic, associates employed in the hospitality industry continued to provide services and hotel accommodation for quarantine guests, making them more vulnerable to the pandemic and if the second wave is turning severe in nature, it would be ideal if hospitality associates are made eligible for priority vaccination. We also expect that the government will recognise us as an industry and support us to weather this severe economic crisis.



Vivek Yagnik

Vivek Yagnik **General Manager, Samode Palace & Samode Bagh**

STRINGENT PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES

The COVID-19 pandemic that has engulfed the world at large has had a great impact on us all and our main concern at this time is the health and safety of all our guests and team members. With the second wave in India, we are now gearing up to re-start operations keeping the stringent precautionary measures in place. A lot of reasoning and study has gone into preparing our staff and hotels to welcome guests back. We have re-assessed and re-planned our brand and service

standards in preparation to ensure the highest level of guest safety. All measures being taken are in keeping with the guidelines issued for the hospitality industry by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, the WHO and FSSAI.

Our cancellation policies are flexible and date changes are provided to all guests. Also, we encourage guests to opt for longer stays & all-meal plans so that venturing out of the property is avoided. Plus, with all our properties having abundance outdoor options & all rooms having their separate air-conditioning, it provides guests the peace of mind they are looking for.

IMPACT OF COVID'S SECOND WAVE

We have seen a surge in cancellations & date changes, however, with our policies being flexible, we are hoping



Cancellation policies are flexible and date changes are provided to all guests



this is only momentary. Also, with the government making the RT-PCR test mandatory for all guests checking-in, it ensures that maximum care is being taken at the highest level. There will be a dip in sales, however, the entire world is suffering from this crisis & as responsible members of the travel industry, we support all the measures taken by the government.

PRIORITY VACCINATION FOR HOSPITALITY WORKERS

Priority vaccination is ideal as people cannot be cooped up in homes for long, they will want to venture out for a short break, even if it is at a drivable distance. Vaccinating the staff would reduce the risk of any infections at hotel properties. Also, it would ease the pressure on hotels, which if it continues, could crumble the industry.

The importance of evolution

Emanda Vaz, Head – Ultra Luxury Sales, Embassy Group, discusses why one must always challenge themselves to learn new skills in order to evolve and flourish.

One thing you learned during the lockdown?

The lockdown gave me time and perspective on the importance of evolution and why one must always challenge themselves to learn new skills. Golf was the one sport I always perceived as being slow paced. However, the golf course was the only place open to take a class during the lockdown and really get some fresh air. One session later, I was hooked.

Not only does golf push you psychically, it also is a game based on the strategy of limiting mistakes and maximising scoring potential – the added bonus is it is an excellent platform to network, meet new people or relax with friends, all while burning off some calories, and soaking in some Vitamin D.

Which is your favourite holiday destination in India and internationally?

In India, it would have to be Kabini for its wildlife and calm, though I would like to travel and explore a lot more of India than I currently have. Barcelona is one of

my most favourite international holiday destinations – known for its diverse offerings of art, history, fantastic food, the local people, and vibe make it an unforgettable experience. Also, it has mountains and beaches, and the architectural brilliance of Antoni Gaudi.

Which holiday destination you would like to go next?

I had a fully planned holiday to Japan in April last year to experience the Sakura season which had to be cancelled due to the lockdown. I am planning to visit Japan as soon as travel eases up. Known for its perfect mix of culture, history and modern comfort, the amazing food is another key reason to visit this beautiful and unique country.



Emanda Vaz



I would like to explore a lot more of India than I currently have



Steady growth in India

Launched in 2016, Luxury Escapes India has partnered with over 150 resorts in the region, including brands such as The Ritz-Carlton, The Oberoi, Four Seasons and more.

Luxury Escapes has elevated its India Country Manager, Arun Ashok to the position of Regional Head India and Middle East, in recognition of the growing importance of these markets. In his new role, Ashok will continue to grow the Indian base – Luxury Escapes' fastest growing international market while simultaneously exploring strategic growth opportunities in the Middle East, particularly UAE and

Saudi Arabia. "The Middle East is uniquely positioned to bounce back from COVID quicker and stronger than most markets, given their emphasis on regional travel and the aggressive vaccination drive that's currently being executed across key locations," says **Arun Ashok**. "The advantage with a nimble organisation like Luxury Escapes is that we can ramp up our operations in a new market like Saudi Arabia relatively quickly to capitalise on new opportunities while maintaining steady growth in our legacy international markets like India and the US."



Arun Ashok



We can ramp up our operations in a new market relatively quickly



Ashley Furniture's bedroom set

◆ Ashley Furniture Home Store launches a new range of bedroom furniture that promise to introduce an exquisite vintage ambience into your contemporary spaces. They are brought to India by Dash Square. Made of wood, veneers and engineered wood, the Kisper King Platform Bed features a brushed dry-brown wood finish and polyester upholstery. Furthermore, included slats eliminate need for a foundation/box spring. The Kisper Dresser and Mirror set is made of wood, veneers and engineered wood and features a mirror that attaches to the back of the dresser. The dresser has 9 smooth-gliding drawers with dovetail construction.



Yours Concretely unveils wall clocks

◆ Yours Concretely has recently launched a Wall Clock collection that beautifully highlights the expressive quality of the versatile industrial material. The brand is known for its clean and contemporary decor pieces handcrafted using materials like cement and concrete. Wall clocks from Yours Concretely are hand-created and hand-poured, keeping the values of artisanal craftsmanship intact. Ideal for homes and offices, these concrete wall clocks' rough-hewn textures and subtle variations work up a rustic-meets-contemporary character that blends just beautifully in any interior or any mixture of styles. Designed with sustainability in mind, Yours Concretely designs minimalist, eco-friendly and sustainable pieces.

Whiteteak table lamps

◆ The Whiteteak Company has recently launched Designer Table Lamp Collection across their stores in India. The collection comprises table lamps in different designs, patterns, styles & colours. Made in the metal base in different frames, these lampshades are plated in chrome & other finishes. Set in the Way lampshade is made of a metal body with a marble base with attractive fabric as its shade, while Pull the Plug lampshade is made of a metal frame plated in chrome finish with a metal shade in black mirror finish.





Plüsch launches Work's

◆ Plüsch has launched a bespoke kitchen – Work's – by Eggersmann, a German kitchen brand. Based on the idea that kitchen is a workshop, Work's brings together a professional kitchen's functionality, eye-catching aesthetics and sophistication through clean lines and gleaming finishes. The traverse made of black powdered aluminium above the working units acts like a bridge. It features a stainless-steel suspending system, which is a mobile module with a rack and crossbars for storing kitchen tools, oils, pots, spoons and everything else you generally need for cooking. It also has a specially designed exhaust device made of stainless steel. The other features are – The Turn with glass fronts and rotating cabinets; the islands in powder-coated aluminium, the table in natural oak; sink unit in stainless steel, etc.

Weikfield's immunity boosters

◆ Weikfield Foods has announced the launch of two immunity boosting products under its brand EcoValley. The new range consists of EcoValley Divya Kawach and EcoValley Pahadi Kahwa. This has been developed based on traditional Indian recipes. Divya Kawach which was inspired by the formulation specified by the Ministry of AYUSH; is made up of tulsi, shunthi, dalcini, black pepper and mulethi while Pahadi Kahawa is made of 17 herbs and spices.



House of Rugs' carpets

◆ House of Rugs has launched carpets that feature stunning floral patterns, which elevate the interiors of any space. These magnificent carpets are hand tufted in the full loop technique and are made of wool. They are ideal for your living room, lounge area, bedroom, dining room or office. These are not mere carpets, but storied legacies passed down through generations. Each hand-made carpet is unique, owing to the human touch, which is bound to vary.

Ellementry launches Twine

◆ Ellementry has launched Twine – a collection of handcrafted baskets that pays homage to the traditional craft of weaving. Made of wire and wood in a chic contemporary style, these elegant baskets play many roles in your home. You can store loaves of bread/buns in the rectangular Twine wire bread basket which is accompanied with a cloth napkin, while the Twine wire basket (tall, taper and round) is ideal for storing fruits and vegetables.





Focus on leisure

Hotels are luring domestic travellers, says
Avadhoot Mahimkar, Director, Sales and Marketing, The Resort Mumbai.



Avadhoot Mahimkar

How do you think the scenario for hotels has changed post-COVID?

It has affected almost all hotels very badly. The ADR which was hiking up has gone down drastically and occupancies have seen the worst dip. For a hotel to sustain such times, cost cutting in various segments is the only option, of course not compromising on quality for sure. Portion serving sizes, manpower costs, etc. can be relooked. Also, the additional costs of sanitisation, gloves, masks would also be a part of the hotel costs for some years now, a hotel should really look at how every single penny can be saved.

Is there any surge in footfall post-COVID?

During the initial months after some relaxations were

given, there weren't many footfalls. People were hesitant to come out at first. However, the footfalls did increase during the festive months like October 2020 onwards till February 2021 where the situation was getting under control and we were experiencing a flat COVID curve. Also, as people were very much within the four walls for almost six to seven months, after some point of time they did venture out during the next two to three months. However, now with some of the parts again going under lockdown, the footfalls have reduced.

How are you catering to domestic leisure travellers?

Currently targeting domestic travellers is the only key. As most of the states are still having high COVID figures and with the travel restrictions, domestic leisure travellers are the ones which a hotel can turn to. Be it a room booking or a table at the restaurant, no hotel is leaving any piece of business.

Launching attractive room packages with heavy discounts on food and other activities (whatever are open like spa, etc.), hotels are trying to pamper the local domestic travellers. Even there is very little but genuine demand from local travellers who were confined in their rooms for six to seven months, but everyone is going for the discounted tariffs and dirt cheap rates.

Have MICE and weddings picked up?

Months like October onwards till February were always peak months for wedding groups. This year also, we saw the same trend, however due to the minimum cap size on the wedding groups, there were lot of marriages which were for 50-75 people only. Calling huge numbers for a wedding has as of now, taken a backseat. However, to cater to such small groups the manpower costs still go high which again a hotel has to look into.

MICE movements are slowing increasing, but again it is the same story with reduced numbers where a group size is not more than 10-15 rooms. Still the ones who want to have some travel done, are enjoying the cheapest rates they could find in the city and with big hotel brands trying to get somewhat occupancy in their kitty, the companies are going for it.

Having said that, the MICE segment would surely take time to bloom and would completely depend on the COVID curve, government restrictions and travel restrictions.

Are you seeing any increase in domestic business travellers yet?

As of now, the demand from domestic business travellers is very less. With most of the big companies still continuing with the work from home mode, it is expected that business travel will take some months to match the earlier demand.



Everyone is going for the discounted tariffs and dirt cheap rates



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Appointments



TEJUS JOSE

General Manager
Renaissance Bengaluru

★ Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel has appointed Tejus Jose as its General Manager. Jose specialises in upscale and luxury hotels and has a rich experience spanning over two decades. His strategic thinking, Sales, Marketing, MICE and Revenue Management expertise have all turned out to be an asset to the properties he has been associated with. In his new role, he will lead operations, guests experience and help position the Renaissance Hotel brand as a true 'Lifestyle Hotel' brand of Marriott International.



SUNIL KUMAR

General Manager
The Westin Goa

★ Sunil Kumar has been appointed as General Manager of the soon to be launched 'The Westin Goa'. With over two decades of extensive career in world-class luxury hotels such as the Oberoi hotels, St Regis, Westin, Hyatt and more, Kumar has extensive knowledge of organisational development and growth, process orientation and personnel management. As the GM of The Westin Goa, with focus on health and wellness, Kumar will bring forth his beliefs in personal well-being to offer an enriching experience for guests.



RISHI KUMAR

General Manager
Indore Marriott Hotel

★ Indore Marriott Hotel has appointed Rishi Kumar as General Manager. An expert hotelier, Kumar has worked with Sheraton Grand Bangalore at Brigade Getaway, Taj Lands' End Mumbai, and the likes. In his new role, he envisions a stellar roadmap for the hotel's positioning within the hospitality landscape. He has consistently displayed an incisive business sense along with fostering an environment of innovative thinking for driving revenues and operational excellence in all his assignments.



PRABAL SRIVASTAVA

General Manager
Grand Mercure Vadodara Surya Palace

★ Grand Mercure Vadodara Surya Palace has appointed Prabal Srivastava as the new General Manager. Srivastava comes with over 20 years of hospitality experience working with various brands including The Oberoi Group of Hotels and Resorts, The Taj Hotels and The Lalit Hotels. In his most recent assignment, Srivastava was General Manager of Golkonda Hotels & Resort, one of the oldest business hotels in Hyderabad with room inventory of 139. He holds a degree in Hotel Management from Mangalore University.



DEBOPRIYO GUHA

Director of Sales
DoubleTree by Hilton Pune – Chinchwad

★ DoubleTree by Hilton has announced the appointment of Debopriyo Guha as Director of Sales. Guha comes with strong experience in the hospitality industry spanning over 12 years where he has worked with global brands such as Oberoi, IHG, Taj Hotels, and Hyatt etc. He will now be responsible for driving all the Sales related actions taken and implemented at DoubleTree by Hilton Pune. He will be responsible for the development and implementation of business strategies which are aligned with the brand's overall vision.



DEEPTI KAPIL

Corporate Manager – Mktg & Comm,
Goldfinch Group of Hotels

★ Deepti Kapil has recently joined as Corporate Manager – Marketing and Communications at Goldfinch Group of Hotels. As Brand Manager she shall play a pivotal role in translating the company's business objectives into marketing strategies that generate revenue. She will be responsible for developing annual marketing communications plans, monitoring trends within the industry, and playing a key role in tracking key metrics and establish positioning for Goldfinch Hotels across India.



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