

FOR THE HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONAL

Hospitality BIZ

www.hospitalitybizindia.com

MAY 2020


VOL 13 | ISSUE 4 | PAGES 48

**Hospitality Industry
Desperately
looking for help to
tide over the storm**



Hospitality BIZ

Stay Home, Stay Safe & Stay Relevant



With the changing consumption patterns, it is time to revise your communication approach. Let's break this social isolation, digitally.

Collaborate with us through our varied technology platforms of Webinar, e-Learning Programme and Virtual Exhibition.

These dynamic platforms will seamlessly connect you with your channel partners from the comfort of your homes.

For staff & student training and knowledge-sharing, these platforms could serve as your one-point approach.

Such sessions will spark ideas, connections and creativity while ensuring the new norm of social distancing is maintained.

For further information, write to:

Ajay Wadode

ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in | +91 8087127814/+91 8767031410

Pooja Nalawade

pooja.nalawade@saffronsynergies.in | +91 9769052241

CONTENTS

News:	6
Expert Speak: Kamlesh Barot	12
Cover Story:	14
Interview: Abhinav Jindal	20
Expert Speak: Siddharth Goenka	22
Interview: Pallavi Agarwal, Founder, goStops	24
Spotlight: UNWTO	26
Expert Speak: Rajesh Shetty	27
Expert Speak: Abhinav Kapoor and Deepika Menon	28
Interview: Sylvain Laroche	30
Spotlight: Koolcha	32
Interview: Shardul Singh Byas	33
Wine and Spirits: Abhay Kewadkar	34
Interview: Subrata Mukherji	35
Interview: Nisha Kukreja	36
Chef's Corner: Chef Ilan Garousi	37
Flag Off:	38
Freeze Frames:	40
Product Showcase:	42
New Appointments:	44
Expert Speak: Vikram Goel	46



PG. 14



PG. 26



PG. 33



PG. 37

FOR THE HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONAL

Hospitality Biz

www.hospitalitybizindia.com

EDITOR & COO*

Sheldon Santwan

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Prasenjit Chakraborty

EDITORIAL TEAM

Mumbai

CHIEF SUB-EDITOR

Disha Shah Ghosh

Hyderabad

SR.REPORTER CUM SUB-EDITOR

Asmita Mukherjee

CONTRIBUTORS

Nivesh Bhagatani (Delhi)

Marcellus Baptista (Mumbai)

Bhisham Mansukhani (Mumbai)

Dominic CostaBir (Mumbai)

MARKETING TEAM

Mumbai

SR.MANAGER - SALES & MARKETING

Sunil Dcosta : 9821798612

Ajay Wadode: 8087127814

MANAGER - SALES & MARKETING

Pooja Nalawade : 9769052241

MARKETING CO-ORDINATOR & SUBSCRIPTION & DATABASE

Gauri Sawant: 022 - 67121875

MANAGER - COLLECTION

Jhanvi Thakur: 022 - 67121890

HEAD CIRCULATION

Raju Chendavankar

DESIGN TEAM

SR. DESIGNER: Madhukar Ingavale

*Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act



Saffron Synergies

MUMBAI

Sterling House, 5/7 Sorabji Santuk Lane,
Opp. Dr. Cawasji Hormasji Street, Dhobi Talao,
Marine Lines (E), Mumbai 400 002

Tel: 91-022-6101 1700 / 701 Fax: 91-022-6712 1854

Clamour for Domestic Tourism

The challenges thrown in by the COVID-19 conundrum have no precedent in the recorded history of humankind. Its long-term consequences in every industry are yet to be completely ascertained. The complete ban on travel and suspension of domestic and international flights clearly portray the plight of the travel & tourism industry. The demand for outbound travel is virtually ruled out at least for next few months as the top destinations across the world are devastated by the pandemic. This brings clamour for domestic tourism. To be more candid, the sector is being viewed as a saviour.

In view of this, the Union Ministry of Tourism along with state governments is taking stakeholders of the industry into confidence to come out with a checklist that includes sanitation and hygiene as critical requirements, among other things. This exercise is to infuse confidence and alleviate fears among the travellers. It will be based on common parameters and acceptable to every state. Besides this, the industry may see sops from both the Central and state governments to encourage domestic travel.

Now, the question, are such measures enough to motivate people to embark on domestic travel immediately after the lockdown is completely lifted? The magnitude of the virus in the states of Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, and West Bengal is far more profound when compared with the rest of India.

Interestingly, all the above mentioned states register significant footfall of domestic tourists. Experts in the industry with regard to outbound travel opine that people will avoid crowded destinations and rather would opt for offbeat or lesser-known ones, at least for next few months. If this holds good for outbound travel; then the same logic applies for domestic travel as well. Are such (offbeat or lesser-known) domestic destinations prepared enough in all respects to welcome tourists? Apart from checklist and sops, the need of the hour is to take local people of the respective states into confidence. Support of locals has always been an essential element for the success of tourism. Moreover, against the backdrop of COVID-19 their support becomes extremely crucial than ever before. It is high time to come out with a full-proof plan to minimise the damage the pandemic inflicts on the industry.



Prasenjit Chakraborty

Assistant Editor

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

BRANCH OFFICES

NEW DELHI

C/o Economic Research
India Ltd
D-100, 1st Floor,
Okhla Industrial Area
Phase - 1, New Delhi -
110020
Tel: 91-011-
26810964/65/66
Fax: 91-011-26810968

BANGALORE

C/o Adfactors PR Pvt Ltd
AL-LATHEEF, 2nd Flr.,
No. 2 Union Street, Off
Infantry Road
Bangalore - 560 001
Tel.: 91-80-4154 0382
Fax: 91-80-4113 3059

KOCHI

Poothully Lane,
Poothully Junction,
Mathai Manjooram Road,
Kochi - 682014
Tel.: 91-484-404 9871
Fax: 91-484-404 9871

CHENNAI

709 - 701,
Bathari Road,
Office No. 204,
Prince Center, 2nd Flr.,
Chennai - 600006.
Tel.: 91-44-42655800
Fax: 91-44-28552497

PUNE

S-203, Ashoka Mall
Opp. Hotel Sun n Sand,
Bund Garden Road,
Pune 411001

GOA

402, Fourth Floor,
Central Towers, Near Sai
Mandir,
Boca-da-Vaca Road,
Panjim - 403001
Cell: +91-9822100020

HYDERABAD

Saffron Media 302 Dega
Towers, Rajbhavan Road,
Somajiguda,
Hyderabad: 500 082
Tel : 040-66103103

Printed & Published by Bharat Bhushan Bahal on behalf of Saffron Synergies Pvt. Ltd., published from Sterling House, 5/7 Sorabji Santuk Lane, Opp. Dr. Cawasji Hormasji Street, Dhobi Talao, Mumbai 400 002 and printed at Jayant Printery, 352/354, J.S.S. Road, Murlidhar Temple Compound, Thakurdwar, Mumbai 400 002. Editor : Sheldon Santwan

All rights reserved. No part of this may be reproduced in any form, without the permission of the Editor.

IMPORTANT: Whilst care is taken prior to acceptance of advertising copy, it is not possible to verify its contents. Hospitality Biz will not be responsible for such contents, nor for any loss or damages incurred as a result of transactions with companies, associations or individuals advertising in this publication. Readers therefore make necessary inquiries before sending any monies or entering into any agreements with advertisers or otherwise acting on an advertisement in any manner whatsoever.

HOSPITALITY BIZ EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD



Riyaz Amlani
CEO, Impresario Entertainment
& Hospitality Pvt Ltd



Nathan Andrews
Development Consultant



Chander Baljee
CMD, Royal Orchid Hotels
Limited



Shatbhi Basu
Director, Creative Consultants
& STIR Academy of
Bartending



Jean-Michel Cassé
COO, India and South Asia,
AccorHotels



Jose Dominic
CEO, CGH Earth Group



Rajiv Duggal
Director
Travel Specialists LLP



Farhat Jamal
Advisor Special Projects,
IHCL



K. B. Kachru
Chairman Emeritus and Prin-
cipal Advisor, Radisson Hotel
Group, South Asia



Param Kannampilly
CMD, Concept Hospitality
Pvt Ltd



Chef Sanjeev Kapoor
Promoter, FoodFood
and Wonderchef



Akshay Kulkarni
VP APAC
DigiValet



Jackie Matai
Co-Founder, Aspri Spirits
Pvt Ltd



HA Mishra
CMD, Food Design Hospitality
Systems Pvt Ltd



Nirupa Shankar
Director, Brigade Hospitality
Services Ltd



Jimmy Shaw
Director, Bona Sera Hotels Ltd



Vijay Thacker
Director, India, Horwath HTL



Manav Thadani
Founder Chairman, Hotelivate

Big Bonanza

Subscription Offer



Subscribe Online

www.hospitalitybizindia.com

Year	Cover Price	By Post	By Courier	Overseas Airmail	Online
1	Rs. 480/-	Rs. 450/-	Rs. 840/-	70 USD	30 USD
2	Rs. 960/-	Rs. 850/-	Rs. 1560/-	120 USD	50 USD
3	Rs. 1440/-	Rs. 1100/-	Rs. 2160/-	170 USD	75 USD

For more details, contact:

Darshana Bhosale : 022-67121881

E-mail: darshana.bhosale@saffronsynergies.in

This offer is valid up to 31st March, 2020

YES... I would like to subscribe

Name: _____ Designation: _____

Organisation: _____ Activity: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Country: _____ Pincode (Zip): _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____ Website: _____

Cell: _____

Payment Details: _____ Cheque / DD No.: _____

Dated: _____ Drawn on: _____

For upes: _____

In Favour of Saffron Synergies Pvt. Ltd., Payable at Mumbai, India.

(Attn. Indian subscribers: Please add ₹ 25/- for Non-Mumbai cheques)



Sterling House 5/7, Sorabji Santuk Lane, Opp. Cawasji Hormasji Lane, Dhobi Talao, Marine Lines(E) Mumbai - 400 002.
Tel.: 91- 22 - 6101 1700 / 701/67121800/818
Fax: 91-22-6712 1854, Website: www.hospitalitybizindia.com

Industry resorts to food delivery for alternate revenue model amid crisis

Hotels & online platforms looking to stay relevant at a time when business from rooms has come to a standstill

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

At a time when revenues from hotel bookings and airlines have come to a standstill and recovery post lifting of the lockdown seems to be an arduous process, innovation seems to be the order of the day in the new normal world. With no help from the government, the industry now is in the search for alternative sources for revenue generation to be able to weather the harsh storm that has engulfed the industry.

Working in this direction, MakeMyTrip has extended its partnership with its partners in the luxury, premium and independent hotels space across India to deliver gourmet meals to the customers' homes starting with Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Bengaluru. The service is now available on the MakeMyTrip app, and the offering is available under the 'Meals & Deals' category.

This development comes at a time when the lockdown is expected to cut 40-50 per cent revenue of the country's organised dine-in restaurants this fiscal, and even post lifting of the lockdown restaurants are expected to run at 25-30% of its service levels in the first 45 days, according to a CRISIL Research.

Satyen Jain, CEO, Pride Group of Hotels, said that due to the pandemic, the hospitality industry has come to a standstill. "The industry is in the search for new methods of revenue generation to keep the business going. Hence, this new move from MMT to generate alternate revenue stream is welcome."

Mentioning that Pride Group is also a part of the MMT's 'Meals & Deals' initiative Jain said, "At the Pride, few of our hotels have also initiated the "food delivery" option, so that our guest can once again rejoice the fine dining experience in a safe environment. Few of our hotels have entered into an alliance with this initiative of MMT too."

Not only Pride Group, but five-star hotel brands such as Marriott, Hilton, Taj, and Hyatt Group have also recently started home delivery services. Some have tied up with third party food delivery service providers

such as Swiggy and Zomato.

According to Sanjay Mamgain, Corporate Chef, Lords Hotels and Resorts, the online food delivery market share in India was expected to grow up to USD 8 billion by 2022. "Post-COVID era and till a vaccination is found food delivery industry will find more prominence as hotels look for alternative

with existing aggregators dominating the space. This shows two things – potential home delivery market post-COVID-19 and desperation of big companies to survive."

According to Tanna, food delivery business is very different from aggregation business. "We have seen OYO coming into the business and winding it up before a year.

This business requires a total focus to fight with current market leaders. It is too crowded with no one in profits".

As per industry experts, home delivery services do not have enough scope for making money as the space is already crowded with several players but indeed, it is a good strategy for brand positioning.

In partnership with fine-dining restaurants across the country, the MMT is providing delivery of select delicacies from K3 and Delhi Baking Company at JW Marriott (Delhi); Roasted by Roseate and The Kheer at Roseate House (Delhi); Limelight and Ging & Pinxx at Royal Orchid (Bengaluru); 24/7 Restaurant at The Lalit (Mumbai), The Right Place and Chin Chin at The Residency (Chennai) along with exclusive delivery options from The Park, Radisson and a few others in the Delhi-NCR region. MMT will be delivering orders through third-party service providers in respective cities.

Opening up the new offering, Deepak Tuli, Chief Business Officer, Emerging Businesses at MakeMyTrip said "As the world adopts life-altering measures to adjust to the new order, customers are seeking options that can help them with familiar experiences in safe and hygienic environment. Our new online gourmet delivery initiative is a step towards ensuring that food-lovers continue to enjoy their in-city fine-dining experiences by bringing their eating-out adventures to their homes. We are excited to rollout this offering together with our hotel partners, who are pushing the envelope to continue to offer unique and authentic hospitality experiences for our customers while they remain indoors practicing physical distancing to fight coronavirus." ■

asmita.mukherjee@safronsynergies.in



Satyen Jain
CEO
Pride Group of Hotels



Sanjay Mamgain
Corporate Chef
Lords Hotels and Resorts



Karan Tanna
Founder CEO, Yellow Tie
Hospitality, and Head of NRAI
Youth Committee



Deepak Tuli
Chief Business Officer
Emerging Businesses,
MakeMyTrip,

revenue sources," he said.

Appreciating the move by MakeMyTrip, Mamgain commented, "Currently only two major players are active in delivery segment, hence entry of new players is always welcome as this will lead to lower commissions and more options to the end user."

While explaining the whole business model of food delivery services, Karan Tanna, Founder CEO, Yellow Tie Hospitality, and Head of NRAI Youth Committee, said, "The premium home delivery market is profitable at unit level, but it does not have a big enough pie for a new player, especially

Hospitality industry urges for adoption of common compliance standard for safety and hygiene

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

The on-going lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, has resulted in offline conferences and gatherings are being cancelled or postponed. To overcome the situation, a growing number of webinars and virtual events are being hosted, to provide industry participants with networking opportunities.

Keeping in line with the trend, India International Hospitality Expo recently organised a webinar named, 'A Crisis Opens New Windows of Opportunity: Keeping the House in Order Post-COVID-19', which was moderated by Rakesh Kumar, Chairman, India Exposition Mart Ltd. and Sourish Bhattacharyya, Food Columnist, Mail Today and Curator, IHE Hotel Awards 2020.

The webinar speakers were some of the eminent personalities from the industry, Nirmal Khandelwal, Chairman, FCML Distributors Pvt. Ltd., Jayashree Nagaraj, Founder President and Chairperson of Professional Housekeepers Association, Nitin Nagrale, Founder and General Secretary, Hospitality Purchasing Managers

Forum, Ish Madaan, Regional Manager (India, Sri Lanka and Maldives), Rubbermaid Commercial Products, Ravinder Pal Srivastava, Executive Housekeeper, ITC Kakatiya, Hyderabad and Vice President PHA Telangana Chapter, Preeti Sharma Gulati, Executive Housekeeper, Hyatt Regency Delhi.

The webinar panelists discussed whether the hospitality sector will find itself burdened with the new sanitary and social distancing regulations along with mounting

bottom-line pressures. The panellists also deliberated whether housekeeping decision makers are preparing for the new reality, which will require housekeeping departments to develop new protocols, pare their numbers, centralise operations (or outsource them), and sell their expertise to corporate clients.

Ravinder Pal Srivastava, Executive Housekeeper, ITC Kakatiya, Hyderabad and Vice President PHA Telangana Chapter asked hotels to proceed with new SOPs and protocol, "as it will never be the same post COVID-19." She also pressed upon precautionary safety and suggested that hotels should heighten hygiene and sanitation

practices and highlighted the importance of information by saying, "Proper signage across hotel properties have to be put about washing hands, wearing masks, gloves etc."

Nirmal Khandelwal, Chairman, FCML Distributors Pvt. Ltd. also emphasised the importance of SOP and explained that the maintenance of hygiene and safe environment at hotels or restaurants will decide the increase of footfalls.

Nitin Nagrale, Founder and General Secretary, Hospitality Purchasing Managers Forum urged the industry leaders to clear the payments of small vendors in the hospitality industry, as in these trying times the vendors are also facing trouble to make their ends meet.

Preeti Sharma Gulati, Executive Housekeeper, Hyatt Regency Delhi who was earlier associated with a hospital said it is imperative for hotels to maintain hospital like hygiene in the near future to gain customer's confidence.

Jayashree Nagaraj, Founder President and Chairperson of Professional Housekeepers Association commented that the Government alone cannot do everything, so the hoteliers have to show vigilance about the subject. Moreover, she along with the other panellists pressed upon for a common compliance standard for safety and hygiene, which should be adopted by the industry. ■

asmita.mukherjee@safronsynergies.in



Accor Group assures non IATA travel agents of benefits

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

Accor Group has assured the travel Agents who are not a part of the private organization and apex trade association International Air Transport Association (IATA) that they will also get the same benefits and commission as an IATA certified agent.

Recently Accor Group hosted a brief online presentation named ADTOI Connect Webinar - Accor Hotels, through which, Randhir Gupta, Sr. Director of Sales - Leisure & Luxury, India and South Asia, Accor Hotels, informed that the non IATA members will get an articode upon logging their accounts into Accor group's website.

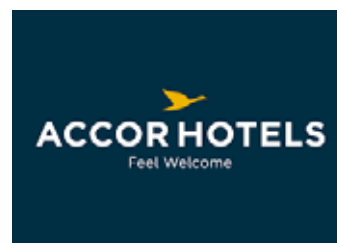
The articode is nothing but a Global Distribution System (GDS) code, and a travel agent who has made a booking by paying the full amount through his particular articode will be eligible for a commission, which he will receive within two weeks.

Gupta also announced that Accor Group will unveil many packages and add-ons with the room tariff once the hotels are ready to welcome guests post COVID-19. "We are coming up with various packages such as, staycation packages, and as soon as the lockdown gets over, we will share the

package details with the travel fraternity" Gupta said.

P P Khanna, President, ADTOI, one of the webinar panellists, suggested that SOPs should be streamlined everywhere. He said, "For travel and hospitality industry, domestic tourism should be priority now". He also recommended that instead of offering discounts, hotels can

offer add-ons, and also try co-branding with various visa or master cards for business activities but "lowering of prices are not encouraged". ■



Taj Rishikesh Resort & Spa, Uttarakhand secures a place in the Condé Nast Hot List 2020

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

The recently published 24th edition of Condé Nast 2020 Hot List by Condé Nast Traveller, announced 86 top hotels across the globe, which represent “the absolute best of the best”. Taj Rishikesh Resort & Spa, Uttarakhand from India made our country proud and secured a place in the hotlist. The resort also secured a place in the category of Best New Wellness Resorts in the World: 2020 Hot List of Condé Nast Traveller. Taj Rishikesh Resort & Spa, Uttarakhand is among the four winners globally, which represent the best hotels for a wellness break. In a conversation with Hospitality Biz, Devraj Singh, General Manager, Taj Rishikesh Resort & Spa, Uttarakhand explains the factors which enabled the year-old property to enter into the list.

Singh expressed his delight at winning the accolade, by saying, “To feature in the Condé Nast Hotlist 2020 is a dream come true for us. We opened a year back and right from the project initiation phase to the pre-opening to the launch and the successful running of the resort, we were hopeful of making it to this most prestigious list.”

“Rishikesh has always been an attraction for the guests looking for spirituality, yoga, meditation and adventure. There is something for everyone on offer at Rishikesh. We are



Devraj Singh
General Manager, Taj Rishikesh
Resort & Spa, Uttarakhand

located at an hour's drive from the town of Rishikesh in a very pristine location. We are blessed by the presence of the gracious Ganges that fringes our resort along three sides and the mighty Himalayan Shivalik Mountains on whose foothills, we are perched. Not only are we a wellness resort,

but we also have ample activities for guests to indulge in. There are Himalayan treks, nature walks, Ganga aarti, village visits, sunrise expeditions, rafting or bird walks, all undertaken in the company of our expert naturalists.

Our location, regional cuisine by our local chefs, warmth in service, and high standards have got us compliments from our guests who have been showcasing the resort to the world as our goodwill ambassadors,” the proud GM added.

While stating the steps taken to elevate the hotel into the list, he said, “We looked into every minor detail. It took us nearly 6 years, to design and build this address, ever so carefully, so that we remain one with our environment and true to the province, which can also be noticed in our Himalayan vernacular architecture. Our wellness experience is spread across more than 10,000 square feet and promises to enliven mind, body and soul with ancient wisdom and state-of-the-art equipment. For those seeking moments of quiet introspection, thoughtful spaces and nooks are all around the resort. From the last one year, we have started welcoming our guests and our complete focus has been in delivering bespoke experiences with the legendary Taj hospitality.”

The hotel won the tag at a time when every other hotel across the globe is fighting for its existence. While speaking about his plans to attract international travellers post COVID-19 crisis, Singh informed, “Taj Rishikesh is the part of The Indian Hotels Company Limited. At the company level, the action plan to welcome our guests post-COVID-19 is already in place and we have been training our associates extensively on the ‘New Normal’ standards. Every guest experience and touchpoint will be curated and personalised to ensure guests feel 100% safe at our resort.”

It is a great achievement for a hotel from India and this news spreads positivity during a time of all-around negativity for the industry. We congratulate Taj Rishikesh for its accolade and wish for the uplift of the industry soon. ■

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in



Industry experts voice concerns about the future of Hospitality and F&B industry

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

Food and Hotel India Informa recently organised a web conference on COVID-19 Challenges, Change and Healing Solutions, Hospitality Biz was the media partner of the programme. The e-conference was attended by some of the leading dignitaries of the food and hospitality industry, who came together to talk about the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on the sector. Anurag Katriar, President, National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) and Executive Director & CEO, deGustibus Hospitality and Himmat Anand, Founder, Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels were among the eminent panellists.

Anurag Katriar, President, National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) and Executive Director & CEO, deGustibus Hospitality said, "The food business is virtually at zero. There is a massive spectre of job loss and there is no end to it. The reality of the trade right now is we are not in a position with much of a solution in our hands, as it depends upon so many unknown variables." Katriar mentioned that now the primary focus of the nation is to contain the

spread of Corona, and business has become a second priority even for the government.

Katriar displayed worry about the post COVID-19 situation by stating, "We will take a very substantial amount of time to reach where we were previously. We would be lucky if we manage to get 50% of the business of our pre-COVID numbers and if our business is down by 50%, there will be a certain amount of job losses in the trade. There will also be challenges to sustain with such losses to the revenue."

He urged the business owners to; change their business models to low risk and asset-light, in addition to converting fixed expenses to variables. "I don't see much of an investment coming into the foodservice sector any time soon. The sector will suffer a very severe phase like any other trade because of the corona." He also emphasised on maintaining and prioritising the hygiene and sanitation process in restaurants, as post-COVID, hygiene standards will overtake food taste as competitive advantage. It will become a priority for restaurants to show customers that they are safer than their competitors.

According to Himmat Anand, Founder,



Anurag Katriar
President, National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) and Executive Director & CEO, deGustibus Hospitality



Himmat Anand
Founder
Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels

Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels, tourism and hospitality business is all about communicating and creating a perception. He mentioned that the Indian population is a very resilient population. "We tend to forget things very quickly. If all goes well, I think, the domestic market will be our saviour."

In Anand's opinion, spa and wellness will also take a hit because of the crisis. "Small hotels will revive quickly but larger hotels will take time to revive. Small boutique properties should bounce back by March next year." He also put forward a very important point that hoteliers are lucky as the crisis situation has fallen in between the low season for hotels which are the months of March, April, and May, when most of the hotels see low occupancy rates in the range of 20%-25%. ■

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in

FICCI webinar highlights the potential of regional cuisine of India

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

While global travel is on hold, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, an informative and interactive webinar organised by FICCI on culinary tourism named 'Culinary Tourism: Discover India by Taste' has surely made us introspect deeply about the food patterns which might be visible in post COVID-19 times.

The webinar focused on the burning topic of whether India can emerge as a culinary destination post the COVID-19 crisis. The webinar was moderated by Chef Rajeev Goyal, Founder India Food Tour & President, India Food Tourism, and some of the eminent panellists were Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, Ministry Of Tourism, Government of India; Padmashree Dr. Pushpesh Pant, Food Critic and Indian Academic & Historian; Chef Ranveer Brar; Prateek Hira, Managing Director, Tornos; Prem Syal, Founder & Chief Dreamer, Hi Tours; and Chef Rajesh Wadhwa, Executive Chef, Taj Palace.

Prateek Hira, Managing Director, Tornos pointed out a fact that most of the travellers

spend around 25% of their travel budget on food and due to the increasing number of food travellers, people are now well informed. Hira also mentioned, "The crisis is going to give a very tough time to the restaurants, as they should expect very choosy clients post COVID-19 since we have got into an era of experiential travel".

Dr. Pushpesh Pant, a renowned food critic, as well as, an Indian academic and historian, emphasized on promoting the various tribal food of India and giving attention to the hygiene of the food being served.

Prem Syal, Founder & Chief Dreamer, Hi Tours informed, "Indian food and cuisine experiences are the most enjoyed by travellers in our travel products. Food has lots of storytelling going on behind the scenes. The various regional cuisine of India has a lot of untold stories. These regional cuisine locations can also be a part of food tours, but only when we have the knowledge about the food specialties of those regions, and the stories behind them. If we can organise a food tour of 14 days, then we can easily showcase India's rich culinary culture by presenting different regional cuisine to the

tourists each day of the tour."

Celebrity chef Ranveer Brar stressed on the fact that, post COVID-19, consumption pattern of food will change drastically, as people preference for home cooked food will increase owing to the focus on hygiene which has become the norm during COVID-19. Brar also pointed out that, the regional cuisine of several states such as, Odisha, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh has got great depth and the immense potential of these regional cuisine has been till now completely ignored.

Chef Rajesh Wadhwa, Executive Chef of Taj Palace, shed light on the acceptance and demands for Indian cuisine. He commented that as chefs, they often get invitation for food festivals from various world class hotels across the globe as there is a huge demand for Indian cuisine. "We can surely use this as an opportunity," he said.

Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, Ministry Of Tourism, Government of India, said that the Government will extend all its help to help India emerge as a culinary destination of choice, but before that products need to be identified which can be pitched to tourists. ■

Hospitality Procurement professionals urge HPMF to formulate SOP to navigate the COVID-19 crisis

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Hospitality Purchasing Manager's Forum (HPMF) which represents 3000 plus members, recently concluded an international e-panel discussion. The subject of the e-panel discussion was 'Reboot! Road Ahead in Supply Chain'. The purpose of the discussion was to examine the current and post lockdown situations in the hospitality industry for procurement professionals and to arrive at a consensus on the course of action to be taken by the fraternity once the lockdown opens.

The panellists were drawn from highly experienced and senior cross-section of the hospitality procurement profession from India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and the

Middle East. The programme was conceived and arranged by Dr Nitin Shankar Nagrale, Founder and General Secretary, of HPMF and Raavish Jhala, CTO. The discussion saw



an unprecedented attendance of more than 100 people online – HPMF members, vendors and others interested in the profession. While

speaking on the overwhelming response of the participants, Dr Nagrale said, "The numbers would have been much higher if we could have better bandwidth. In fact, I have received numerous messages and calls asking for a repeat, with over 300 people interested in joining in".

The panel was moderated by Jaideep Gupta, Director, Aanyah Management and had as its panellists – Dr Sanjay Goyal, VP SCM, Lite Bite Foods Ltd, and Vice Chairman of HPMF, Sanjay Verghese, Director of Materials and Food Safety, The Imperial, Delhi, Bhanu Pratap, Director Procurement, Atlantis the Palm, Middle East, Biplab Das Bharati, Senior GM, Ambuja Neotia Group, Kolkata and head of HPMF East Chapter, Jagath Rodrigo, Materials Manager, Taj Bentota, Sri Lanka, Kumaar Koirala, Materials Manager, Annapurna Group, Nepal and President, HPMF Nepal Chapter, Rajesh Nair, Materials Manager, Grand Hyatt Kochi and head of HPMF Kerala Chapter and Sunil Kuttan, DGM Supply Chain, Gourmet Investments, India.

The e-panel discussion was started by Bharati and his precise analysis of the worrying possibility of manpower curtailment due to the expected dismal business levels in hotels and his take on how to sustain the manpower costs without loss of jobs.

After Bharati's session, Bhanu Pratap gave a clinical analysis of the situation in the Middle East and emphasised that the use of technology and support from the government for hospitality infrastructure has gone a long way in ensuring that Dubai and the Middle East have the situation under control.

Sanjay Verghese, who is an expert in food safety, highlighted the steps to be taken post the lockdown situation and how important it was for the hospitality industry to promote hygiene and safety amongst their staff and associates.

Rajesh Nair dwelled on the subject of inventory and cost management during and post-lockdown and the importance of vendor communication and management for the mutual benefit of all stakeholders in the industry.

Kumaar Koirala gave an overview of the

"Most of the establishments are either closed or working on absolutely low levels. Most five star hotels are closed or have a few in-house guests who got stuck due to the lock down, restaurants and catering establishments are also closed due to lock down.



Many of these establishments are either providing food to the poor or through home delivery model. The supply chain is completely shattered as most suppliers are not being able to provide required products on time and in required quantities.

Non-food items like packing material, containers etc. are a big challenge of us. Government has issued a notification on essential goods supply but still, many of the delivery vehicles are stopped at many check points. We have already obtained special permissions from the local police stations for deliveries in the respective zones, so that the deliveries are not stopped."

As there is no top line, hence bottom line at the moment is irrelevant. Government is doing its best in controlling the Covid-19 at this moment and I feel that's the right approach. We will soon have good days.

Collectively, we have made several appeals to government, such as, interest free loans, delay in payments, salary support for employees, etc. I am hoping that the government will do something for us and we will be somewhat in a better position.

This is a tough time for the world but I am very sure, if we all come together, we will get over this phase soon."

Dr Nitin Shankar Nagrale, Founder and General Secretary, HPMF



**Reboot! Road Ahead in Supply Chain...
HPMF Leads the Way!**

e-PANELISTS

 Dr. Sonjay Goyal Vice President SCM Lite Site Foods India	 Mr. Bhansu Pratap Singh Director of Procurement Atlantis The Palm Limited Middle East	 Mr. Jagath Rodrigo Materials Manager Taj Bentota Resorts & Spa Sri Lanka	 Mr. Kumar Kirala Purchase Manager Annapurna Group of Hotels Nepal
 Mr. Dipak Bharti Senior GM Purchase Ambuja Neoris India	 Mr. Rajesh Nair Materials Manager Grand Hyatt Kochi India	 Mr. Sunil Kuttan DGM- Supply Chain Gourmet Investments India	 Mr. Sanjay Verghese Director Materials & FS The Imperial New Delhi India

**April 11, 2020
12:00 PM India Time**

**ZOOM Meeting ID: 917 505 916
Password: 786**

and the importance of tightening the belt without compromising on the quality and hygiene aspects of the restaurant business.

All the participants emphasised the need for assistance from the Government to this industry which caters to over 1.7 million jobs across the country and contributes to nearly USD 300 billion to the Indian GDP.

It was also decided that HPMF would come up with a white paper on the main points of the discussion and formulate SOPs for its members globally

current situation in Nepal and his take on the post COVID situation. Although currently bleak, he said that the country was positive that the effect of the calamity would be under control and Nepal would once again emerge as one of the leading tourist destinations in South Asia.

Sunil Kuttan gave a precise overview of the restaurant scenario

so that the Hospitality Procurement Profession can contribute significantly to their organisation and country during and post this unprecedented situation “HPMF will continue to pioneer and explore ways and means of empowering its fraternity through focussed platforms which will address all such issues faced by our industry,” concluded Dr Nagrale. ■

QualityNZ appoints Dr Nitin Shankar Nagrale as Chief Executive Officer India and Emerging Markets

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Dr Nitin Shankar Nagrale joins QualityNZ as ‘Chief Executive Officer India and Emerging Markets’. He will be responsible for various business heads such as Imports, Exports, Manufacturing, Marketing & Cricket Ambassador promotions, and new business initiatives including Education and Tourism. With rapid expansion planned, his responsibilities will extend beyond India into new territories such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and the Maldives.

Dr Nagrale brings with him a rich experience of over 25 years in the hospitality industry, during which he has been actively involved in managing supply chain procedures and overseeing significant projects for luxury hotels in



India and South-East Asia.

His qualifications include a Masters in Marketing Management from the

Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies in Mumbai, a Diploma in Materials Management from IIMM Bangalore and a Diploma in Hotel Management-Catering Technology & Applied Nutrition from IHM. In October 2019, he was bestowed with an Honorary Doctorate in Supply Chain Management by the National American University, USA.

He is the first person in the World to have completed the Certified Hotel Purchase Manager Certification Course from the American Hotel and Lodging Education Institute (AHLEI).

Dr Nagrale also founded the Hospitality Purchasing Managers’ Forum (HPMF) in India – the first-ever platform to converge over 3000 buyers from hotels, restaurants, catering, and airline organizations across India, UAE, Sri Lanka and Nepal. ■

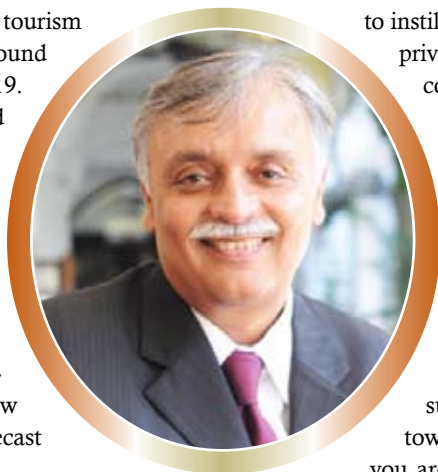
Novel Corona Virus 2019 from Hit & Fall, now from Survival to Revival

By **Kamlesh Barot**, Director, VIE Hospitality

The world over, particularly our tourism industry has fallen very badly to ground zero, after being hit by CoVid19. Though the true test of time would be, after the first 3 months of opening how do we survive from this to the next 50% business level. Thereafter we shall rediscover the new normal of our revival, from the 50% to 100% level, till the vaccine is flowing in each one of our bloodstreams, God-willing sooner than later. After the vaccine, will we still be social distancing? Wouldn't we all rebound to the pre-CoVid practice of antisocial closing and show unprecedented buoyancy, to refute every forecast made today!

Historically, our hotel industry turned into IT hubs in the Tech bubble era, 26/11 made our hotels more secure than airports, the eco-wave made hotels 3R (reduce, reuse and recycle) efficient, should we forget about reuse & recycle now, and only concentrate on reducing? Same happened when we redesigned for the differently-abled, and now with Corona, our hotels will be more sterile than hospitals – I am wondering where's hospitality gone?

We might at our outlets, put up a new welcome smile on our masks



to instil the assurance of guest's security and safety, giving privileges beyond our loyalties and circles. To gain the confidence of our patrons, many hotels will show their 'Back-of-the-House' CCTV feeds on their websites.

Health certificates might feature in our redrafted new SOPs. Can our ERPs or hotel software be patched with the Arogya Setu app? Probably not! The key to our survival and revival will very heavily dependent upon our first fifty days of online reviews and thereafter.

Upon arrival at your next stay with us, don't be surprised if you're given three bags: one for soiled towels, one for soiled bedding and one for trash, you are then asked to place the bags near the entrances to your rooms and contact housekeeping for clearance. Few of you may observe no in-room housekeeping per se during your stay, as the deep cleaning of the rooms might only take place after guests leave. Maybe others would get into their rooms which have been kept vacant, then cleaned, again kept vacant and then allocated after the previous guest checked out. Few hotels might have no minibars, few might have shut their spas or swimming pools, a few stopped buffets or the turndown service. Maybe there'll be no



excess pillows or excess linen, or hangers, you might also be given a specific gym time slot, IRD (room service) might be with bento boxes or tiffin boxes or set meals & yet others may allow only one person in the lift car.

Corporate travel managers told, their employers had cancelled or suspended all or most previously booked or planned international business travel, while 92% said all or most domestic business travel had been cancelled or suspended. There is light at the end of the tunnel though, since the 23 odd million Indians who travel abroad every year, might not do so and travel within the country, but with hardly any of the 10 plus million foreign tourists coming in every year, will there be a revival, albeit with Delhi and Mumbai still shut? With MICE or the big fat Indian weddings going on a year-long diet, diminished business traffic, e-papers replacing print, mostly e-conferences on Zoom or Team or gowebinars and no exhibitions, domestic and leisure travel will be king.

*[Like us at FHRAI, the American Hotel and Lodging Association also sent a letter to the Treasury Department and the Securities and Exchange Commission asking for a USD 10 billion CMBS market relief fund that would be part of the Main Street Lending Program, but designed specifically to facilitate loans to hotels.]

We are one of the most capital as well as labour-intensive industry. Without new normal working capital revenues flowing, it'll be difficult to service our lenders and honour our commitments to our teams, our supply chains and the authorities, when our banks have today blocked our bank accounts and our credit card funds due to directives to many banks.

What support we'll get from our Governments at the States and the Centre, with so many representations we've all made, as our businesses and expansion plans have been put in the attic?

"Hotels tend to be a reactive business," said professor Chekitan Dev, marketing and branding at Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration. But now we shall be moving from the hands-on & human touch approach to contactless hospitality, no breakfast overcrowding, no communal tables & new staff cafeterias. New menus shall be either 'use & throw' or menus shall be QR'd on guests' phones or on sanitized tabs. Sanitization of public area toilets and even faucets within would be done after every use. Cutlery, crockery, glasses & napkins, maybe UV sanitized or thrown away. All this will increase our overheads rather than lowering our costs, coupled with depressed revenues due to the spaced-out seating, to adhere to safe distancing. From FHRAI we shall send a new hygiene checklist to all our members, for each and every department, followed by FSSAI seminars for our all India members. We just finished 46 seminars on the new FSSAI Act and have trained 1643 team members.

In these trying times, with staff exodus to their hometowns and stalled mass transportation, we have yet the biggest challenge, to retain our most talented and multitasked team. Though we are not in favour of retrenching our decades loyal staff for a few month's salary



trimming, to cut down on the heaviest loader on your P&L, that is if we will revive.

Coca-Cola CEO, James Quincey said "Game theory developed with care is, how bad problems become less bad, and opportunities become apparent, in the fog of war. "

With 1.3 billion guest's pent-up money and entertainment desire with no software in cinemas and lesser screens, since the non-polluting and zero honking lockdown started, the size & shape of their wallets also would have changed. There'll be now the new Fine Dining avatar and takeaways, even at an additional delivery cost, going up to 35% at times to the restaurants, as the new strategic point-of-sale, without any value cutting.

*[With the Centre freezing staff DAs for the next 18 months to save INR 38,000 crores we observe that in the USA the unemployment has plummeted today to 23%, which was in the great depressions at 25%. 38 million out of work till date, have filed for unemployment claims, besides those who have left the labour market. In LA under the government CARES act, furloughed or unemployed employees can collect their state unemployment plus an additional USD 600 weekly from the federal government for up to four months. White House just approved additional funding for the Pay-check Protection Program (PPP) an additional USD 310 billion. Of that, USD 60 billion would be set aside for community-based lenders and smaller banks to assist smaller businesses that don't have established relationships with big banks.]

On the brighter side, Trip.com anticipates peak travel season over Chinese May Day holiday. The five-day holiday is expected to mark the first peak for travel in 2020, with travel figures possibly doubling those of the Qingming Festival, a long weekend in April.

"We shouldn't assume that each step forward is permanent, necessarily". ■

The views expressed within this column are the opinion of the author, and may not necessarily be endorsed by the publication.

Hospitality Industry

Desperately looking for help to tide over the storm

Many hospitality industry experts are stating that the coronavirus pandemic is one of the hardest hits that the industry has faced. An unprecedented turmoil has been generated across the hospitality industry which has put both owners and employees into a spot. The sector is looking at a severe cash crunch with nil revenue inflow, which may lead to millions of employees losing their livelihoods. With no viable signs of recovery on the horizon, the industry associations have placed multiple appeals before the government for respite from this critical situation which might change the face of the hospitality industry forever. **Asmita Mukherjee** understands the precarious situation on the ground by speaking with industry experts about their most pressing issues during the pandemic, expectations from the government, and action plans post lockdown.

‘We hope that the government will announce substantial relief and aid for hospitality and aviation’

Rattan Keswani, Deputy MD, Lemon Tree Hotels and Director, Carnation Hotels

Will there be any changes to the business model post lockdown?

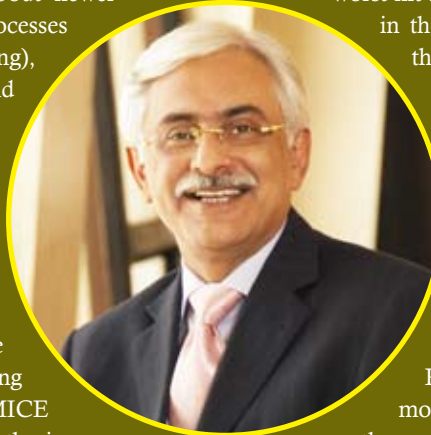
Much the same way that 26/11 changed the way security is handled in hotels, I think this pandemic will bring about newer hygiene standards, changes in the reservation processes (such as changing table settings for better distancing), lesser movement in common areas, and on-ground health checks for guests and team members.

The new normal will see an elevation in the standards of cleanliness and sanitisation followed by guests, and the same will be expected from hotels. Social distancing will become a new norm, at least in the short term, and people will prefer not to visit overcrowded or cramped places. Personal and communal space definitions will change, with the former becoming a high priority for most people. Weddings and MICE segments may be relooked at – with large scale gatherings decreasing, and focus on more frequent, but smaller events.

For companies, working from home, staggered work hours to decrease contact, and reduced travel may become the new norm. Engagement and employee motivation will need to be heightened.

We are also relooking at every customer touch-point, and working towards either removing or restructuring them to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both guests and team members. Some of these include initiatives for contactless billing, contactless dining, completing check-in formalities over email, sharing of e-papers etc.

What are your expectations from the Indian Government to spring back from the pandemic impact?



We hope that the government will announce substantial relief and aid for hospitality and aviation, the two industries that are the worst hit at this time. We are amongst the largest employers in the organised sector, and we need assistance from the government to be able to protect jobs and livelihoods.

Industry bodies from across the country have sent their critical recommendations to the government. We hope that they will be considered favourably for the survival of both the sectors in the long term.

What has been your biggest pain point during the lockdown?

Possibly the greatest need has been to keep employee morale at a high. Our unsung heroes are the teams on the ground, working tirelessly in our operating hotels, to ensure that the guest experience is not hampered. The incubation period and high infection rate of this virus can be truly worrisome, and we are trying to review every single feasible method to ensure the safety, security and wellbeing of not just our guests, but our team members as well. Every one of us spends time every day researching additional safety and precautionary measures to incorporate in our current operational practices.

What is the immediate plan of action post lockdown?

The most critical part for us post the lockdown will be re-opening of our hotels wherein operations had been temporarily suspended, in keeping with the government norms. ■

‘Revenue potential per cycle is going to come down by more than 50% because of social distancing’

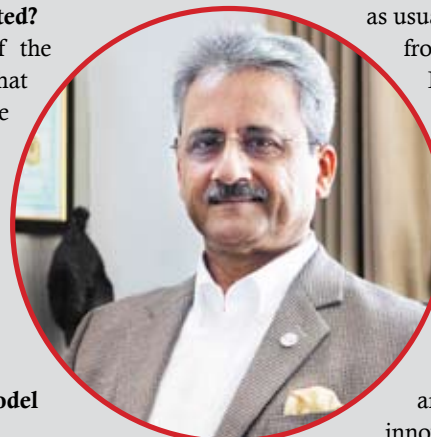
Vineet Verma, MRICS, Executive Director & CEO, Brigade Hospitality Services Ltd

With the current collapse of the hospitality and travel industry, how has your revenue been impacted?

We have been as badly affected as rest of the industry, of the seven operating hotels, that were doing well till early March, four have had to shut down. The other three have been operating with single-digit occupancies and negligible revenues that are grossly inadequate to meet even a part of our fixed costs. Our losses run into several crores and these will further increase if the situation does not improve in the immediate future.

Will there be any changes to the business model post lockdown?

The world of hospitality, post-COVID-19, is expected to



go through a paradigm shift. It will certainly not be ‘business as usual’ and we are sure to see radical changes, both from operations and guest behaviour perspective.

It is critical for the properties to bring in more stringent levels of health & safety standards, to reassure our guests that they will have a safe stay with us.

At almost every hotel, social distancing and touchless experience will be the new norm and we are preparing for it. Our guests will be offered mobile functionalities, such as keyless entry, mobile check-in, and check-out. I am certain that digital resources are going to be fully exploited with many more innovative measures being adopted across the globe.

Digitisation in the MICE segment is also expected, now

that our guests have experienced the benefits of Zoom, Microsoft Teams, GoToMeeting etc.

We have also seen a spurt in-home delivery and take-away orders and this is certainly the way forward for hotels to augment their revenues. Catering packed meals to corporate offices is another service that should gain better traction.

The present situation appears to have also impacted people's choice of food. There has been a sharp decline in the consumption of non-vegetarian food and many have found new joy in turning vegetarian or egg-itarian at best. Most hotels may need to further tweak their menus to include a larger selection of such items.

More importantly, hotel revenues are expected to be severely impacted by the implementation of social distancing norms in restaurants and public spaces. This is going to necessitate a reduction in the number of covers to achieve minimum distance between two tables etc. and as a result, revenue potential per cycle is going to come down by more than 50%. The same thing will apply for the banquets, where we will need to permit a limited occupancy per event. We will need to work around these challenges and explore other options to augment our F&B revenues.

What are your expectations from the Government to spring back from the pandemic impact?

While industry bodies such as FHRAI and FAITH have already made representations before the Government and we do expect a favourable response, some key areas where we do need support are:

- The deferment of all statutory fees payable during rest of the year 2020-21.
- Liquor license fees to be waived for the duration of lockdown and to be adjusted against next year's fees.
- Centre to consider permitting GST collections to be deferred by a few months, which can be used as working capital by hotels.

- Electricity Supply Companies (Escoms) to waive MMD charges on electricity, as has already been done in Maharashtra and Gujarat.
- Reconsideration of Government's directive against employee layoff and salary cuts as most companies will soon be unable to pay if the situation does not immediately improve.
- Moratorium on insurance premiums, without losing risk cover

What has been your biggest pain point during the lockdown?

Most of our hotels are completely shut down with zero revenues, whereas our liabilities towards fixed costs including payroll, statutory fees and taxes have remained largely unchanged. While this has placed us under immense pressure, we are not sure about our position a month or two down the line, as there is zero visibility on what the future holds for us in our industry.

What is the immediate plan of action post lockdown?

The pandemic calls for the restructuring of services and offerings on many accounts. It becomes imperative for us to be ready with an exhaustive lockdown exit strategy. Each department must adhere to detailed responsibilities and ensure proper execution at all levels. Once we reopen our doors for business, we are expecting a cautious response in the initial months from our guests. MICE activities will take a back seat at the beginning, given the limitations of large public gatherings. However, we are optimistic that the rooms will start getting occupied and our restaurants will be resuming dine-in business, where we must strictly implement social distancing and hygiene. Apart from food, regular temperature checks at the entrance for both the guests and associates, regular sanitisation of elevators and public spaces, restricting the number of guests entering elevators as a part of social distancing, will continue to be a common sight at the hotels. ■

'To ensure livelihood in the post-COVID-19 phase, support from the government is critical so that the industry survives and recovers at the earliest'

Anshu Sarin, Chief Executive Officer, Keys Hotels

With the current collapse of the hospitality and travel industry, how has your revenue been impacted?

The onset of coronavirus (Covid-19) in March brought a quick performance decline in the hospitality and travel industry. This global health crisis has triggered a national response such as the closure of borders and various levels of lock-down which resulted in the economic slowdown, an unprecedented market reaction and a behavioural change in people.

To me, it is irrelevant from what level the downward trend started. We all know the drop has been large. What is more relevant now is how long would this impact last and more importantly how do agile and nimble organizations repurpose themselves to survive this pandemic.

From a financial standpoint, the immediate to short-term focus is on



the cash-flow, financing, credit line and creation of positive operating leverage. To this effect, we as a category leader have a nimble metric-driven cost platform. This holds us in good stead.

Will there be any changes to the business model post lockdown?

An event of this magnitude which necessitates safety and healthy parameters to be paramount will surely have ramifications on how businesses run. What we do know for sure is that business models will change. Categories of hotels (like mid-market hotels) where there is a higher risk spread from the demand side, and in terms of geographical width, genre depth (leisure/business to Fly or Drive too) and strong operating margins - will emerge stronger.

Trends which were already underway such as transition from 'asset-

heavy' to 'asset-light' model will only get accelerated. Brands which have demonstrated strong fundamentals in the pre-COVID-19 phase and continue to evolve and deliver today will become the preferred partners for many asset owners. Over the next 12-24 months, one could expect consolidation via the M&A route.

The time it will take for the curve to flatten and for a curative/preventive solution to be found will decide the eventual changes in the long-term offering of service and product.

What are your expectations from the Government to spring back from the pandemic impact?

Most (albeit not all) industries have been deeply impacted by Covid-19. The two key reasons that travel and hospitality companies need favourable government initiatives at this time are:

- Highly intensive on capital and labour
- Nature of this crisis indicates that travel and hence lodging will

take the longest time to recover

To ensure livelihood in the post-COVID-19 phase, support from the government is critical so that the industry survives and recovers at the earliest. To this effect, many industry leaders and associations have made representations. Nature of assistance ranges from support in debt payment, wage bills, statutory levies and load charges.

What is the immediate plan of action post lockdown?

Safety and security of our guests, team members and stakeholders are of paramount importance. In consultation with professionals from the healthcare field, we have created a robust set of standard operating procedures. These SOPs cover every facet of hotel operations and guest interaction. Providing transparent and exhaustive safety protocol is the priority. The resurrection of revenue streams and continued cost optimisation would be our priority. ■

'There are a lot of cash flow issues as we are not able to collect our funds from debtors'

Satyen Jain, CEO, Pride Group of Hotels

With the current collapse of the hospitality and travel industry, how has your revenue been impacted?

In the last few months, things have accelerated drastically for the industry-leading to a minimum or no occupancy in some properties. Because of the uncertainty in the lockdown period, we are experiencing a big drop in new reservations and increase in cancellations on both the business and leisure end.

Will there be any changes to the business model post lockdown?

Post lock down more emphasis will be given to the safety and security of guest and staff. The biggest challenge will be to keep the safety measures intact. Keeping it at the forefront of every strategy, we have taken several measures and have even launched a few initiatives to navigate through the crisis. Post lockdown, each of our properties will carry out extensive SOPs in the area of health & hygiene. In these uncertain times to avoid any safety threats to the guest and staff, the hotel will start its service with the only minimum required workforce.

What are your expectations from the Indian Government to spring back from the pandemic impact?

The hospitality industry is one of the hardest-hit industries as compared to the other industries. We welcome the government's move to offer a moratorium for three months loan. No doubt it will help us, but the problem is that the period is too short.

The measures, that we want the government to take includes conserving cash flow, GST withholding and compulsory directive to be given to the banks to extend principal & interest payment for

two quarters. Also some tax credits for payments, some waivers on property taxes, and other measures to uplift the industry.

What has been your biggest pain point during the lockdown?

There are a lot of cash flow issues as we are not able to collect our funds from debtors since the offices are shut. Also, it has been difficult for us to operate to our full potential due to the lockdown, as even getting the required material to operate the hotel has become difficult. Also, since the guests are not being able to get to the hotels, there have been considerable cancellations.

What is the immediate plan of action post lockdown?

During the initial few months of post lockdown period, the industry recovery will be gradual because of travel restrictions around the world.

However, post lockdown in India, MICE will play a vital role in the recovery process. Pride Hotels has already launched a few of its initiatives, as a revival plan for the future while keeping all the precautionary measures in mind.

As a precautionary measure, we will resume operations across our properties with the required minimum workforce. For our guests, we have initiated a package wherein we will provide them with an alternate workspace. It is specifically designed for the mid-senior level people who are accustomed to travelling and working in isolation. All working professionals, especially in the field of IT/ Finance/ Business Development among others, can be benefited from this initiative. ■



‘There will be a great change in the entire business model both in the short term and long term’

Vikram Kamat, Founder Chairman, VITS Kamats Group

With the current collapse of the hospitality and travel industry, how has your revenue been impacted?

It has been greatly affected. We are over 20 per cent down, both because of March, April, and even advance bookings of May.

Will there be any changes to the business model post lockdown?

There will be a great change in the entire business model both in the short term and long term. In the short term, many common areas and facilities will be discontinued / not encouraged, such as banqueting, discos, and bars where the crowd gets very close. On a long-term basis, many business avenues may discontinue altogether. At least for the short term, the areas of conferencing and banqueting and weddings will be greatly affected.



What are your expectations from the Indian Government to spring back from the pandemic impact?

While the specific demands have already been highlighted by The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), the entire focus of all demands is to allow hotels and restaurants keep cash flow rolling and let the units function to encourage continuous employment. So, the requests range from conserving cash flow through GST withholding to waiving off local costs like excise license, property taxes, etc., so that maximum money can be directed to payment of salaries and wages.

What is the immediate plan of action post lockdown?

We have planned various steps such as bringing medical officers to implement new procedures for deep cleaning, sanitization, and hygienic cooking. ■

‘We could even see bankruptcy in the hospitality business’

Vibhas Prasad, Director, Leisure Hotels Group

With the current collapse of the hospitality and travel industry, how has your revenue been impacted?

The COVID 19 pandemic and the impact of the Indian lockdown have had a disastrous impact on the country's tourism sector for now and perhaps forever. Massive cancellations in recent weeks leading up to the lockdown and closure of all our hotels have witnessed complete erosion in revenue. Seeing the current status of new cases, and the trajectory of the curve, it will be many months or even a year or more, before business comes to levels that we have seen in the past year.

Leisure Hotels Group operates properties majorly in leisure destinations, and the summer months are peak season for us across most of our properties. We attract guests during these summer months, from almost all parts of North India which is severely affected by lockdown due to the pandemic. Travel during the first quarter (AMJ) itself contributes a significant percentage of our overall business in a financial year. Hence, we expect revenues to take a beating of 40% or more, in this financial year.

Will there be any changes to the business model post lockdown?

We all know and expect that the country and the world will change post corona. There will be a new normal. There will be changes to how people travel for work or pleasure in the immediate future (if at all) until a vaccine has been formulated, produced and distributed for everyone in the world. This process might take a year or more.

In the near future, we only expect domestic leisure to pick up wherein people would take their own car and travel to areas where there are

limited cases or chances for exposure. Small boutique properties would be attractive for customers due to their layout which provides privacy and protection. The hill areas of Himachal and Uttarakhand have many such properties in close proximity of Delhi NCR, Western UP and Punjab.

We don't expect inbound tourists to come to India for another year or longer. Indians looking to travel abroad for leisure will also be in a small minority. Business travel will also take time as WFH routines have become the norm and organisations would ideally not like to expose their workforce to the threat of the virus. MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conference & Exhibitions) segments and social events including weddings will take from 6 months or longer to recover.

Our hospitality business is built around human contact and touchpoints. In today's environment, social distancing, and contactless services will become the new norm for a while. Accordingly, our Value Proposition will get affected. All our properties are getting geared up to become fully COVID-19 compliant as per the norms issued by WHO, in order to provide our guests with a worry-free vacation. We are currently working on our second set of SOPs which will ensure that our guests have little to worry about as and when travel restrictions are lifted and customers travel again.

What are your expectations from the Indian Government to spring back from the pandemic impact?

The Central and State Governments are expected to come out with a relief package before June 2020. Various tourism bodies and



Associations have already made several representations. Some of the expectations are listed below:

- Moratorium for Loans for 3 months (1st March – 31st May'20) has already been offered by the RBI. This is expected to be extended to 12 months
- COVID Emergency Line of Credit: Lenders have announced an emergency line of credit upto 10% of Working Capital limits
- Classification of NPA: 90-day NPA norm to exclude moratorium period between 1st March to 31st May availed by borrower. Ensure that Credit Rating agencies do not down-grade ratings of businesses
- Subsidise employment for 3 months by government contribution per employee of 50% of the salary
- Lease, License, Rentals and Excise Fees as well as Property Taxes to be suspended effective 11th March till the end of COVID-19 period
- Enable GST collected to be used as Working Capital for 6 months. Complete GST & Income Tax holiday for 12 months
- Property tax to be reduced and deferred for FY2020-21
- Utility costs like Electricity to be charged on actuals versus the load
- Waive off PF contributions for Employer & employee for 12 months. Waive off ESI for 12 months
- Deferment of excise duties & vat & all other levies
- Deferment of Advance Tax
- Incentivise travel by introducing an onetime opportunity for Leave

Travel Allowance to be part of the new income tax slabs

- Annual renewal of licenses paid for in 2020 should be extended till the end of 2021 without an incremental fee or charges

What has been your biggest pain point during the lockdown?

The pain and ambiguity of small-medium business owners like us are likely to be very substantial. The biggest pain point is maintaining the cash flow while there has been no revenue and reduced/ no customer demand. We have been forced to take drastic steps to continue being in business, with no support/ help.

If we do not see a revival of the business in the near future along with no government measures or reliefs, then we will be forced to downsize our workforce in the first tranche. Over the medium term, we will be forced to default on our re-payments to banks and financial institutions, possibly become NPA in the eyes of the RBI. In the long term, we could even see bankruptcies in the hospitality business.

What is the immediate plan of action post lockdown?

Everyone is hurting right now, and no-one has the answer as to when this crisis will be over. Our immediate plan of action post lockdown to update the customer touch-points and be ready for potential customers to find us/ book online once travel resumes. We shall be communicating via all mediums about the actions taken/ COVID compliances across all hotels that support the current social distancing measures to ensure stress-free vacations for our customers. ■

'We will be focusing on rationalizing cost, cutting down expenditure as per changing customer needs, automation, and adoption of technology to improve service levels'

Pushendra Bansal, Chief Operating Officer, Lords Hotels and Resorts

With the current collapse of the hospitality and travel industry, how has your revenue been impacted?

Novel Coronavirus pandemic has hit 150 countries, affecting over 800,000 people and leaving several thousand dead. Our industry depends on people travelling, for work and pleasure. With over half of the world's population under lockdown, our hotels are also under lockdown which has affected our revenues completely.

Will there be any changes to the business model post lockdown?

Due to limited travel options after the crisis, we will promote staycation for the local travellers. We will be focusing on rationalizing cost, cutting down expenditure as per changing customer needs, automation, and adoption of technology to improve service levels.

What are your expectations from the Government to spring back from the pandemic impact?

Various hotel fraternities have written to the government on revival plans for our industry and we fully support the same and

look forward to economic relief packages from the government to save our hospitality industry.



What has been your biggest pain point during the lockdown?

COVID-19 has rudely pulled the rug from under the feet of the hospitality industry, leaving it in a state of complete disarray.

According to recent estimates, hotel revenues in India will decline by anywhere between USD 8.5 billion and USD 10 billion in 2020, not to mention the job losses. This pandemic will have a huge economic impact on owners, operators and our front line staff as well.

What is the immediate plan of action post lockdown?

We have gone back to our drawing board to redesign our plans for this financial year. The revival of business is our focus area. Sales and marketing strategies are going to be programmed around the domestic traveller because domestic demand will open up first and drive growth in the short term. Special focus will be on guest and associate health and safety parameters. ■

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in

'We are facing difficulties managing the working capital and finances as the supply chain has been immensely affected'



Millions of pints of beer are going into the drain as pubs and liquor shops remained closed for over a month in the country, and many continue to remain so. The shelf life of beer is very less as compared to other liquor, so breweries will have to drain out all the Work-In-Progress (WIP) stock as it will soon get damaged, along with the stock that has expired during this period of inactivity. Kimaya Himalayan, a home-grown brewing company is facing a lot of challenges, such as destruction of stock, and nil cash flow in this crisis period. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with **Abhinav Jindal, CEO & Founder, Kimaya Himalayan Beverages LLP** to know about their struggles during this period and how they plan to overcome challenges.

Q The COVID-19 outbreak has hit millions of jobs amid the closure of restaurants and brewing companies across the globe resulting in loss of revenue. How is Kimaya Himalayan being a brewing company, navigating the turbulent waves of COVID-19, through its business and employee policies?

This is an unprecedented and daunting situation for companies across industries. However, we look forward to redemption and advancing on the expansion mode in terms of business. We will not be relinquishing our expansion plans and are hopeful to move forward as projected earlier.

There is no reform in the employee policies or salaries. The company will not be laying off any employees due to COVID-19. If any layoff happens, it will only be on the performance grounds which were identified before the lockdown in the annual evaluation process. Management of the company has extended their support with the difficult decision of pay cuts to help the company stay afloat in this uncertain time. The promotions and schemes for our business partners shall remain unaffected as till date.

Q With the current collapse of the hospitality, F&B and travel industry, how has your revenue been impacted?

We were looking forward to this season being a major contributor to sales for the year, accounting for approximately 35%-40%, and now when the lockdown has been extended till 17th May, it will add up to the loss if stretched any further. It was the first full financial year for Kimaya Himalayan Beverages and this is sure to dent the PnL. We are facing difficulties managing the working capital and finances as the supply chain has been immensely affected.

The shelf life of beer is approximately 6 months. We will have to destroy the expired stock which has already been supplied to the warehouses and the company won't be able to retrieve the value.

Q What are your expectations from the Indian Government to spring back from the pandemic impact?

The management of working capital is a challenge in such unprecedented times. The pressure building up in the credit lifecycle is becoming strenuous with each stakeholder holding tight in the situation. To stabilize the low liquidity or cash flow, government should support start-ups with easy availability of funds by extending loans against bill discounting to revive business. Due to the short shelf life of beer, many companies will witness loss due to the expiration of stock in April and May (in case the lockdown extends), as the stock keep units will have to be destroyed. In such a scenario, if the government extends support to forgo duties, companies can take a sigh of relief.

We expect the government to be more supportive in terms of a moratorium of license fee and duty. In this industry, manufacturing is subjected to GST whereas output (finished product) is subjected

to VAT, which leads to an enhanced cost of production without any set-off benefit of input taxes. It would be a great relief if the government can consider condoning the input GST.

Q What has been your biggest pain point during the lockdown?

The shelf life of beer is very less as compared to other liquor. The biggest pain point is that we will have to drain out all the WIP stock as it will soon get damaged, along with the stock that has expired during this period of inactivity. The hectolitres of beer in the fermentation tanks, BVT tanks and the product ready to be packaged will have to be drained off.

Working capital and finance unavailability is a challenge with choked cash flow, resulting in unstable business viability and sustainability for a start-up like ours. Also, the supply chain will be immensely affected.

Q What is the immediate plan of action post lockdown?

The duty and taxes on the expired stock will still be borne by the company. We will approach various state governments for relaxation of duties on the expired stock. Our primary concern will be to manage production and meet the surge in the demand, as soon as, the lockdown lifts. Strategic planning in terms of production and supply needs to be undertaken, as it may become a challenge to cater to the market demand immediately. The supply chain discrepancies will have to be attended. We are taking preventive measures to maintain the sanitization at the factory and retail level; we will be implementing effective precautions moving forward. ■

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in



COVID-19 crisis: How to plan forward

By **Siddharth Goenka**, MD, Octave Hotels & Founder, Aiosell Technologies

C OVID Crisis has hit the hospitality & tourism industry the hardest and it will take a long time for the dust to settle. Leisure hotels will take the hardest beating as fear and panic will infect the itineraries of modern travellers. Business hotels may show some intermittent signs of recovery, but things will probably never be the same. Most companies (large and small) have tasted blood with video conferencing and universal acceptance of work from home model. The world seems to be preparing itself for the worst economic recession accompanied by unemployment levels not seen since the Great Depression. This will be further worsened by de-globalisation and change in geopolitical equations with countries turning more inwards and hostile, thereby further reducing demand for travel.

How do hotel owners react to this impending tsunami? We can either choose to accept the doomsday scenario and surrender to the invisible enemy, or we can throw down the gauntlet and take the bull by the horns. If we do choose to fight, we must first need to find the courage and self-belief to reinvent ourselves and think outside the box. We may



have to accept fundamental shifts and structural changes to the industry and question assumptions that defy conventional wisdom.

With every calamity comes a moment of opportunity, and those who are able to swim against the tide will reach the shores safely. While I do not claim to be able to predict the future or provide a fool-proof playbook on how to get out of this crisis, but I will try to share some ideas on how hotel owners can weather the storm and try to keep their heads above water.

The fundamental tectonic shift that will emerge for hotels out of this crisis will be around three pillars: efficiency, automation, & technology.

One way to think of hotels is to compare them to large mega-factories with machines and workers- working tirelessly in shifts to produce output. Just like how concepts like 'lean manufacturing' and 'just in time production' fundamentally changed the manufacturing industry, hotels may soon have our own 'Toyota' moment. Hotels will need to adopt similar concepts that focus on revenue and cost efficiencies because profit can no longer be taken for granted. Fixed costs will need to be converted to variable costs to





shed our extra flab thereby reducing spare inventory and wastages. We will need to use an ideal mix of machines, manpower, technology, and automation to maximize our output while minimizing input, without compromising on guest satisfaction. We will need to take hard decisions about which business units to continue and which ones to pull back from.

Hotels will carefully need to plan their manpower strategy keeping in mind automation possibilities in every department. Staff to room ratios will see a downward trend and there will be an emphasis on achieving 'more' with 'less'. Reservations and back-office teams that perform repetitive clerical tasks can be minimized by introducing automated reservation systems and chatbots that are linked to integrated PMS and marketing platforms. The large clunky IT departments can be replaced by centralized cloud-based PMS & CRS systems with a 2-way integration with marketing & distribution systems reducing the need for periodic backup and maintenance. Core functions like pricing, revenue management and online distribution can be centralized & automated using modern sophisticated systems, which will lead to an increase in productivity & yields, while the reduction in manual efforts. Large sales & marketing teams that service corporates and travel agents can be trimmed down by introducing B2B booking platforms where suppliers and customers can transact directly.

Many hotels may need to reevaluate ancillary business units like restaurant, bar, spa, and gym which have a high operating cost and fail the profitability litmus test. It may be prudent to either outsource these areas or completely remove them from the product portfolio. Guest enhancement functions like room service, concierge services, travel desk and check in-checkout can be automated using smartphones, tablets, and AI-based technology to increase efficiency. Energy costs like electricity and water can be minimized using IOT devices and energy-saving instruments that run on 'use as you need' basis instead of large centralized units with high fixed costs. Hotels will need to differentiate from their competition by incentivizing their staff to maximize reviews & ratings on online platforms, by using modern tools of reviews & reputation management.

The increase in online business will continue to be beneficial for hotels because it will replace fixed acquisition costs (large sales teams) with variable costs like digital marketing. Even though OTAs will continue to command a lion's share of the business, hotels should focus their efforts on direct booking channels including own websites and booking engine to reduce their distribution costs. Incessant discounting schemes introduced by some OTAs to grab market share may reduce because short term valuation boost will no longer be considered a metric for success. This may bring about some maturity and fair distribution of market share across online channels. The new emerging funded aggregators who have recently shot to limelight will have to make a hard choice to either grow sustainably by reducing unnecessary expenses (large teams and minimum guarantees) or be relegated to obscurity because of lack of funding options that keep them afloat.

Banks, PE and VC funds may chase projects that are more sustainable, scalable, and profitable rather than outlandish bets that follow a herd mentality of super-natural growth. Asset light models like revenue share & management contracts will be more popular for new projects than outright purchase or lease models. Due to the reduction of profitability in the industry, supply will not flood the market as new projects will either be shelved or be converted to other less risky asset classes. Hotels that are able to survive the crisis may come out as winners because they will be the last men standing when the crisis is over and demand returns.

COVID-19 will be a watershed moment for the hospitality industry. Instead of writing our own obituaries, we should use this opportunity to regroup, rethink, and reset. There are always winners that emerge out of every crisis, and it is our time to 'cross the rubicon' and script our own futures. Our spirit, thoughts and actions will determine whether the darkest hour is behind us and whether we can emerge out of this crisis fully shattered or just bruised, ready to pick up the arms again. ■

The views expressed within this column are the opinion of the author, and may not necessarily be endorsed by the publication.

'We have grown 2.5X each year, continuously for the last 2 years'



goStops is a full-stack youth hostel company, whose business model is quite unique. The idea of goStops took form when Pallavi was backpacking across Europe, back in 2012. She was fascinated by the hostel culture there and wondered why a similar model didn't exist in India for travellers, who were looking for premium quality social accommodations at an affordable price. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with **Pallavi Agarwal, Co-Founder, goStop** to know about the company's broader strategy.

Q What was your inspiration behind starting goStops?

In the Indian short-stay accommodation market, there was a void in quality-assured stays in the budget range of INR 400-800 per night. Such accommodations were mostly poorly maintained and were unpredictable in terms of quality and experience. In addition to this, there was no accommodation brand that was youth-friendly and which exclusively catered to their needs and aspirations in terms of quality, design, experience or budget. We saw clear whitespace in the market, identified the problem and have been trying to solve it, ever since the inception of the first goStops in Varanasi.

Q Kindly share your business model with us.

goStops is a full-stack youth hostel company, with a unique business model. We lease, manage, and franchise real estate assets, which we design, transform, market, sell and operate as youth hostels in locations where the youth travels for business or leisure.

The major chunk of the revenue comes from selling our bed inventory on our official website and through various online travel platforms (HostelWorld, goMMT, goibibo, etc). A minor chunk of the revenue comes from our in-house cafe sales, as well as, through selling experience based packages such as Day Tours, Walking Tours, etc.

Q When compared to owning or operating a hotel, how profitable is Hostel as a business? What are the key profit measurement parameters for a hostel, and how has your business fared on those parameters over the last two years?

Unlike the majority of the hotel industry, we do not require a franchise owner to build a property ground-up to operate our goStops branded youth hotels. We merely transform existing properties based on our brand guidelines and provide end-to-end support in order to operate and market them. This creates a significant difference in the gestation period and makes up for much quicker ROIs and better business value. Hence, it becomes a better proposition for investors to invest in goStops youth hotels.

The key profit measurement metrics are revenue accrued on the property vis-à-vis expenses. Almost all of our properties are profitable, as our business model is such that the unit economics is always robust. We are also witnessing 50% growth.

Back in 2017, about 80% of our clientele were foreign backpackers. Today as much as 60% of our guests are Indians. These young Indians are travelling both for leisure, as well as, work.





Q What is the size of the hostel market in India and goStops's market share in that market? How has the supply-demand scenario been?

There is no exact data available on the Indian hostel market. However, we can derive some conclusions on the basis of the hotel and alternate accommodation market in India. Indian hotel and stay is a USD 19 billion markets. 70% of this market is unorganised and 70-75% of the market is dominated by affordable category hotels. Our target segment is largely millennial. Data suggests that 1 out of 2 millennials consider non-lodging hotel options such as private homes, homestays, hostels and service apartments as being the preferred options as compared with hotels.

goStops has just started capturing the alternate stays market in India. Currently, we operate 13 youth hotels in 15 different locations, with a total capacity of 800 beds across India. We do an annual turnover of approximately INR 10 crores. We have grown 2.5X each year, continuously for the last 2 years while being bootstrapped.

Q How do you plan to utilize the recently raised funds? What are your investment and expansion plans?

goStops has been entirely bootstrapped since inception. We have seen 2.5x growth every year for the last 2 years. Having come up to 13 youth hotels and ~800 beds, goStops requires external funding in order to proceed with the exponential scaling plans, which are necessary to build a product that stays for a long-time in the market. In August 2019, we had raised funds in a small equity round and have recently raised funds through a mid-sized round as well, with a micro-VC. We are also looking to raise our Series A funding within the next 9 months.

The first large investment that we are looking to make after our funding is into marketing. We are looking to push the concept of

hostel living to as many young Indians as we can and educate them about it. The second large investment would be in technology, as we aim to ensure that we deliver all our promises regarding the product to the youth, to ensure smooth scaling and strong consumer experience while booking, checking-in, etc.

We are planning to expand our presence across the country by doubling our bed capacity within the next 12 months. The aim is to cover all the metro cities by expanding our presence in North and West India including Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Goa. ■

asmita.mukherjee@safronsynergies.in



UNWTO calls for firm government actions to support tourism recovery

HBI Staff | Mumbai

The Global Tourism Crisis Committee has united behind the United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) rallying cry for governments to "go beyond words" and begin taking decisive action to safeguard the millions of jobs under threat as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Crisis Committee was convened by the UNWTO in response to COVID-19. With tourism among the worst affected of all major economic sectors, the United Nations specialised agency for tourism also warns of the social and development toll the economic impact might have.

UNWTO ECHOES WIDER CALL FOR ACTION NOT WORDS

In the third meeting of the Committee, UNWTO urged members to increase pressure on world leaders to rethink tax policies and employment policies relating to tourism and to help make sure businesses survive to help drive wider recovery efforts.

This call to action comes as decision-makers come under mounting pressure to take concrete steps to help combat COVID-19. Drawing up financial and economic responses has been the central focus of the Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, while the European Commission has been enhancing political cooperation within the European Union. The Tourism Crisis Committee meeting was also held against the backdrop of the Saudi Presidency of the G20 calling on governments, private organisations and philanthropists to contribute a collective USD 8 billion to address the existing financing gap and properly address the pandemic.

Governments have an opportunity to recognise tourism's unique ability to not only provide employment but to drive equality and inclusivity

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General, UNWTO, said, "This crisis has shown the strength of solidarity across borders. But nice words and gestures will not protect jobs or help the many millions of people whose lives are dependent on a thriving tourism sector. Governments have an opportunity to recognise tourism's unique ability to not only provide employment but to drive equality and inclusivity. Our sector has proven its ability to bounce back and help societies recover. We ask that tourism is now given the right support to once again lead recovery efforts."

LOOKING BEYOND A LOCKED DOWN WORLD

The call to action comes as UNWTO reports on the extent to which

COVID-19 has brought global tourism to a standstill. The UNWTO "Travel Restrictions" report notes that 96% of all worldwide destinations have introduced full or partial restrictions since the end of January. Pololikashvili has also called on governments to lift such restrictions as soon as it is safe to do so in order that societies are once again able to benefit from the social and economic benefits tourism can bring.

Looking ahead, the Global Tourism Crisis Committee is working on a Recovery Plan for the sector. This will be centred around open borders and enhanced connectivity while also working to raise consumer and investor confidence.

To help countries get back to growth, UNWTO will soon be launching a new Recovery Technical Assistance Package. This will enable its Member States to build capacity and better market and promote their tourism sector in the challenging months ahead.



Zurab Pololikashvili
Secretary-General, UNWTO

TOURISM SPEAKING AS ONE

UNWTO formed the Global Tourism Crisis Committee to join every part of the tourism sector as well as leading international institutions together to create a united response in order to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and prepare tourism for recovery. From within the UN system, the Committee includes representatives from WHO (World Health Organization), ICAO (the International Civil Aviation Organization) and the IMO (International Maritime Organization). Joining them are the Chairs of the UNWTO Executive Council and its Regional Commissions. The meeting also saw an increase in the number of countries actively involved in the Committee. Present this

time were representatives from Kenya, Zambia, Senegal, Jamaica, Brazil, Chile, Malaysia, Maldives, China, Greece, Croatia, Spain, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

The UNWTO Affiliate Members Department was again present to represent its Members from across the private sector, civil society and academia. Alongside them, the private sector was represented by members including IATA (the International Air Transport Association), ACI (the Airports Council International), CLIA (Cruises Lines International Association), WTTC

(the World Travel & Tourism Council). Also taking part were representatives from the IFC (International Finance Corporation) and IFEMA, whose Director Ana Larrañaga is also Chair of the Board of UNWTO Affiliate Members. This third meeting benefitted from inputs from the ILO (International Labour Organization) and the OECD, emphasizing the enhanced importance placed on tourism as international organizations respond to COVID-19. ■



Tips for the hospitality industry on retaining brand recall in COVID-19 times

By **Rajesh Shetty**, General Manager, The Acres Lifestyle Club & The Fern Residency

The impact of the current COVID 19 pandemic on multiple industries is being noticed across the world. In the time of social distancing and home quarantine, travel and hospitality are among the worst impacted sectors! The hospitality industry is highly dependent on tourism which has borne the brunt of the current situation. This has led to multiple cancellations of room bookings, occasion celebration and even general dining, greatly impacting their revenues and raising concerns of possible layoffs post the pandemic crisis.

Private Lifestyle clubs, which offer F&B, activities and event venues, are mostly dependent on members and guests for revenue generation. The current lockdown has impacted not only the footfalls but also the rising cost of maintaining the expensive infrastructure without actual revenues coming in. It has also adversely



the lockdown. In order to address this influx, clubs would have to be prepared with the following measures:

THE CLUBS WILL HAVE TO ENSURE

- The club building and facilities are sanitised and there are clear visual indicators of the same to reassure the members of the safety and reiterate the management's focus on the members' health and well-being
- They are ready to service their members like never before as they would be visiting the club after a long hiatus and thus need to have a great experience to keep their loyalty intact
- Ensure there is no downtime of any of the facilities as the tolerance levels for the same might be quite low. The members would be raring to use all the facilities available to the same extent as during normalcy or even more

During this downtime, it is also essential to continue to work on brand recall and maintain contact with patrons by sending out e-mailers and through a digital medium with social awareness messages and informing them about the efforts taken up by the club. This would help brands to a) resume operations on a high note post the hiatus, and b) have adequate prospective sales in the pipeline to be able to weather the losses incurred.

The digital media is a big boon in the current situation, allowing businesses to stay in touch with their current consumers and lure in prospective customers too as most people are currently resorting to digital media for information and entertainment. Those businesses that can effectively use the same would definitely be able to reap its benefits in the near future once we approach normalcy!

As the markets and the economy finally come back to normalcy, hospitality, travel and private clubs will play an essential role in bringing people back together and share the sense of solidarity in these times of collective grief. ■

The views expressed within this column are the opinion of the author, and may not necessarily be endorsed by the publication.



Picture credit: Indonesia Expat

impacted the members' lifestyles, who were used to a routine of working out or spending leisure time at the club.

However, once normalcy resumes, club members might want to resume their daily routine and may even do so more enthusiastically than ever. This could primarily be so in case of using the gym and working out, so as to get back in shape and make up for the lost time and also to get back to socialising – one of the greatest deprivation in

Hospitality sector – Taking a cue from other nations

By **Abhinay Kapoor**, Senior Associate, Economic Laws Practice and
Deepika Menon, Associate, Economic Laws Practice

Currently, all businesses are busy grappling with the unfortunate task of sustaining businesses.

Soon, they would not be left with much of an option, but to turn to reserves to meet their operating costs.

While other industries may have just started feeling the economic impact of this pandemic, the Indian hospitality sector began to feel the manifestation of its symptoms as early as the latter half of January.

The timing of transmission of this virus couldn't have been worse, as this is the time of the year when the Indian hospitality sector generally witnesses maximum footfall, not only from tourists (both overseas and Indian) but also from weddings and MICE contracts. Due to the expected surge in demand during this period, the sector undertakes planning in advance, which includes the procurement of all the consumables, etc. in advance and/ or payment of advance to vendors. While the sector had already invested in preparation for an expected surge in demand, all bookings, especially in the months of March to June, have already been cancelled. Thus, exposing the



sector to substantial loss.

As the epidemic amplified in India, a mandatory lockdown has been imposed which aggravated the problems for this sector, resulting in total loss of income. The hospitality sector may have managed to reduce their variable and overhead expenses during the lockdown, but they continue to incur substantial fixed operating expenses, which is a characteristic of this sector. Salaries constitute

a majority of the fixed operating cost, which cannot be reduced, especially considering the Order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs directing all employers to ensure that their workers are paid wages for the period for which the lockdown has been imposed. Other expenses which the hospitality sector will continue to incur during the lockdown period may include rent for a leasehold property, fixed payment to brand owners, servicing of loans, insurances, etc.

In view of this, the Government of India should consider sector-specific steps as, this sector, is undoubtedly an important driver for GDP, forex and employment. This, coupled with the fact that the nature of this sector makes it be susceptible to prolonged suffering, even after the effect of this pandemic subsides, it will be essential for the Government to take unprecedented steps to support this sector during such trying times.

Epidemics, like the one which the world is currently facing, may take considerable time to subside and are known to leave a huge economic impact. A 2019 report by World Travel and Tourism Council on Crisis Readiness suggests that outbreaks such as H1N1 estimated to have had a global economic impact between USD 45-55 billion. The recovery time from disease cases took 19.4 months on average, with a range in recovery from 10 months to 34.9 months. Arrivals to Hong Kong fell 75% following the SARS outbreak. However, when compared to H1N1 and SARS, the impact of COVID-19 has been much wider and unprecedented therefore, the steps which the Government is expected to take should also be unprecedented.

In this regard, the Government of India may borrow from other countries who have already announced specific reliefs for the hospitality sector. Supportive steps taken by countries in the recent past in light of the COVID-19 situation include

- Malaysia which has exempted hotels from paying Service Tax for a period of months, viz. March 2020 to August 2020.
- Turkey has announced that accommodation tax will not be



Picture credit: BBC News



Picture credit: Bloomberg

applied till November 2020.

- Vietnam is proposing a VAT rate cut for restaurants, hotels, and transport and tourism companies. A five-month delay on VAT payments by businesses is also being contemplated.
- Indonesia has decided to waive 10% consumption taxes on hotels and restaurants in Bali and nine other tourist destinations for the next three months.
- Iceland has withdrawn Hotel tax until the end of 2021.
- China has exempted payment of VAT on catering and accommodation services indefinitely until the situation is restored to order in China.
- Hotels, tourist attractions, service apartments, shops and restaurants in Singapore will be entitled to a property tax rebate of 30%.
- Italy has suspended the payment of social security contributions, welfare contributions, premiums for compulsory insurance, withholding taxes and VAT, which were due to be paid during the period April 8, 2020, to April 30, 2020, inter alia for theatres, tour operators, travel agencies, hotels and accommodation sector, restaurants, museums and fitness centres, etc. Further, tax payments have been postponed to May 31, 2020, and an option to make tax payments in five monthly instalments without the imposition of interest and penalties has been provided. for accommodation facilities, travel agencies and tour operators.

The Government of India may also refer to similar reliefs given by various Governments in the past when the financial world was reeling from the effects of the global economic crisis of 2008, and the hotel and tourism sector required aid to regain its fiscal health. The measures include significant reductions in VAT levied on restaurant services by Belgium and the Czech Republic, and reduction in hotel sales tax by Jordan. Other measures include offering a credit line to the tourism (500 M Euros; approximately equivalent to current USD 554 M) and restaurant sector (50 M Euros; approximately equivalent to current USD 55.4 M) by Germany, and deferment of increase in the Property Tax assessment rate for hotels by a year, by Singapore.

These steps were taken by other countries during the economic

crisis and again during this epidemic may be useful learning for the Indian government, however, will all these steps be enough? The relief provided by Governments of other countries chiefly entails an exemption from consumption-based tax. As some of these countries are not in complete lockdown, these benefits may be of help to the hospitality sector operating in these countries. However, as the hospitality sector in India does not envisage any consumption in many months to come, such similar exemptions to the hospitality sector in India are not expected to convert into any tangible relief.

Care should be taken to understand the current situation of 'complete lockdown' in India and how it is different from previous pandemics/epidemics or economic

crisis, which on no occasion lead to complete lockdown. Also, when compared to many other sectors which will be up and running as soon as the lockdown is lifted, the hospitality sector will have to wait till the eradication of this epidemic before they can hope to expect decent occupancy rate. It is time that the Indian Government understands the uniqueness of this sector and puts together a plan to save this sector by injecting it with tangible measures which directly impact the fixed operating cost of this sector.

Given that the operating cost of hotels is higher when it is running with low occupancy as compared to the operating cost when such hotels are shut down, it is important that appropriate subsidies/exemptions are extended to this sector to cut down their fixed operating cost during the initial period of low occupancy following the lockdown. Some of these measures may be in the form of a waiver of lease payments to be made for the Government-owned properties, subsidy in license fee paid to the Government, including but not limited to the liquor license, discount on electricity and water bills, reduction in the rate of GST, interest-free/low-interest working capital loans, etc.

Taking a cue from the above, it is time that the Indian government sets its wheels in motion, and introduce a sector-specific stimulus package which is not limited to the extension of dates for GST payment but is in the form of subsidies and exemptions giving direct relief with respect to the fixed operating costs. Given the current deteriorating nature of this sector, it is extremely crucial that the hospitality sector rallies together its members, and makes a representation to the government seeking reliefs which will not only help the sector to sustain this forced hibernation but will also help the sector in operating efficiently post its hibernation. This is of utmost importance for the hospitality sector, as this will enable it to continue its contribution to the economy and employment generation like it has in the past. ■

The views expressed within this column are the opinion of the author, and may not necessarily be endorsed by the publication.



'ibis will be focusing on a major refurbishment of its products'

Accor's economy hotel brand ibis is focused on evolutive design with simple and flexible furniture. The Ibis family also includes the brands, Ibis Styles and Ibis Budget. **Sylvain Laroche, Director of Operations- ibis & ibis Styles, India** is responsible for maintaining the brand standard, along with overseeing the evolution of the brand, in the country. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with Laroche to know about his current focus on ibis India.

Q What are your top priorities as the Director of Operations of ibis & ibis Styles, India?

I am primarily responsible for managing the 19 ibis & ibis Styles hotels in 13 cities across India and overseeing the evolution of the brand along with the Accor Team, while ensuring that the operating hotels achieve their results. I also ensure that the hotels which are coming up in the near future, open as scheduled and are in line with brand standards.

Q Can you tell us more about the brand vision?

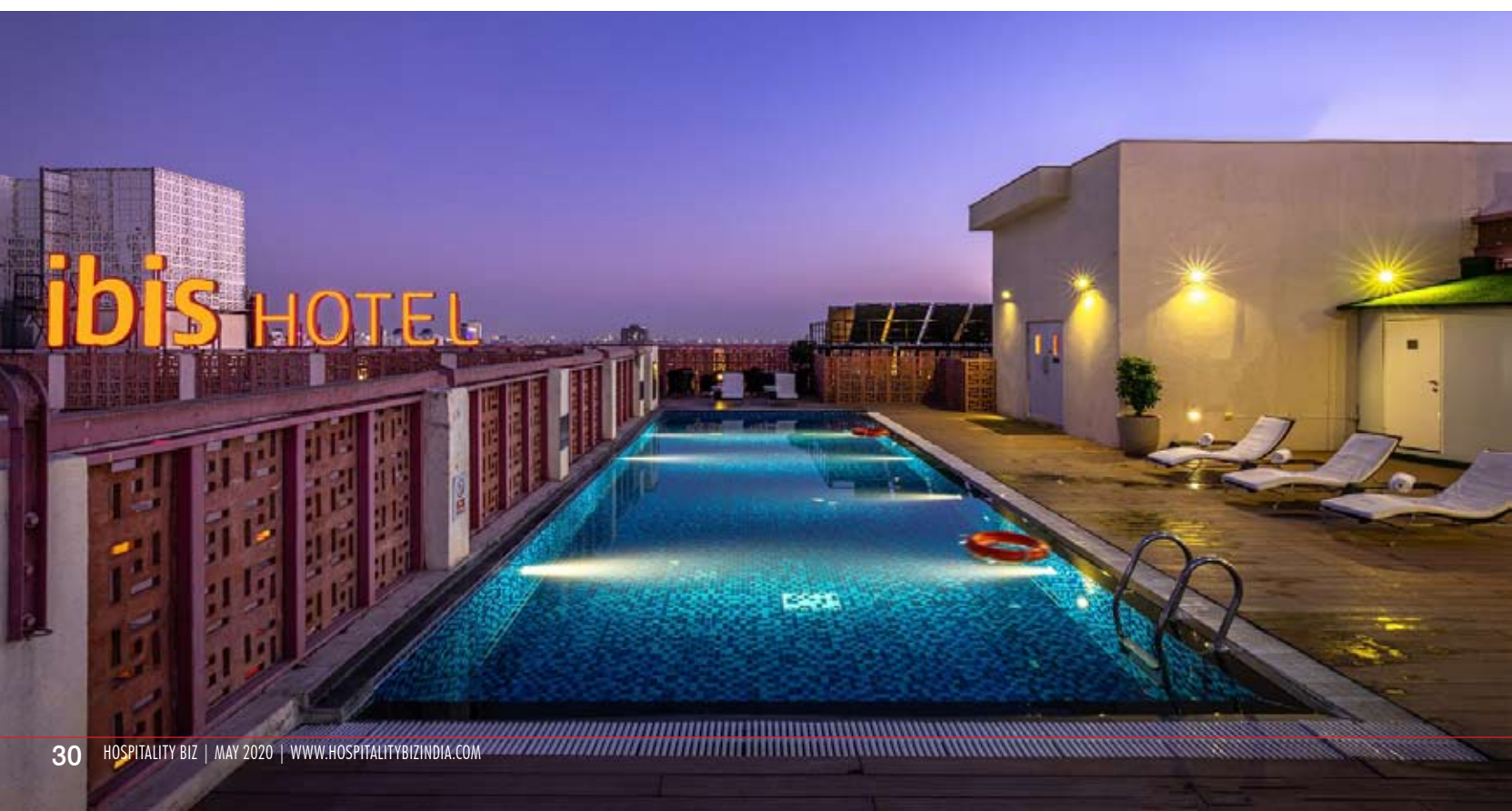
Launched in 1974, ibis pioneered the concept of affordable luxury and were trendsetters in the economy hotel segment. With over 1,200 hotels and more than 154,000 rooms in 67 countries, ibis

is recognised across the globe as the leading brand in the economy space. ibis hotels are social hubs, with on-trend interiors, relaxed bars, flexible dining spaces and a passion for new music. Travellers and locals encounter a vibrant lifestyle at ibis that is comfortable and makes guest feel at home.

We put people at the centre of everything we do. Our refreshed approach to hospitality –ibism is inspired by the changing demands of travellers for unique and personalised experiences.

Q With over 19 ibis hotels, what future potential for growth is there in India?

The next ibis to open is scheduled for early 2021, at Vikroli, and has between 280 to 290 rooms. There will be no new openings in India





this year, instead, the chain will be doing a major refurbishment of its products, with the ibis Mumbai Airport and the one in Viman Nagar, Pune getting updates. The refurbishment was very necessary for the products to move with the times and cater to the new customers.

Q What factors do you expect to drive demand, revenue, and occupancies in the upcoming properties across India over the next few years?

In my opinion factors such as, augmented hospitality, gather communities, co-working spaces, new technologies around in room entertainment, mobile check in, product sustainability along with an ibis near the consumer will drive all the three factors in India.

Q An excellent hotel experience has so much to do with the service. How do you balance technology versus human service to still provide that experience?

ibis is one of the most recognized brands in the world. We are continuously listening to both our guests and employees to ensure that we provide the best of experiences in stay, food, entertainment as well as the community around. ibis is more than just stay, and everyone can dine, wine. We want our guests to feel welcome when they choose to stay at our hotels.

Q What are the biggest challenges that you face today while improving guest experience?

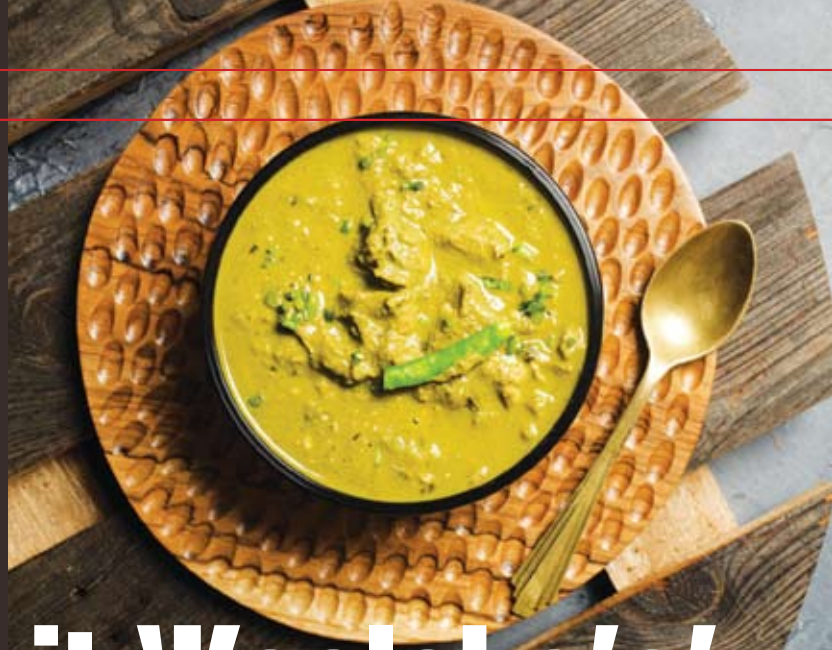
Our biggest challenge is our most interesting

challenge and ibis is very well equipped on this: It is the continuous evolution of guest expectations. With the rise of experience led stays and personalized guest experiences, what guests want when they travel, have changed.

With the ever changing customer's needs, for instance, when they travel they will not only need a hotel, but food experiences, museums, a car rental company and concierge services etc. So a single platform should offer that to you. This is why Accor offers augmented hospitality. ■

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in





'Kulcha' or is it 'Koolcha's'

HBI Staff | New Delhi

Growing up if there was one constant memory it was the staple Kulcha and chole available around every corner. Best of all it never burnt a hole in your pocket. It was the same during the early years as a lowly employee where it continued to sustain and offer a wholesome meal. But somewhere down the line it faded to the back of one's mind and remained one of those nostalgic memories.

So, I was intrigued when I got a call to review this new place which offered only, you guessed it, only Kulchas. But they called it 'Koolchas', intrigued I went to their place in Sect 14 market in Sushant Lok. The first pleasant shock was seeing the restaurant, bright, airy hole in the corner. The menu was a happy delight I was astounded by the sheer variety of Kulchas. It boggles the mind 100 varieties of koolchas in every possible flavour. Add to that they would even customise it to suit your taste buds with 5 different 'Add Masala' options.

Lost in a plethora of choices for example Koolchas with amritsari chole, butter chicken, veg options, chicken keema, dhaniya masala koolcha with daal, aaloo pyaaz koolcha, teekhi mirchi koolcha, keema koolcha and the list goes on and on. I desperately needed help which Gaurav Bahi, the MD and his charming mother gave me. Under their guidance I choose a selection of Koolchas and was

thoroughly satisfied. As a desert I had their chocolate koolcha which was sensational. Who thought that the common koolcha could even be a desert? Being greedy I tried their Kulfi which was perfect. All this washed down with the floral tones of the 'Rose Katira' concoction so authentic that you could taste and feel the rose petals in it. I then had another speciality of their - Coffee wali chai, a never before experience, it had the taste of both coffee as well as tea, finely nuanced with both flavours. Initially it gives a coffee flavour but after a while that flavour changes to tea flavour. Finally an excellent cup of great French press coffee and I was replete.

It would be remiss of me not to talk about the people behind this. Gaurav Behl the MD a student of MDI who started his career with real estate before quitting to chase his dream 'food', his mother the inspiration behind the whole concept. Even today nothing comes to the outlet unless checked and approved by her. You can constantly find her pottering around the kitchen checking to ensure that everything is up to her stringent standards. All the masalas used here are freshly ground, nothing is brought readymade. Gaurav is planning to expand his business, currently he has the original outlet in Sushant Lok plus this one in Sector 14, to other places. Going by the looks of it he has a winner on his after. After all we Indians love our food.

Leaving the best for last it is open 24/7 so for all the BPO folk and other night owls head straight over and feast.





'We are planning to increase 12,000 seats by the next fiscal across India'

With the co-working space getting crowded with both national and international players jostling for a share of the market, Primus Co-Work has entered into a white space in the market, through a unique idea which not only helps corporates to save a big chunk on rental real estate but also enables restaurateurs to utilise their unused space. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with **Shardul Singh Byas, CEO, Primus Co-Work** to know more about the strategy and future goals of the brand.

Q What was the inspiration behind Primus Co-Work?

The co-working phenomenon had entered India and a lot of domestic and international companies were setting up co-working spaces in India. The issue with all was that they were very capital intensive on the business side and not location friendly from a consumer side. So with my background as a restaurateur, I realised there was an untapped opportunity to make the co-working an asset-light model by tying up with restaurants that are shut during the day and open only in the evening after 7 pm.

Q Can you brief us about your business model? How are restaurants getting benefited by partnering with you?

On the supply side, we partner with restaurants that do not open during the day and operate only after 7 PM. We take over the place and convert it into a co-working space from Monday to Friday, which functions from 10 am to 6 pm. The interiors remain the same, we just add more plug points where required. We get our own dedicated internet leased line installed along with Wi-Fi, as well as, a Nestle Gold coffee vending machine at each location. The restaurant provides the space, electricity, a steward and a valet. We have a GDM (Guest Delight Manager) at every location along with an office boy to run any errands. We also provide printing and concierge services on a paid basis.

There are a few restaurants, where we have to pay fixed costs for electricity, steward and valet, on a monthly basis. These restaurants also curate a special food menu (lunch) for all Primus guests which comes with a 10% discount. All the food revenue is kept by the restaurant, while all the consumer revenue (those who sign up with Primus) is kept by Primus. As this model is working, we are getting new inquiries from restaurants who want to partner and are not charging us the costs for electricity, steward and valet,

On the demand side, we have a mobile app, which the customers can download. They can select the plans and make a payment digitally using the app or website. We have hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, half-yearly, and annual packages starting from INR 200/hour for hourly to INR 15/hour for annual packages. Each customer once enrolled, needs to use the mobile app to select the

desired location (across all our locations), check availability and book his/her seat. The customer can book for a 4 hrs or 8 hrs session.

Q With the co-working space getting crowded with both national and international players jostling for a share of the market, how do you plan to survive and grow?

The Primus model does not exist so far in India. We have a completely asset-light model, where we tie-up with restaurants that do not operate during the day and open only after 7 PM. We have tied up

with at least 1 restaurant in every pin code across Mumbai and Pune, thus making our service hyper-local, where the customer can select the place of work, basis their needs for the day. We are focussing on customer needs which are getting hyper-local in nature day by day. We are also trying to provide a seamless user experience through our mobile app right from booking to payment, and ensuring that we scale up very fast to meet the growing demand.

Q Do you have any plans to expand to other cities? Are there any future investment plans that you are considering?

We will be expanding to 5 other cities - Bangalore, Delhi, Chennai, Goa, and Hyderabad.

We will be adding more restaurant partners and building more capacity in the coming year. Currently, we have a capacity of approximately 1500 seats across 2 cities (Mumbai and Pune),

and we want to increase to 12000 seats across India, by the next fiscal end.

We are already out to raise external funding and are in talks with some funds.

Q What are the challenges while operating Primus Co-Work?

The major challenge is to get consumers to understand the concept. Since this is a new concept and does not exist elsewhere, consumers have to be briefed on how it works. We also encourage them to take a free trial so that they are comfortable with the concept and like it before they are ready to buy. Once they understand the concept, then they definitely go ahead with our annual package. ■

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in





'We expect the wine consumption to double in next 5 years'

Abhay Kewadkar, Managing Director, Tetrad Global Beverages Pvt Ltd., has partnered with a start-up to introduce the concept of wine dispenser across hotels in India. Kewadkar brings with him 30 years of wine experience and expects the consumption in India to double in 5 years. Kewadkar speaks to **Disha Shah Ghosh** about diversification and distribution strategy.

Q What made you set-up Tetrad Global Beverages as an import only company when in fact you started your career with an export-oriented wine unit?

It's a question of business opportunity. 100% export-oriented unit made sense 30 years ago. Today the world has changed and it is about creating value through introducing global brands. For me it was a better choice to put money and effort in creating a niche brand with French collaboration, and offer the consumer the best of both world in 1 bottle through our own label, and a wide range of handpicked labels from across the globe rather than investing in infrastructure or manufacturing.

Q How do you position your label Early Dark in the Indian market?

We have designed the label to be catchy and playful. While we hope the bottle captures the attention of all age groups, from a pricing point of view we are extremely competitive. It is French wine made exclusively for the Indian audience but the pricing is at par with any premium Indian wine in the market today.

Q Enlighten us on your distribution network

We are already available in Maharashtra, Karnataka, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, and have plans of entering markets like Goa, Andhra Pradesh/Telangana, Kerala, Pondicherry and Delhi in the next three to six months.

Q As per 2018 statistics, the demand for wines in India is growing at a CAGR of 21.8%. However India is still the largest consumer of whiskey with 60% of market share enjoyed by IMFL. In such a skewed scenario, what is your strategy to promote your wines?

Wine is showing a very healthy CAGR but yes the base is very small. It will take some more time, but we are in the right direction and the business is showing all the right signs for an upward growth. Our strategy is to increase awareness by creating pouring opportunities, educating the consumers and demystifying wines by making it a beverage of choice of more people.



Q Your growth forecast for wine consumption in by 2025?

We expect the wine consumption to double in next 5 years.

Q Enumerate on your collaboration with a start-up and plans to introduce the newly designed wine dispenser across key hospitality establishments in India? How will this technology aid in popularizing wine consumption?

The wine dispenser is a fabulous tool for creating awareness about wines as it allows us to introduce the concept of 'taste and buy'. With this apparatus the customers can not only try up to 4 varietals of wine without getting drunk, they have the freedom to have just 30ml of a varietal and pay for 30 ml only instead of the usual 120 ml which is an entire glass. This is going to be revolutionary. Besides, the dispenser helps retain and serve the wines in its ideal temperature which also enhances the experience of having the wines.

Currently, we have installed these one-of-a-kind dispensers in some of the star hotels of Bengaluru, but will soon be launching it in other parts of the country like Kolkata and Mumbai. ■

disha.shah@saiftronsynergies.in



'The demand for organic tea is on the rise in India'



With the increasing number of coffee lovers in India, the domestic tea industry is facing a major hit. Although tea consumption is facing stiff competition from coffee the country's organic tea consumption is on the rise over the past couple of years. Understanding this trend Typhoo India has launched an expansive range of organic tea for the country's tea aficionados. Typhoo, UK's third-largest tea brand first stepped into India with a select range of Teas and Fruit Infusions in 2008. Since then the company has managed to hold a good share in India's tea market. Their latest offerings in the organic range are introduced keeping in mind the growing market of herbal and green tea. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with **Subrata Mukherji, Business Head, Typhoo India** to know more about their organic offerings and key insights about the domestic tea market.

Q Although India is known as a tea nation, the spurt in the growth of coffee cafes and the entry of international café chains has diluted the market share of tea in the beverage market. How do you view the current tea landscape in India?

In India, tea has a long history and is known as the unofficial national beverage, with over 83% of urban households consuming tea, according to the National Sample Survey Office. But it is also true that coffee lovers are catching up.

India is the world's fastest-growing market for packaged coffee, new research by Mintel shows. This owes to Urban Indians taking to cold coffees and cappuccinos, flavoured, ready-to-drink varieties in supermarkets. The sector has seen an upsurge in the cafes and fresh

trend which is having a positive impact on the growth of the tea market. We see the demand is growing gradually beyond tier-I cities with a growing number of organic brands in various categories and hence creating awareness but the numbers are yet to pick. We at Typhoo have a varied range in Green Teas and Herbal Teas which are all organic, a count of 12 SKUs in our portfolio are organic.

Q What are the new offerings in line from the brand of Typhoo?

We have recently expanded our Organic Herbal Range with 3 new super variants such as Power Seeds, Super Greens and Three Tulsi in INR 210 for 20 tea bags and also steps up its Green Tea range and offers Organic green tea in 4 blends such as Pure Green Tea, Green Tea Tulsi, Green Tea Lemongrass and Green Tea Moroccan Mint. The products are priced at INR 210 for 25 teabags.



coffee roaster cafes in the last few years.

The tea industry has grown significantly, due to the demand in herbal and green tea range.

Q The organic tea market in India is growing at a good pace. What are your plans to increase presence in that market segment?

Due to the perceived health benefits, we see a demand for organic tea is on the rise in India. A rise in the awareness levels and disposable incomes of consumers has enabled the tea manufacturers to introduce premium and health-oriented products. Many tea brands have started adding several healthy ingredients to their organic tea formulations in order to target some of the common wellbeing issues. Therefore, a shift towards the consumption of organic tea acts as an emerging

Q Which distribution channels are you targeting currently, and what are your plans for the future?

We are available in major modern retail chains such as Godrej's Nature's Basket, Future Retail Chain brands like Foodhall,

Spencers, More, 24x7, Metro, Walmart, Lots etc. Our presence in Top SMT stores is significantly strong and we are expanding the GT market now with our new range which is easily finding its way on shelves. We are also retailing online with Amazon, Big Basket, Flipkart.

Q Kindly let us know about the B2B and hotel tie-ups which you already have and you plan to have in the future?

Typhoo is present in leading hotel chains and B2B sectors such as Air India, Radisson, Marriott, Roseate and a few more. We are continuously expanding and pitching to acquire more chains in our kitty as their previous agreements complete. ■

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in



'We aim to open 10 more stores by the end of 2021'

Who knew that a good old fan can also act a luxury accessory? **Nisha Kukreja, Founder, Luxaire Luxury Fans** has made this possible through a portfolio of fancy grandeur fans. Her company also offers IoT enabled fans along with multiple customisations. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with Kukreja to delve into the world of luxury fans.

Q What was the idea behind establishing Luxaire Luxury Fans?

We were looking for fancy grandeur fans for our home in 2012. But when we researched we couldn't find satisfactory fans in the Indian market, and this research led us to the fact that there was a huge market gap in this segment. There were only commercial fans present at that time which were mass-produced either in India or China. So to bridge this market gap we established Luxaire in 2012. We were the first organised player to enter the market with original designs, and Bangalore was a good start for us. We were predominantly an online business. However, we soon started getting a lot of traction from Noida, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kerala and we've also supplied to Dubai along the way.

Q What are your strategies to differentiate Luxaire from other brands in its category in India? Is there any specific feature that sets the brand apart from its category competition?

At Luxaire we have a dynamic portfolio of fans. We have been the first to introduce fans with unrivalled technology combined with beautiful designs. We have also been the first to introduce fans with innovative technology like Remote Controlled fans, Reverse Forward Technology Fan, Whisper Quiet Functionality Fans, Canvas Blade Technology Fan, BLDC Motor i.e. Green Technology Fan, LED, Mood light options fan and we have been providing these fans with up to 15-year warranties, which is unmatched in Asia. With our latest addition of Eco-Friendly Pendant Lights, we have also expanded our portfolio.

Q Which Luxaire products cater to the hospitality industry?

Our strategy has been to have a Consultative approach to hospitality projects. For instance, a modern business hotel with full HVAC may choose from a plethora of >400 Contemporary / minimal ceiling fans for their common areas, such as the lobby, banquet, and restaurants. However, a resort or a leisure destination may choose a more classic variation such as a Victorian/ Steampunk Designer Fan. We have >100 Ceiling Fan options with blade variations of Cloth, Wood, Wicker, Rattan and Palm Blade Fan. Most importantly, for the hospitality sector, we have special indoor and outdoor ceiling and pedestal fans that cover various areas like the lobby, guest rooms, spas, alfresco restaurants, swimming pool, lounges and gazebos.

Q What are the customer profiles that you are targeting? What are your investment and expansion plans for Luxaire?

Our target audiences are HNI's and UHNI's. The assignments



would be new hotel interiors, renovations of hotels, restaurant, bar and brewery interior design. We have been catering widely to the hotel industry, be it India or South Asia.

We have planned an aggressive roadmap for Luxaire in terms of expansion. We currently operate online and via our flagship stores in Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kochi, and aim to open 10 more stores by the end of the year 2021. We also have strategic plans of associating with hotels to sync their impressive amenities that blend with our luxury new-age technology.

Q What are the B2B and Hospitality tie-ups which you have?

Luxaire has been the favourite among the B2B and hospitality segments. We have supplied our HVLS Fans in showrooms such as that of Harley Davidson. Our wooden fans have redefined class in popular restaurants like Manu Chandra's Olive and Taco Bell in Bangalore. A lot of our Classic Fans have gone in hospitality projects like those of the Leela Group, Taj Hotels, and Bloom Rooms in India, and they are well appreciated, which has resulted in repeat orders for us. We have also redefined the ceiling fan experience in many boutique hotels across Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Mauritius, Andaman and Seychelles.

Q With the world getting hotter due to global warming, people are accustomed to air conditioning. Do you see a demand dip in the fan market?

A decade ago, AC was a luxury item in India, as not many people could afford it. Today, due to rising temperatures, it has actually become a commodity, as all the classes use it, albeit sparingly in summer. India is a country where ceiling fans will always be popular to move air within the room naturally, as they are better in many ways like functionality, energy efficiency and also health benefits (for those suffering from asthma, skin or respiratory problems). ■

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in



‘Truthfulness, Balance, Peace are attributes I associate with, in my cooking’



Chef's Corner

Q What was your inspiration behind becoming a chef?

Food was always in my blood, which led me to travel the world over, including India, and discover varied cuisines. I really enjoyed my time in India and noticed the similarities between Indian and Israeli cuisine. In Israel, we enjoy a lot of spices and herbs, which to my delight are also a significant part of Indian cuisine. Food was very important in our family, and we loved to cook and eat meals together. My family, exposure to lots of exciting dishes while growing up, world travels particularly to India, all have inspired my culinary journey. I launched my first restaurant Shanti in 1992; 8 years later in the year 2000, launched my second restaurant, Chakra, and now my third restaurant in the year 2014, called Satya. All the restaurants serve Mediterranean cuisine, with the influence of India and Asia.

Q How would you define your style of cooking?

I make it a point to prepare food that is seasonal, which means going on my motorbike into the Jerusalem city market every day, exploring the fresh fruits, vegetables, and bringing in the local produce. It is important that we bring only the safest and finest products to our cooks and therefore our customers. I enjoy cooking food which is seasonal, healthy and tasty – vegetables form a big part of my dishes. I also enjoy cooking seafood from time to time. A lot of people have been choosing a vegetarian diet over the years, and as a chef, it is remarkable to see the shift in trend giving me an opportunity to be creative in that regard. I believe in taking something simple and giving it a new meaning. I enjoy making seafood with an influence of India – like Sea Food Biryani, with lots of spices, coriander, onion, garlic, and ginger in a beautiful amalgamation I like to add herbs/spices/olive oil/ to the food which I cook and give it a different twist to cater to the young audience who forms a part of our customer base across my restaurants.



Chef Ilan Garusi, a famous celebrity chef of Israel had always been very fond of Indian cuisine and culture. As an ode to his love for India and his Yoga practice, he named his three famous restaurants in Israel as Shanti, Chakra, and Satya which are Indian names. Chef Garusi recently visited India for the Jerusalem Mumbai Festival last month organised at Mumbai. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with the celebrity chef to learn more about his inspirations from India.

Q Which is that one dish that you are extremely proud of creating?

I enjoy cooking with vegetables – and making it the hero of a dish.

Cabbage treated in the oven for over an hour with caramelised onion and butter with added olive oil, cheese and herbs post-baking in the oven, is a dish I enjoy creating.

The dish I have been really happy creating in recent times is Fried Spring Rolls with Crabs and Shrimps. We use crab and shrimp meat and mix it up with butter, herbs, and onions as the side serve along with a flavourful sauce.

Q Is there a conscious effort to relate your restaurants with India, as the names of all your restaurants - Satya, Chakra, and Shanti seem to be Indian?

I have travelled to India more than 5 times over the course of time and really enjoy the vibrance and diversity of the culture. Being a Yoga practitioner for 18 years, the names of my restaurants comes from meditation and spiritual practices. Satya is inspired by the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali, the second of the five yamas (restraints) described in the Sutra, which stands for truthfulness.

Chakra again comes from the concentrated energy centres of the body which when aligned lead to balance. The name Shanti caught my attention when I travelled to India at a young age, and a large number of people used the term in daily referencing. I then found out the term means Peace which fascinated me. Truthfulness, Balance, Peace are attributes I associate with, in

my cooking.

Q What is your favourite Indian dish?

I have travelled to the south of India towards Goa, Cochin, Kerala and I really enjoy the Masala Dosa. I believe Indian food is so special with its spicy flavours. I make a lot of lentils (dal) in my house. I enjoy it with a lot of garlic and coriander, prepared more like heavy soup infused with spices. ■

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in



The Hideaway, Greater Noida

Located at Knowledge Park I, Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh, the hotel boasts of 72 well-styled boutique rooms. It offers Premier Rooms and Superior Rooms with the round-the-clock in-room dining experience. The Hideaway also offers three dining outlets that include an all-day diner, L'attitude; and an option to experience far-eastern culinary art at the speciality restaurant Mikuni. The Cafetiere at the lobby level offers a variety of delicatessen short eats with a choice of beverages.

Besides the boutique nature of the hotel, an additional highlight of The Hideaway will be almost 50,000 sq. ft of indoor and outdoor venue spaces for conferences & events.

Welcomhotel GST Road, Chennai

The hotel is located in the heart of Tamil Nadu's industrial and automobile hub. This development is a new incarnation of what was earlier the Fortune Select Grand; it is now Welcomhotel GST Road.

Standing nine stories tall over a vast built-up area of more than 23,580 square meters, the hotel has a striking façade that features glazed glass finishing, allowing an abundance of natural daylight to enter all rooms. Tranquil surroundings, a warm and inviting lobby, exquisite restaurants and 172 well-appointed rooms are some of the facilities that make this one of the most sought-after destinations in Chennai.

WelcomCafe Crossandra, an all-day dining restaurant offers sumptuous breakfast, lunch and dinner buffets, apart from a delectable all-day dining menu, in a pleasant and cheerful ambience, including an alfresco setting in the courtyard. The charm of any destination lies in its local flavours and Welcomhotel brand's signature thali offering - WelcomSthalika, brings you the tastiest regional fare. A smorgasbord of dishes that offer a glimpse of most cherished local delicacies is a thoughtful feature.

The Poolside Dining offers a panoramic view of the city skyline. Mood lighting and lounge music create a uniquely romantic setting, making any dinner here an unforgettable experience. The varied menu here includes continental fare and tandoori cuisine, prepared in distinctive styles with modern renditions.



goStops, Palampur

The new hotel is located in Bundlavillage, which is famous for its vast tea gardens. The hotel has a lawn and wide passages that serve as an excellent relaxing place overlooking the snow-covered peaks of the Dhauladhar range on one side and a small river flowing on the other side.

It has a common area which is spread across two floors with a dedicated gaming area, a working zone along the wide passages and a lawn which also serves as an ideal spot for bonfires and outdoor movie nights.

Swarajya Lords Plaza, Lonavala

Lords Hotels and Resorts have opened Swarajya Lords Plaza, an upscale hotel in Lonavala. The Swarajya Lords Plaza Lonavala is an epitome of elegance in the lap of nature. Comfortably nestled on the old Mumbai Pune highway, this hotel is perfect to experience an exquisite life with beautifully appointed rooms, luxurious and spacious suites, lawn, banquet halls, swimming pool, multi-cuisine restaurant, bar and rain dance.



The Fern Hotels & Resorts opens The Fern Residency Vijayapura, Karnataka

The Fern Residency, Vijayapura is a centrally-located 67-room mid-scale business hotel. The property is in close proximity to all the important places in the city. The Fern Residency is an ideal choice for both the corporate and leisure traveller, offering great value and service that is warm and personalized.

The hotel has three categories of rooms, Winter Green, Winter Green Premium and Hazel Suite. All the rooms are equipped with modern facilities. Some of the amenities which the guest can use include High-Speed Wi-Fi internet, LED television and Satellite TV connection for entertainment & international news, complimentary in-room tea & coffee facility among others.

The dining options include a contemporary all-day-dining multi-cuisine Ajwa Restaurant. It offers a wide range of food & beverage selections from around the world.



Clarks Premier Kota

Located on the prominent Bundi Road, in the heart of the city, Clarks Premier Kota boasts of 75 tastefully appointed rooms across different categories to suite every need. The hotel offers 27 Deluxe and 12 Executive categories rooms. There are 12 Suites and another 24 as Studio rooms with separate living area and a kitchenette to cater to bigger space requirement of guests.

The hotel offers a wide array of world-class facility and services. Hotel's state-of-the-art conference hall can accommodate up to 120 people. Its F&B offerings are second to none in the city with 86-cover multi-cuisine vegetarian restaurant Bridge and 80-cover multi-cuisine rooftop restaurant Aasma as well as Illusion, a 70-cover lounge bar to relax and unwind after a day of hectic business.

Other guest facilities include a state-of-the-art health centre, swimming pool, city's landmark discotheque, high-speed internet, free wifi, eco-friendly toiletries, travel desk and more.





Classic Marble Company hosts the 3rd edition of the luxury living show, D/code 2020

India's largest stones conglomerate Classic Marble Company (CMC) hosted the third edition of India's only curated luxury living show, D/code 2020 held at the NSCI Dome, Worli on 7th & 8th March 2020. Curated by architects Krupa Zubin and Zubin Zainuddin, it brought together some of the finest creative minds in the design and architecture space in India.

Jaquar Group opens Jaquar World showroom in Moscow

Leading complete bathroom and lighting solutions brand, Jaquar Group opened doors to its new flagship Jaquar World showroom in Moscow at Leninsky Prospekt – 85. In the spotlight for bringing Indian manufacturing to the forefront on a global scale since the launch of its first Jaquar World in Singapore to, now, its 15th, in Moscow, the Jaquar Group has pioneered the immersive approach to its retail spaces globally through their company-owned showroom – Jaquar World.



Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Hyderabad Banjara Hills supports YoDee Foundation, in launching Women on Wheels (WOW)

Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Hyderabad Banjara Hills supported YoDee Foundation, for the launch of Women on Wheels, Hyderabad's first Women for Women Cab Service. To begin with, four Celerio CNG cars have been rolled out on the occasion of International Women's Day, on 8th March, by Satyavathi Rathod, Women & Children Welfare Minister, Govt of Telangana. WOW is the brainchild of YoDee (Yosha Deedithi) Foundation. It is supported by the Government of Telangana, Dept. of Women Development & Children Welfare. TSRTC, Transport Department, Police, Sultan-UI-Uloom Education Society, Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Hyderabad Banjara Hills, We Connect, Area 9 Ladies Circle of Round Table India and others.

NatureFresh Professional engages with bakers through 'Bake Zone' tour at Aahar International Food & Hospitality Fair 2020

NatureFresh Professional engages with consumers and bakers through 'Bake Zone' tour at Aahar 2020. The objective of the tour is to add value to every baker by enhancing their skills and efficiencies, along with constant encouragement to acquire industry knowledge. Located near Pragati Maidan metro station, the brand's stall (04B and 03B) in hall A4B is aesthetically designed as a café that showcased 60 different recipes. NatureFresh Professional has won an award of Excellence in Display in Aahar 2020.





Radisson Blu Goa recognised for its par excellence service

Radisson Blu Resort Goa, Cavelossim and Radisson Candolim have been adjudged as the second best and fifth-best Radisson Hotels respectively, for its Excellence in India by the Radisson Hotel Group. This recognition to both the properties has been accorded on the back of its premium amenities, world-class culinary preferences, best in class services and unmatched hospitality.

Dineout celebrates International Women's Day

Dineout's premium membership program, Gourmet Passport celebrated International Women's Day (8th March) with the theme, 'Do it like a woman and be #Femtastic' to honour the women in the F&B industry who have shattered barriers, both personal and professional, to become leaders in the industry. Their campaign compliments IWD's (International Women's Day) 2020 theme which is #EachForEqual that promotes an equal world is an enabled world and celebrates those who choose to challenge stereotypes, fight bias, broaden perceptions, improve situations and celebrate women's achievements.



Radisson Blu Atria, Bengaluru organises Cook-Off between Acid Attack Survivors and Female Cab Drivers

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Radisson Blu Atria, Bengaluru saluted the fighting spirit of women who are an inspiration in today's world. The hotel recognised two incredible ladies, the brave and inspiring Pragya Prasun, a Bengaluru-based acid attack survivor-turned-activist from Atijeevan Foundation and social worker who has been fighting to provide relief and rehabilitation to her fellow acid attack and burn survivors. The hotel also recognised Vandana Suri who because of an attack on a woman in a cab started TaxShe, a cab service that uses women drivers to meet the travel needs of women and children.

Young Chef Yeshwanth Kumar wins at Culinary Olympics 2020, Germany

Chef Yeshwanth Kumar has been awarded four Silver medals at the renowned Culinary Olympics 2020, Germany. Which also known as the topmost culinary competition held for chefs around the globe. Master Yeshwanth Kumar is 16 and a resident of Chennai.

Kumar represented India in four various categories namely Classical Vegetable and Fruit carving, Live Vegetable and Fruit Carving, Artistry made from Pastillage and Gum paste. It is a matter of pride for India as he bagged Silver medals in all four categories.



Mint Homez unveils exclusive Turkish Collection

Mint Homez has announced an exclusive Turkish collection that offers a wide array of bespoke designs which reflect delicacy and luxury. The expert craftsmen behind this collection have specially picked the select elements to bring to the settings that are adequately flamboyant yet classy. The company has created refined and honest designs, layered with contemporary styles, sophistication and new-age luxuries. Modern Classic which rightly describes this collection has a delicate flavour of the past yet gracefully in tune with the current trends, forms and patterns, perfectly crafted and finished. The ultra-luxurious collection includes couches, dining tables and consoles.



CMC introduces its latest KalingaStone marble products

Classic Marble Company has introduced its latest KalingaStone marble products specifically for flooring applications. From the Bianchissimo collection is the pearl white Bianco Thassos and the other is Ashford Black from the Serenelli collection. The former is a plain, single colour marble slab and the latter is a black marble with white swirls across its surface. The two have been introduced as a paired flooring option as can be seen in the representation image. A simple off-white marble flooring layout with the Bianco Thassos is fashioned with a geometric design using Ashford Black as the contrasting marble. The design is subtle but renders the room an additional design dimension making the flooring appear chic and tasteful.

Span Floors launches the Laminate Herringbone Collection

Span Floors has launched Laminate Herringbone Collection 2020. Manufactured in a most modern plant in France, this collection is especially suitable for customers looking for the classy real wood, at comparatively reasonable pricing in the very trendy herringbone pattern. One of the challenges with a laminate floor is its appearance. Most consumers still confuse between laminate floors and real wood floors. However, wood-look laminate floors are essentially prints of wood (and not real wood) and one of the key parameters that define its quality is how good this print is. Once the high level of print quality that captures the detail and nuances of a real wood floor is achieved, the next challenge is capturing the real wood texture that can be felt by hand and is extremely realistic. And being a flooring product, it has to be able to take the day to day abrasion in the Indian context where conditions are comparatively dustier not to mention the habit of damp mopping the floors every day.



Graff unveils its new eco-sustainable faucets collection

Graff has launched a new Eco-sustainable collection with superior coatings and colour solutions. The Eco-sustainable collection by GRAFF comes in a unique design and several finishes including the newest Brushed Onyx PVD (BOX) and Brushed OR'osa PVD (BRG) finishes. GRAFF is one of the first companies in the world to have adopted the strictest international standards to eliminate any residual lead from the water supplied by its faucets. The collection offers a choice of circular or linear lever handles for deck-mounted, wall-mounted or freestanding installations.

Charnock introduces range of machines to Sanitise Air and Surfaces to keep the Coronavirus away

Charnock Equipments Private Limited is a leading Integrated Supplier of Total Mechanised Cleaning Equipments and Solutions in India. Mr. Vivek Mata, the Managing Director of the company says that India is at a crucial juncture in its fight against COVID-19. The country has responded with urgency and determination, and has aggressively stepped up the response measures. The standards of sanitation in every sector are certainly expected to rise in an unprecedented rate. To support this situation, Charnock has introduced a range of equipments that are ideal to deal the infection control during these testing times that uses minimum manpower and recurring chemicals costs; and are environmentally friendly as well.

ULV 50:

The ULV 50 is a light weight and portable disinfectant fog spraying machine. The product is a perfect way to fight against the various bacteria's and viruses that are present on surfaces and surrounding air. The disinfectant that is sprayed acts instantly and the effect stays for a longer duration. This machine uses Ultra Low volume Air pressure combined with disinfectants to generate cold dry fog upto the size of 0.45 microns to reach the smallest of nooks and corners.



Air Silent Range

AIR STERIL:

Another product that Charnock advocates from their equipment portfolio is Air Sanitization Units -The Airsteril range. The Airsteril works on a combination of technologies together. The germicidal irradiation by dual UV light (Ultraviolet) kills microorganisms (bacteria, viruses and mould) by disrupting their DNA and removing their reproductive capabilities. The negatively charged Superoxide Ions charge airborne contaminants causing them to cluster together and fall from the air as they become too heavy, aiding all other processes. This can remove airborne particulates down to 0.0001 micron, that's better than any HEPA filter. These units are plug and play systems and once mounted on the wall and switched on, the unit continues to operate non-stop and works continuously to sanitize the ambient air and surroundings.

The Airsteril range further has products under its umbrella such as the CPWT (specializing in eradicating the viruses from washrooms that have a high footfall.) The CPMP is a portable equipment and hence can be carried and used in different spaces. The CPCVX is an ideal choice to be used in vehicles used to transport laundry, food, medical supply etc. The Air Silent Range is a precise option that one can choose; to be used in confined spaces such as elevators or guest rooms that have the most frequently touched surfaces by varied guests.

Baaya Design launches new product range, Desire Distress Detail

The new range of Baaya Design, 'Design Desire Distress', details in distressed wood features combinations of wood and metal, with a focus on presenting differential products that are made with an attention to detail. This collection of wooden pots, jars, planters and décor accessories, reflect the brand's sheer dedication to work with external elements like wood, iron and brass found in the lap of nature, to beautify home interiors.

The Desire Distress Detail collection stays true to the spirit of Vintage Forged by offering a line of products that possess a rustic and antique look.



Serta launches Ergo Bed

Serta announces the launch of its most innovative product in the Indian Market with ERGO Bed. These beds come with an adjustable base mechanism and the mattresses are made of superior 5 Zone pin core latex with high-grade specifications for optimal body support and comfort.

It features one-touch Zero-G technology. It will adjust your legs at a higher level than your heart, which will help to relieve pressure off of your lower back and promote better blood circulation. Because of their adjustable nature, these bed frames also offers health benefits like improved healing while decreasing the risks of swollen joints, heartburn, and back pain. It also has a one-touch flat button. This will return the base to the flat position easily and quickly. A wireless remote also comes with the product which allows the consumers to easily raise and lower the head or foot of the mattress without having to deal with cords.

HYATT GROUP



Vaishali Shahi, Human Resource Manager, Hyatt Regency, Chennai

Shahi has over 12 years of vast experience in human resource and will be seen overlooking the strategic planning, recruitment policy design & implementation, talent management and associate engagement.

Having a strong background in the hospitality industry, Shahi gained an immense knowledge working with eminent brands

such as IBIS Bengaluru, Crowne Plaza Pune City Centre and JW Marriott Pune. In her tenure, she coordinated with senior managers to ensure smooth activities are completed and issues are addressed to reinforce an assertive outlook of the organization, championed communication with the necessary use of compensation systems, tools, programs and policies, facilitated learning and development sessions and other key strategies.

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL



Manav Malhotra, General Manager, Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa

Malhotra brings with him over 16 years of experience in core hotel operations and has held managerial roles with several renowned hotel chains.

With a diploma in hotel management from IHM Gwalior and post-graduation in Guest Service Management from Oberoi Center of

Learning & Development, New Delhi, Malhotra will now oversee all the operational and commercial aspects of the hotel. He will be responsible for driving the performance through new and innovative strategies at the Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa.



Pallav Singhal, Hotel Manager, Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet-Mumbai, Marriott Executive Apartments

With an admirable background and culturally rich experience in the hospitality industry both overseas and across India, Singhal is a dynamic and charismatic presence.

With a boundless determination and a clear vision for the future,

Singhal now begins the next exciting chapter of his journey – as the Hotel Manager of Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet - Mumbai, Marriott Executive Apartments, Marriott India's largest multi-dimensional lifestyle complex.



Nagesh Chawla, Cluster General Manager, Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet - Mumbai, Marriott Executive Apartments

Chawla's impeccable work history and wealth of experience lead to the beginning of him steering the flagship as the Cluster General Manager for Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet - Mumbai, Marriott Executive Apartments,

Marriott India's largest multi-dimensional lifestyle complex.

Passion, uncompromising adherence to the highest standards, attention to detail, a people's manager and a goal-oriented management approach define him as the leader that he is. Almost two decades ago, Chawla began his stint as a Front Office Manager at Renaissance Mumbai, and with sincere efforts and dedication, developed as the Director of Rooms. He eventually moved to JW Marriott Hotel & Marriott Executive Apartments, Tomorrow Square, Shanghai and thereafter took over the JW Marriott Hotel, Hong Kong as the Resident Manager. In his previous role, he was the Managing Director for The Ritz-Carlton Jakarta and JW Marriott Hotel Jakarta.



Aully Banerjee, Marketing and Communications Manager, The Westin Chennai Velachery

At The Westin Chennai Velachery Banerjee will be responsible to carry out diverse marketing, communications, media relations, social media and digital marketing activities. Her role engages her to enhance brand visibility of the hotel along with the positioning and marketing of Food & Beverage presence of award-winning restaurants and the Spa

in the Hotel. Banerjee started her career with The Imperial New Delhi and then later moved on to work with eminent hospitality brands such as Hyatt Regency Chennai, The Leela Palace Chennai and Hilton Chennai. She has successfully designed and executed invigorating food and beverage promotions, new menu launches, new restaurant launches and also supported Hilton Goa Resort and Doubletree by Hilton Goa-Panaji, pre-opening hotels for their marketing activations.



Arabinda Seth, Executive Chef, Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata

Using his refined culinary repertoire and nifty managerial skills, Seth has brought to the table dynamic and innovative energy to the diverse food options offered at Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata. Leading the kitchen management team vis-à-vis daily operations, he is also responsible for ensuring quality standards in compliance to food

and beverage policies, planning and pricing menus, innovative food presentation and working in tandem with the catering department.



Pranav Khanolkar, F&B Manager, The Westin Chennai Velachery

In his new role, Khanolkar will be responsible to carry out extensive food and beverage operations of the hotel that includes five award-winning dining outlets and two banquet venues. Khanolkar is a seasoned hospitality professional with nine years of enriching experience with him from the industry. In his previous role, Khanolkar was working in the

capacity of Director of Events Management at JW Marriott Pune. He has worked with various hotels within Marriott such as Bengaluru Marriott Whitefield Hotel, Courtyard by Marriott Pune, Chakan, Jaipur Marriott Hotel and shortly at Amari Resort Galle, Sri Lanka.



Sougata Halder, Executive Chef, Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park

An expert in the culinary space, Chef Halder has consistently set industry benchmarks to the high standards of fine dining in India. He has been a part of the industry for over 12 years.

Before joining Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park, Chef was working with Marriott Kathmandu, Nepal as the Executive Sous Chef, and was also the part of the pre-

opening team. He began his career with properties like The Chancery Pavilion, Bangalore; Moevenpick Hotel and Spa, Bangalore; Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield; Four Points by Sheraton, Bangalore; JW Marriott, Kolkata and Le Meridian Gurgaon, Delhi.



Kailash Gundupalli, Director of Culinary, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre and Hyderabad International Convention Centre

Bringing over 20 years of proficient hospitality experience, Chef Gundupalli leads the culinary operations at the property. In his role, Chef Gundupalli is predominantly responsible for formulating and implementing the department's standard operating

procedures, ensuring the smooth running of operations, interacting with guests to understand their requirements and providing the best of hospitality and F&B experience. Prior to joining Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre and HICC, Gundupalli has been associated with renowned hotels like Grand Sukhumvit Bangkok, Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach, ibis & Novotel Bangalore Techpark, Hilton London Paddington, Du Vieux Port Hotel & Restaurants - Montreal, Four Points by Sheraton Hotel - Toronto, Hockley Valley Resort.



Sandip Satange, Hotel Manager, ibis Coimbatore City Centre

Satange brings with him a rich international hospitality experience with over 11 years across global hospitality brands in India, USA & UK including stints with ibis London Shepherd's Bush and ibis London Heathrow. Satange's journey with Accor started in 2010 as the F&B Team Leader of ibis London Heathrow. During this course, Satange successfully led the pre-opening of 4 hotels and

was one of the key members of the pre-opening team of ibis Chennai Sipcot. He also spearheaded the opening and launch of Holiday Inn Express, Bengaluru Whitefield as the Hotel Manager.

ACCOR GROUP



Ravi Sharma, Director of Finance, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre and Hyderabad International Convention Centre

A dynamic hospitality professional, Sharma brings over 14 years of domain experience in financial planning and analysis, accounting control, budgeting, taxation, statutory audit, and pre-opening of 5-star Hotels. In his new role at Novotel Hyderabad Convention

Centre and HICC, he will be spearheading the supervision of the revenue management and distribution strategy of the hotel along with managing the day to day yield operations. Prior to joining Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre and HICC, Sharma headed finance operations for hospitality brands such as The Leela Goa, The Oberoi Rajvilas, Jaipur, Trident Hotel, Agra, Novotel Imagica Khopoli, Mumbai primarily working in the accounts, taxation, audit, and finance operations.



Jayakrishnan Sudhakaran, General Manager, Novotel Ahmedabad

Sudhakaran brings with him 20 years of vivid expertise in sales, marketing and operations. Prior to joining Novotel Ahmedabad, he was the hotel manager at Novotel Ibis Chennai OMR.

Sudhakaran has been associated with Accor since the past five years and his career graph reflects Accor's strong commitment towards offering

more opportunities for building great careers. Sudhakaran cleared the prestigious IHMP program in 2018. He started his journey with Taj President Hotel, Mumbai in banqueting and later moved onto be a part of hospitality brands such as InterContinental Hotels,

Artificial Intelligence to rule the food industry post-COVID

By **Vikram Goel**, Managing Director, RATIONAL International India Pvt. Ltd.

Whether we like it or not COVID-19 has established a 'new normal' in all spheres of our lives. While the world is grappling with the changed order, few countries have crossed the bridge and are slowly getting back to business. India, on the other hand, is anxiously waiting for the dust to set and life to begin all over again. How soon we are able to do so is a million-dollar question at this moment. However, what all are sure of - is the need to urgently find a new fit, evolve strategies and be ready for the post COVID scenario.

BACK TO BUSINESS

The food industry too is slowly but steadily finding its lost ground. In the past few weeks, home delivery services have been restored and restaurants are seeing a gradual spike in numbers. With no-contact deliveries and online payments, consumers are fast gaining confidence in ordering food from restaurants. While consumers are also eagerly waiting to get back to eating out, the industry itself is trying to find ways to make the consumer experience more safe, hygienic and assuring. Post-COVID, a lot is sure to change in the way people plan their eating outs. Restaurants, on the other hand, have to re-invent themselves in the way they cook, serve and meet the high standards of hygiene. And the only answer is - shift towards automation and leveraging Artificial Intelligence for the benefits of all. Today more and more restaurants are using smart combi-ovens - which can do wonders in no time with little human intervention. The minimal use of human hand assures the food is safe, hygienic and perfect to taste as every aspect is pre-programmed.

AUTOMATION, THE WAY FORWARD

In this fast-changing scenario, the food industry should brace itself to more stringent rules for non-home cooked food preparations. One can easily foresee the introduction of strict guidelines by the government taking the benchmark of food safety and hygiene a notch higher. In many parts of the world traditional cooking equipment such as tandoor and gas stoves, which are both risky as well as unfavourable for the environment, have been banned in commercial spaces. We too can expect a greater emphasis on the use of unsupervised smart equipment which assures high standards of food safety and hygiene.

While new rules might soon be laid down to beat the virus at all levels, consumers themselves will be more discerning in times to come. They will pick restaurants which follow high standards of hygiene and where social distancing is practised in the best possible way. A recent study done by an Indian restaurant-tech-solution platform cited more



and more people are moving towards digital ordering and payment, where they do not have to touch anything other than sanitized cutlery during their restaurant visits.

The professional kitchens are in for mega changes world over. Restaurants will have to upgrade themselves with new-age technology which depends a lot on Artificial Intelligence and complete automation. Smart combi-ovens are the 'new normal'. These smart appliances can be programmed in such a way that they can cook the best meals with minimal intervention. They can make any chef's craftsmanship come true with ease. From baking, steaming to giving the final finish with the right colour crust, aroma and texture; they can do it all. What's more, most of the intelligent equipment come with automatic self-cleaning function and hence nothing is left to chance when it comes to matters of cleanliness and hygiene. Even the HACCP data can be retrieved from the units automatically which can become a mandatory requirement in future for commercial kitchens to maintain.

AI LEADS THE WAY

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning are playing predominant roles in the world of food safety. From storing raw materials at the correct temperature/environment, cooking as per the chef's orders to even self-cleaning of appliances at regular intervals, AI leads the way with perfection. Automation would also mean using lesser manpower



in the kitchen which would even serve the golden rule of social distancing and in the long run, may save on precious man-hours. AI also goes a long way in enriching customer satisfaction. With a rich mine of data at their disposal, restaurants will be soon able to gauge customer preferences and whip up curated dishes to their personal liking. Serving tailor-made meals to diners without having to explain their choices each time will surely increase customer satisfaction.

These smart equipment will master each dish to perfection offering the customers fresh, out of the oven scrumptious meals with each order.

As of said, change is the only constant. Kitchens the world over are set to become more intelligent with smart appliances, Bot chefs, voice assistant, tailor-made menus and perfect dishes. Technology once again is set to lead the way and hand-hold the industry into a post-COVID era with new discoveries and learnings. ■

The views expressed within this column are the opinion of the author, and may not necessarily be endorsed by the publication.

Hospitality BIZ

11 YEARS OF



 **Loyal Readership**
 **Industry Leadership**

 **Daily News**
 **Expert Views**

 **24x7 Content Creation**
 **Catering to every Generation**

 **Marketing Innovation**
 **Credible Data & Information**



360° Solutions

★ **Market Research** ★ **Print & Online Advertising**
★ **Roadshows & Exhibitions** ★ **Webinars**



Contact Us

Mumbai

Pooja Nalawade

E: pooja.nalawade@saffronsynergies.in

M: 09769052241

For Subscription

Darshana Bhosale: darshana.bhosale@saffronsynergies.in | 022-67121881

Architectural Luminaires

The New
K-LITE

Underwater Luminaires



Recessed Pool LED Luminaires



LED Spot Lights



LED Fountain Lights

In-Ground Luminaires



Symmetrical Reflector



Symmetrical



Asymmetrical



Wallcover Luminaires



Micro & Mini LED Luminaires



Symmetrical Lens



Symmetrical Reflector
Honeycomb lens optional



Asymmetrical



Symmetrical



www.kite.in