

HOSPITALITY[®] Talk



Reviving restaurants the tech way

As restaurants get ready for the new normal post-COVID, inresto by Dineout's Contactless Dining product suite is the perfect solution to offer a safe dining-out experience.





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PHILIPPINES

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Business finds a way

Hotels are going all out to woo guests with lucrative offers, stringent safety & hygiene protocols and rejuvenating experiences.

THE FERN ROYAL FARM RESORT OPENS IN ANJAR-KUTCH, GUJARAT

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has opened The Fern Royal Farm Resort in Anjar-Kutch, Gujarat. This is the 20th hotel which the company is managing in the state. Overall, the company's count has extended to 76 hotels across the country and in Nepal and Seychelles. The resort in Anjar comprises 88 rooms, villas and suites. It offers six categories of accommodations, namely Winter Green Room, Winter Green Villa, Fern Club Room, Fern Club Villa, Hazel Suite and Royal Farm Villa. All the rooms are equipped with state-of-the-art modern facilities. The villas also have attached swimming pools and lawns. The hotel is situated on the Anjar-Bhuj highway, with easy access to the major sightseeing attractions. It is 17 km from Kandla Airport, 6 km from Anjar Railway Station and 5 km from the Anjar Bus Stand.



DOUBLETREE BY HILTON PUNE CHINCHWAD REOPENS

DoubleTree by Hilton Pune Chinchwad's focus remains on their customers as much as on their people and their product. The hotel has aligned its safety protocols with Hilton Cleanstay, a worldwide programme rolled out by Hilton in partnership with Reckitt Benckiser where they have trained their teams in the various protocols & revised their SOPs accordingly. As the hotel has launched their food delivery initiative for their patrons, DoubleTree by Hilton Pune Chinchwad has initiated the return of their team members in stages and has included counselling by experts as part of the onboarding experience post lockdown. They are hand-holding the process of making them familiar with the changed set up, protocols and processes.

SUSTAINABILITY AT THE POSTCARD HOTEL

The Postcard Hotel is a collection of boutique luxury hotels hidden in holiday destinations across India (Goa), Bhutan and Sri Lanka. The hotel's key focus is being sustainable and sourcing fresh local



ingredients that offer an authentic glimpse into the destination where they are located. The three hotels in Goa are settled in a 214-year-old ancestral bird estate in Moira, amidst Portugese colonies in Velha, and the one in Cuelim Goa overlooks 3,500 acres of lush green paddy fields.



ACCOR INTRODUCES 'LET US TAKE CARE OF YOU' CAMPAIGN

Accor's 'Let Us Take Care of You' campaign invites travellers to explore the world at their doorstep. Accor is offering great discounts across all its properties in India. For the guest booking directly through Accor channels, they will avail 20% discount on BAR (Best Available Rate) including breakfast, any one major meal (a three-course meal), 2X ALL points and same day free cancellation. For bookings through Accor's OTA partners, the same offer will be provided except for the ALL points benefit. The booking period is from July 15 to September 3, 2020 for stays starting from July 15 to October 31, 2020.

SAYAJI GROUP OF HOTELS UNVEILS 'ENRISE BY SAYAJI' IN PUNE

Sayaji Group of Hotels has added another landmark in Pune with the launch of 'Enrise by Sayaji'. Expediently located at Hinjewadi – the industrial and IT hub of Pune, this luxury hotel is conveniently situated within the triangle formed by Pune-Mumbai Express Highway, Rajeev Gandhi IT Park, Hinjewadi and Pune-Bangalore Highway. Enrise by Sayaji Pune encompasses 29 luxurious rooms and suites that fit seamlessly into the traveller's scheme of things.



RCI PARTNERS WITH SANSKRUTI SUITES & RESORT

RCI, part of the Wyndham Worldwide family of brands, welcomed a brand-new affiliation, Sanskruti Suites & Resort to its existing 4,300 hotels base. With this new addition, RCI's India portfolio has reached to 214 resorts in the country. Located



equidistant from Pune and Mumbai in Karjat, the resort makes for a perfect weekend holiday. It offers 30 luxury villas, featuring a living room, kitchenette, one master bedroom and one children's room. The resort has 36 Studio Suites, featuring a small living room area, kitchenette, a king size bed and a large terrace.



IHG LAUNCHES FIRST HOLIDAY INN IN GURUGRAM

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has opened the first Holiday Inn of new Gurugram in Sector 90 of the city. The hotel is equipped with 263 rooms & suites. It's prime location offers easy access to Manesar, Southern Periphery Road, Dwarka Express Highway and the city centre. The hotel is located approximately 45 minutes from Indira Gandhi International Airport, 30 minutes from Gurugram's railway station and 30 minutes from Huda City Centre Metro station. The hotel is an ideal weekend getaway destination for Delhi-NCR residents and offers a convenient stopover for tourists covering the 'Golden Triangle' of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur.

CROWNE PLAZA GREATER NOIDA PLAYS HOST TO RIG INSTITUTE OF HOSPITALITY

Crowne Plaza Greater Noida has signed a long-term lease agreement with RIG Institute, one of the leading hospitality educational



institutions in India, in collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) to set up an exclusive educational facility in their premises. This off-site campus is being developed as a world-class space to offer 18-month Diploma courses by Ecole Hoteliere de Lausanne, Switzerland (EHL). The hotel is continually adapting to the pandemic and opening new business avenues.

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Resurrecting the F&B industry

Restaurants strategising their operational model post-COVID, find inresto by Dineout's Contactless Dining product suite beneficial.



Nisha Verma

Every monumental event in history has reshaped the world into being what we see today. Similarly, the onslaught of this pandemic has made individuals and businesses retrace their steps back to their drawing board. The effects, however, have transformed the restaurant industry and accelerated it into the future.

inresto by Dineout plays a vital role in revamping the industry from the inside with its array of advanced contactless technology. More than 10,000 restaurants like Radisson, Hard Rock Cafe, Subway, Conrad, The Beer Cafe, Mamagoto across the country are now using their technology to provide a safe dining out experience.

TECH IS THE ONLY WAY FORWARD

For restaurants, one of the primary objectives was to offer a safe dining experience. inresto made it possible by offering seamless technology that removed non-essential human interaction and removed high touch elements. "If you are focused on the problem, you will only see the problem. But if you are focused on finding the solution, you will end up finding that and more," says **Ankit Mehrotra**, CEO & Co-Founder of Dineout.

"We realised our vantage point when our B2B and B2C world collided. As Dineout, we gauged the inhibitions of the diners. As inresto, we built technology that removed those inhibitions, thereby helping our restaurant partners to reopen their doors confidently," points out Mehrotra.

BUILDING TRUST IS KEY

A safe dining experience is key to build diner confidence and trust, especially now when people are sceptical of stepping out. Safe dining is what leads to loyalty and re-visits from diners today. A recent survey conducted by Dineout with over 1 million respondents, brought to the fore customers' expectations when they visit a restaurant. The survey revealed that 96 per cent of



ANKIT MEHROTRA
CEO & Co-Founder
Dineout



diners preferred to be seated as soon as they reach. Old style menus are passé, and 80 per cent of diners prefer ordering through a digital menu. Even cash payments are a thing of the past, with 55 per cent of respondents saying that they would rather opt to pay digitally. Hence, the contactless solutions, offered by inresto, will play a key role in building customer loyalty. A six-step contactless journey powered by inresto product suite does the trick for restaurants to ensure a seamless experience for its diners:

1. **Pre-ordering** – Cut the wait times at the restaurants, as diners opt for Dineout's pre-ordering feature to ensure that the food is ready by the time they reach the restaurant.
2. **Contactless Valet** – Avoid crowds, as diners are able to get their cars brought in, as soon as payment is done. inresto Valet aims to reduce time spent at community areas and increase driver efficiency.
3. **Contactless Seating** – Make reservations online and simplify digital table allotment. inresto's Guest & Reserve technology ensures capacity management at restaurants as per the government regulations.



We built technology that removed inhibitions of diners, thereby helping our restaurant partners to reopen their doors confidently"

WHITELABELED END-TO-END CONTACTLESS JOURNEY



4. **Contactless Menu** – inresto’s digital menu solution DineIn uses Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence to offer dynamic pricing and customised offers at partner restaurants besides offering diners the options to place an order by simply scanning a QR code from their devices.

5. **Contactless Payment** – Simplify the payment process for both the restaurant and diners. Digital payments via Dineout Pay removes the need to exchange cash and cards.

6. **Contactless Feedback** – inresto feedback helps collect real-time response on the dining experience and helps the restaurant increase their Net Promoter Score.

WELL-EQUIPPED FOR THE NEW NORMAL

Maintaining the utmost hygiene standards is paramount. Easier said than done. “We forecasted the need for standard hygiene checks and sanitation almost instantly. And decided to scout the best hygiene partners in the industry to help facilitate our restaurant partners to adapt and thrive in the new normal. Our collaboration with Equinox Lab, Rentokil & Zoono, QubeHealth and Staqu is directed towards ensuring a safe dining experience. We also curated a personal protective equipment (PPE) kit that 70 per cent of our restaurant partners were happy to acquire from us,” shares Mehrotra.

“In the month of May 2020, we drafted a Whitepaper outlining the guidelines for the restaurant industry which was released by the Additional Director General of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Ms. Rupinder Brar. The Ministry recognised the merits of contactless dining as a confidence-building measure to bring back diners and reiterated the importance of following the recommended practices when it comes to restaurant operations to ensure a safe space for people to visit post lockdown,” adds Mehrotra.

This Whitepaper addresses key actionable points to create a contactless dining experience and enables restaurants to regain the trust of diners by providing them a safe and secure environment.

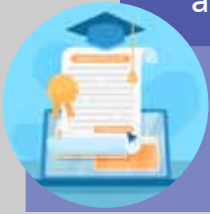
OWNING DINER DATA

Data is gold at this time in the industry,

ENABLE SAFE-TO STEP OUT FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS

Rebuild customer confidence by providing a safe environment

Accreditation from Equinox Labs for hygiene ratings and audits



Association with Rentokil and Zoono for sterifume disinfection services



Restaurants Safety and PPE Kits



Association with QubeHealth for monitoring employees' health



Live Kitchen Feeds to be displayed in customer journey



as it not only helps restaurants to focus on personalising their products and communication, but also makes them gauge customer behaviour for the future.

“There won't be a better time for restaurants to take ownership of their diner data. This means much more than sending them a personalised message. What most don't realise is the true potential of this data which can be analysed to make future business decisions. With inresto product suite, we provide full control to the respective restaurant partners which helps them in business growth and diner acquisition,” shares Mehrotra.

Data points collected using valet, table reservation, delivery & takeaway, digital ordering and feedback can be accessed by restaurants to increase their revenue and decrease costs. Restaurants can develop loyalty programmes, run targeted campaigns, and analyse reports for profitability.

MAKING RESTAURANT PARTNERS #AATMANIRBHAR

Leveraging social media platforms where diners tend to spend most of their time, inresto is on a mission to help restaurants get direct orders.

“Up until a few months back, social media was just a tool that was largely used to market the restaurant's offerings to its patrons. Now is the time to utilise the wonders of this channel to the fullest and beyond.

Fullest, by sending regular and personalised communication while keeping in mind the diner attributes. Beyond, by using social media to get orders directly from the diners. We've made

it feasible for restaurants to have an 'Order Now' button on their Instagram handles, that enables their diners to order food from the digital menu directly and instantly. inresto is the only B2B partner in India that has made Instagram integration possible for its partners.

By doing so we are making our restaurant partners Atmanirbhar, enabling them to monetize their own channel, and helping them avoid third party aggregator commission," claims Mehrotra.

Another offering from inresto is to leverage WhatsApp for automated order fulfilment. "Incorporating WhatsApp as an official platform for restaurants shortens their ordering process and gives regular updates about the order status to the diners, thereby establishing trust on the world's most widely used messenger," he adds.

DELIVERY & TAKEAWAY: THE KNIGHTS IN SHINING ARMOUR

Have you ever heard of five-star hotels delivering food at your doorstep, or ever thought about your favourite exclusive gourmet restaurant making sure that the dish you love reaches you in time? Today, this crisis has changed the way delivery, takeaway, and food pick-up operates.

"For the longest time, the Indian restaurant industry played it safe. Sticking to the basics, about 75 per cent of the organised restaurants operated with the dine-in model and very few dabbled with home delivery. But presently, they have an opportunity to hit a home run.

Numbers never lie. A CGA Peach report pointed out that in 2019, more than 50 per cent of the adult population in Britain had their food delivered to their doorstep. That's about 28.6 million people. Restaurants across the world have started acknowledging the increasing appetite for home delivery and takeaway, while dine-in picks up a steady pace.

Similarly, in our country, many restaurants, especially luxury dine-ins who earlier shied away from delivery, have now curated delivery-only menus. This change in behaviour has a significant impact on the market and indicates faster recovery," claims Mehrotra.

EMERGING MARKET FOR DRIVE-THROUGH & CURBSIDE

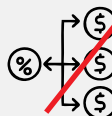
Speaking on emerging trends worldwide and their ripple effect in our country, Mehrotra informs, "A report by Mckinsey & Co, suggested that 91 per cent of Indians have changed their stepping out behaviour. Similar patterns have been observed in the overseas market, in lieu of this, most restaurants with available parking spaces are looking to convert into drive-thrus.

In India, takeaway & drive-through occupied about one per cent of the overall restaurant industry as compared to 15-20 per cent in the US & European

BENEFITS FOR YOUR RESTAURANT?



Get Direct orders from Diners



Avoid Aggregator Commission



Get Insights on orders

HOW TO ADD FOOD ORDERS STICKER TO YOUR INSTAGRAM

Select a photo or video to upload to your story

Select the "FOOD ORDERS" sticker and post your story



RIGHT INVESTMENT

Owing to the crisis, the industry has witnessed unavailability of capital for investment. Restaurants need to assess the implications before investing. Investments made in the right technologies which enable business operations will result in fruitful growth.

market during the pre-COVID times. However, given the current trends in India, it is expected to go up to 15 per cent over the next six months. An early adopter, Timbre, on the outskirts of Bangalore is using inresto's contactless dining product suite to let diners experience an open-air movie theatre with delicious food served to them in their cars. This is a prime example of adopting technology and adapting to the new normal."

INRESTO IS THE ONE-STOP SHOP

"inresto is a step ahead of the usual ordering and billing platforms, which are multiplying at lightning speed," says Mehrotra.

"Restaurants which are looking at a fast recovery are keen on getting business from all possible platforms and there are one too many in the market. inresto Point of Sale (POS) is the only technology that is compatible with the majority of market players such as Zomato, Swiggy, PhonePE, Google, Paytm, etc.

We are bridging the gap in the marketplace and enabling restaurants to manage orders, logistics, delivery, inventory and billing from all such platforms at one place. Our aim is to collaborate and provide a 360 degree solution to restaurants," he concludes.



Over 10,000
restaurants like

Radisson, Hard Rock
Cafe, Subway, now use
inresto, offering a safe
dining-out experience"



Going beyond safety

Not everyone got bogged down during the adversities caused by COVID-19 and instead of calling it a doomsday, they managed to sail through. **Himmat Anand**, Founder, Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels, also managed to do so.



Nisha Verma

Himmat Anand believes that the industry created a lot of negativity as a reaction to COVID-19. “The industry is at fault to have created a negative scenario for themselves by discussing about how industry will close, hotels will be doomed, and travel will be unsafe. This way we doubled our troubles,” he said.

POSITIVE OUTLOOK

However, they kept a positive approach towards their business. “We accepted that everything was lost and decided to build ourselves back upwards from zero. We were very positive and proactive on social media and took out new programmes. The idea was that we wanted to have a continuity of our presence and of our business. We were the first in the country to announce the opening of our property. In mid-May, we announced that on Friday, June 19, we will open,” he added. Tree of Life Resort & Spa was the first property they opened. “We were conscious of the fact that we will only open properties which are within four to five hours of driving distance from the source market, and hence Jaipur was the best bet, as it was within driving distance of NCR. We started with an occupancy of 28-30 per cent in



HIMMAT ANAND

OCCUPANCY

Udaipur is dependent on the Gujarat market, which hasn't taken off the way we thought, but when we opened on July 1, we did about 24-26% occupancy in July.

June, and slashed June prices. To activate the market again, we went for a deep 50 per cent discount in June. In July we brought it to 40 per cent, and in August we had around 25-30 per cent discounting. By October it would come to around 10-15 per cent discounting, as I believe that by October things will be stable for us as a group. This means that out of eight properties, at least in four, things will be stable. Jaipur has done unbelievably well in July. It has taken us by surprise, as we have done better this July than July of last year. Our occupancy in July was about 68 per cent with an ARR of ₹10,700. Interestingly, our luxury pool villas are the ones to sell out first and they sell between ₹14,000-16,000 per night only with breakfast plus GST,” shared Anand.

SMALL WEDDINGS DO THE TRICK

Small weddings is another segment, which did get them some business. “Before COVID happened, we launched a brand called Intimate Moments by Tree of Life in Jan-Feb. The idea was that people wanted to get away from huge numbers and we felt that people want to do small weddings, celebrations, anniversaries, birthdays, baby showers, and bachelorette parties, but in an intimate and personalised way. However, it didn't take off the way we expected, but now we have re-introduced Intimate Moments, where we are focusing only on small segment functions at our properties, which usually have 10-18 rooms, which can accommodate 35-50 people. We've had around four weddings in the last month, including two in Varanasi. We also have bookings for Varanasi and Jaipur for November and December,” concluded Anand.



Our luxury pool villas sell out first and they sell between ₹ 14,000-16,000 per night only with breakfast plus GST”

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Beyond the Unlock

In June, Unlock 1.0 permitted businesses including hotels to reopen in a phased manner. Since then two more Unlocks have further opened up the hospitality sector. Let's check out how the Unlocks worked for the hotel sector.



Steena Joy

The world as we knew it before COVID-19 has forever changed. It has taught the travel and tourism industry to reinvent their working SOPs and rethink the strategy to just stay afloat. The resilient hotel industry is now faced with changes in consumer travel patterns and behaviour and have to accordingly work to include these in their operational strategies.

Gaurav Sinha, Director of Operations, JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru says, "A positive outlook towards business has made us look beyond the conventional way of opportunity. We are seeing development in business – social events and staycations as major contributors. MICE will take longer than expected and uncertainty of travel can continue. For large form of events we have seen some possible light with enquiries for Q4 of 2021."

Speaking about the challenges, Sinha adds, "Business continuity is a severe challenge. Our first effort is to gradually sustain business and employment of our people. The company is taking all possible measures to hold on to talent and their well-being while balancing the business for stakeholders. We still have a long way to go. However, the lockdown has certainly opened a new way of looking at business – controlling the operating cost while sustaining the longevity of business."

Girish Krishnan, Hotel Manager, Four Points by Sheraton Mahabalipuram Resort & Convention Center



GAURAV SINHA



We are controlling the operating cost while sustaining the longevity of business"



GIRISH KRISHNAN



The awakening of a new-informed era will have huge values for qualitative assurance"

observes that the industry has faced a major loss in terms of mass-scale cancellations and reduced traffic. He says, "Some of the short-term challenges will be low expenditure power but the long-term challenges will be a shift in consumer behaviour, consumption patterns, perception, expectations and trends. Accordingly, we are working on the pricing strategies and on understanding the perception during this time, we have anticipated a change in the saving patterns and the demand for experiences that are value for money. The focus is to shift from an anxious situation to a positive approach."

The positive aspect is the decluttering of each sector to form a qualitative stage that will last long; redefining safety, sustainability and productivity; understanding the intensity of demand; evaluating the emerging opportunities; and building futuristic developments. "The awakening of a new-informed era will have huge values for qualitative assurance, and that will help us to bring back the loyalty and trust of our guests," he adds.

Four Points by Sheraton Ahmedabad has seen a marginal increase in the number of travellers coming into the hotel – people travelling for work, transiting through the city to other destinations, families staying over weekends to take a break from routine and rigorous schedules they followed during the lockdown. The hotel is also seeing dine in inquiries. Speaking about the challenges, **Vinayak Mhatre**, Hotel Manager, Four Points by Sheraton Ahmedabad points out, "Challenges

that continue to impact the business are limited travel options from feeder markets like Mumbai, New Delhi and other metro cities in the country. Current limitations on international travel will impact the overseas business that was coming into the hotel." The hotel has seen some inquiries for last quarter of 2020 and first and second quarter of 2021 coming in. Mhatre feels that Clean and Hygienic Stays complemented with Innovative and Safe Dine in options would be the key to business in the months to come. Leaner operative models without losing out on delivery efficiencies would help the industry to revive faster, he adds.

Punish B Sharma, Vice President – Operations, The Fern Hotels & Resorts opines that it's still early days as far as the hospitality industry is concerned. He says, "The industry got the permission to open recently and that too with limitations. If I take all these things into perspective, I will say that Meluha, The Fern is doing pretty decent. We had a few guests who were staying with us even during the lockdown. We also got guests who stayed with us as a part of self-quarantine. With the unlocking we have seen some more activity on the rooms front, however it is going to take some time to get good numbers. We have a huge locational advantage. A lot of corporates operate from Hiranandani gardens and we have a captive audience. This puts us in a better situation."

His only concern area in the near future is actually the MICE segment. "The job in our hands right now is to concentrate on the room sales. Once we start getting good occupancies, I am sure the MICE business will also pick up," he affirms. His thoughts on the road to recovery? "I am sure that the occupancies are going to steadily get momentum. We have been getting good responses. Our new operational standards are being appreciated by guests. All of us as a team have to pull up our socks and put our best, the rest will follow," he says.

Fredrik Blomqvist, General Manager, Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru agrees. "Without any doubt, the business pace is slow and this recovery journey is going to take time – we need to be patient. We are currently focusing a lot on internal training and ensuring our revised operating standards have been implemented accordingly." Four Seasons has launched Lead With Care, an enhanced global health and safety programme that is being implemented at properties worldwide, including at Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru. "Food & Beverage is very much the front and centre of the game and that has been a very positive thing for us. The key challenges are that we are unable to see the light at the end of the tunnel and it will take time to restore the confidence in our travellers," Blomqvist adds.

Four Seasons has implemented an incentive driven programme for its sales teams to benefit by promoting and selling each other across the region. This can also be seen on social media with the brand's #FSAsiaStories hashtag where different Four Seasons hotels are promoted, one by one, with a view to entice guests to dream up their next travel idea. As for MICE, he feels that the sector needs to be prepared for a marathon and not a race – it will take time and small steps will



VINAYAK MHATRE



Leaner operative models without losing out on delivery efficiencies would help revival"



PUNISH SHARMA



Occupancies are going to steadily get momentum. We have been getting good responses"



FREDRIK BLOMQVIST



F&B is very much the front & centre of the game & that has been a positive thing for us"



SHRUTI SHIBULAL



We are slowly seeing an increase in intra-state travellers visiting our properties"



be taken to get where the sector wants to be, but only over time. Blomqvist believes that this a great time to ideate and think out of the box like transforming al fresco spaces into meeting venues, tapping the staycation segment, crafting great banquet menus, improvising on takeaway offerings. "We will have to look through a much wider lens and it will serve us well to promote Bengaluru as a destination, and not just Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru, to our global guests," he suggests.

Shruti Shibulal, CEO and Director, Tamara Leisure Experiences informs that the nationwide lockdown and the travel restrictions it brought with it was a very challenging period for her group. "However, we are a strong and resilient organisation, with an incredible team of dedicated and committed associates, chefs, and operations managers. We are slowly seeing an increase in intra-state travellers visiting our properties. We are hopeful that, in time, inter-state travellers will also return," she says.

The biggest challenge the hospitality industry will face now and in the coming months will be to establish trust amongst clientele. "We are aware that some things have forever changed, and it will be imperative to ensure safety measures and protocols to suit the new reality we are faced with," she says. As for MICE, there has been movement with wedding bookings at the brand's Trivandrum property, O by Tamara. Wedding parties have been choosing upscale hotel venues over auditoriums for elegant and intimate wedding celebrations. Going by an increase in enquiries for events such as these, Shibulal expects a better turnout in the coming months.

Courtyard Surat is fortunate to run a full house during the March to July 2020 period and still counting. "We



were able to secure business from a local company of Surat, which protected our top line. With stringent initiatives put in place and controlled bottom line, we were amongst the few hotels in India to achieve a high GOP of 65 per cent in April and May; and, 60 per cent in June and July,” says **Vikas Sharma**, General Manager, Courtyard by Marriott Surat. This helped Courtyard Surat to protect associate jobs and their salaries and thereby has resulted in a highly motivated workforce.

He opines that MICE business will still take some more time to start showing results. “The new normal will be the virtual meetings. Unfortunately, with a cap of 50 attendees, maintaining physical distancing and restriction on buffet services, it will never give us the magnitude and class that the MICE segment is known for,” he affirms.

The road to recovery is expected to be long; it could take 12-18 months to come anywhere close to pre-COVID numbers. Domestic tourists will primarily lead this. International tourists are not expected before the early part of 2021. Any good news on the vaccine front will certainly provide a big boost. “We have to now, as industry professionals, start looking at the hotel as a business enterprise as the new pillars of hospitality in my view will be associate, guest, cash,” he states.

Being in proximity to the airport, Novotel Hyderabad Airport had never shut operations completely. The hotel had few international long stay guests who were unable to travel back to their countries. **Rubin Cherian**, General Manager, Novotel Hyderabad Airport says, “Since Unlock 1.0 we have seen a steady rise in our business. Nearly 77 per cent of our guests are domestic, thus our dependence on the international inbound traffic is limited. The hotel has by now hosted a healthy number of Indian weddings (respecting the 50 guests gathering rule) and we have also been getting requests for rooms from airlines dealing in cargo and private jets



VIKAS SHARMA



We were amongst the few hotels in India to achieve a high GOP of 60% in June and July”



RUBIN CHERIAN



Bigger MICE events would take some more time to come back to their full potential”



ATUL UPADHYAY



Communication will play a lead role in reaching out to the guests and needs to be done subtly”



PRANTIK RAY



Recovery will be prolonged by at least three to four quarters with normalcy around two years away”

for their crew. We were able to capture this business as we have an advantage of being close to the airport.” Cherian adds, “We are seeing a pattern where corporates are considering smaller gatherings currently, however we anticipate that bigger MICE events would take some more time to come back to their full potential.” He believes that while economy & midscale segment hotels will be the first to recover as travellers are going to be very price sensitive in such times, they would also like to patronise brands which have a strong global presence.

Atul Upadhyay, Vice President Operations, Pride Hotels feels that the biggest and foremost challenge while reopening the business will be the implementation of the new standards, which will require developing a new set of skills around the management of cleaning, disinfection, and inspection. “The current crisis has also taught us the value of being prepared for pandemics. This means having policies and practices ready to go when in need will also be another challenge,” he points out.

He says that MICE will take a little more time to recover but once it does, we are hoping to get higher demand as some of the international planned events will shift to India due to travel restrictions. He believes regaining guest’s confidence should be the first step in overcoming the crisis. “Communication will play a lead role in reaching out to the guests and needs to be done subtly. Gentle, so it reassures the guest of the safety in their decision to start planning and travelling again,” he reiterates.

Prantik Ray, Area General Manager, Sayaji Indore advises, “The prime focus should be on guest safety & sanitisation. Stick to brand USP, customise packages & promotions, focus on transit travellers, engage with online channel partner, target less impacted corporate bodies are a few brand strategies to boost occupancies.” He opines that recovery will be prolonged by at least three to four quarters with normalcy around two years away. Small scale business travellers will recover first whereas group or MICE will be the last to recover.

Vipul Tripathi, DGM-Operation, Effotel Indore says, “COVID-19 has severely impacted the hospitality sector in Q2 & Q3 2020. As far as Indore is concerned, even after the Unlock, restaurants are not being operational, only room business is operational. Whilst hotels in certain cities opened in early June, guests have not yet returned. As a market, Indore majorly is driven by corporate movement and we believe that demand in Indore will take time to recover and it will only happen when major corporates allow their employees to travel through their revised travel advisories.”

There is no MICE movement happening in Indore city as of now and Tripathi believes that it doesn’t seem likely in the near future. There has been significant decline in occupancy, average room rates (ARR) and also revenues. But he opines that, “There will be definitely be a boom in domestic tourism as people will choose destinations within India as opposed to international holidays. Also, as Indore is a city between two Jyotilingas (Ujjain & Omkareshwar), we are planning for some value for money pilgrim packages where guests can visit these Jyotilingas in a very safe and secure manner.”

On the revival path

As hotels in Delhi have finally opened up, hoteliers are gearing up to clear the mist of doubts in the minds of the guests. In a recent webinar, prominent hoteliers talked about challenges & new strategies.



Neha Rawat



SANJAY GUPTA
General Manager
Le Meridien Gurgaon

We decided to keep our hotel open during the pandemic. We also opened a floor for our associates in April & rebranded the entire hotel programme. The month of June is usually marriage season in India and event management agencies/wedding planners/guests had a faint idea that we are actually open. In June, we were one of the few hotels to see a pick-up in the weddings business. This has helped us stay afloat. Our focus is more towards staycations, marriages, parties which have helped us generate cash flows. Discounting has been replaced by compelling add-ons we are giving to the guests.



VARUN CHHIBBER
General Manager, The Leela Ambience
Gurugram Hotel & Residences

It's incredible how things change, we are seeing a new cycle of business. In the new scheme of things, with 50 guests you can book the luxury hotels in ₹3-4 lakhs; people are showing lot of interest in doing small events; buffets have changed – they are served by our chefs; every associate has to wear PPE. There are 335 odd seats in the resto – now we have reduced it to 50 per cent due to social distancing. Our brand 'Spectra' is the drawing room of Gurgaon. We have got to think about it more practically, we are not doing ala carte in banqueting. It is important for us to maintain to our rates.



ROHIT ARORA
Area General Manager
The Park New Delhi

As of now, there is no corporate or leisure business coming in. People who are really fed up of staying at home are coming back to hotels, so we are seeing staycations. Dropping prices will not get us business, we will end up losing more money. From the last couple of days, we have started operating our F&B outlet also with social distancing norms in place. Footfalls started picking up after just two days. We have got lot of queries for cocktail parties & marriage functions for the month of November. Corporate travel will take some time to pick up due to extension in work from home (WFH).



NAYAN SETH
General Manager
Taj Palace New Delhi

As we are going forward, we are gaining better control. We can easily take in about 200 people, but we all await the guidelines. The right approach will be to open the hall with 50 per cent capacity. We have opened F&B and took the resto to customers by offering home deliveries and takeaways. Rather than discounting, our value proposition is – luxury must not get affected. There is some movement happening in the domestic region, we have come up with innovative campaigns like drivecations for clientele. There is huge amount of pent up demand as most people are opting for resorts, staycation packages. We are getting F&B queries for October & November.




RAJESH NAMBY
General Manager
The Lodhi New Delhi

All through the pandemic when we were closed, we were practicing how we would reopen any day. We restructured our kitchen in line with health, hygiene and sanitisation guidelines. There was a big challenge in running the resto as PPE kit was necessary. We also have an in-house cleaning manager. As we opened for the guests, we saw that luxury is here to stay. We got 25 reservations from OTAs. There are very small boutique resorts, we are no competition to business mode hotels. We are also getting guests at our resto. Buffet is not going to be the new normal atleast for some time to come.



Pre-bookings are vital

The pandemic seems to have forced Goa Tourism to do some house-cleaning and relook at tackling short and long-term issues such as curbing illegal hotels and improving data collection.

 Hazel Jain

Menino D'souza, Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Goa, said during a recent webinar that his department will be looking at tackling fundamental issues both in the short-term and long-term. "One good thing that is coming out of COVID-19 that we will also adopt for the future is making pre-bookings of hotels mandatory for tourists entering the state. We are looking at maintaining this system to curb mass tourism that Goa is attracting," he said. D'souza also brought up the issue of collecting statistics. "Currently, we don't have an accurate data for tourist numbers. The process we are following now is not correct. According to that, we have 80 lakh tourists coming to Goa every year. Figures show that we receive more than a crore of tourists into Goa. So we are putting a new software in place to resolve this," he shared.

Underlining the need to curb illegal businesses, D'souza said that his department has proposed an amendment to make the process of registering easier. "We need to protect our brand and profits need to seep down. But if demand is not met legally, it is met illegally and rightful



**MENINO
D'SOUZA**



**SERAFINO
COTA**

MORE THAN 260 HOTELS REOPEN IN GOA

More than 260 hotels that had applied for permission to reopen are now operational in Goa and are listed on the Goa Tourism website. Tourists entering the state must get a COVID-19 negative certificate issued by Indian Council of Medical Research 48 hours prior, or submit themselves to test once they land in Goa until results are out. Until then, they will be kept in isolation at their hotel.

businesses suffer. Illegal hotels are also a security risk as well as dent the state treasury. We have now proposed to have only two to three NOCs for hotels. This will surely plug the loophole," he explained. Agreeing to this point was **Serafino Cota**, President, Small & Medium Hotels Associations. He said, "There is a huge issue of illegal hotels in Goa. They are not registered and all that revenue is lost. It is a very high number and it includes illegal beach shacks. We suggest the tourism department to come up with a policy for homestays that have four or more rooms with the owner staying there. They also need to be registered with Goa Tourism as it is very expensive to set up even a small hotel. Such illegal hotels cause a huge leakage in the system of more than 70 per cent or more revenue."



Illegal hotels are a security risk as well as dent the state treasury. We have now proposed only 2-3 NOCs for hotels"

‘We are not elitist’

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President of FHRAI and President of HRAWI, pleads the authorities to take the hospitality industry seriously and to stop perceiving it as elitist and recognise its capability and potential.



Hazel Jain

What is the current status of opening of hotels and restaurants in Maharashtra?

Hotels in the state have been open since July 8, but restaurants have not yet been given the permission to do so. We have been trying to convince the Central & state governments to permit restaurants to open. We have submitted elaborate presentations outlining all the safety and precautionary measures that restaurants will voluntarily adopt to ensure social distancing. Ideally, restaurants could have begun operations along with hotels if not earlier. Hotels occupancies in the state are in single digits i.e. below 10 per cent, but we are hopeful. Hotels occupancies in these months usually are low, but post-September we are hoping for it to go up. Also, we are receiving a steady trickle in booking enquiries, so until September, it is mostly a wait and watch game.

Tourism cannot restart unless hotels are opening. Your thoughts.

True. Hospitality is rightly called the backbone of tourism. Tourists require accommodation if they decide to travel and also need a place to eat at. So, it all goes hand-in-hand. If hotels don't open, tourists will not travel and if tourists don't travel, it will affect tourism. It will especially affect domestic tourism which right now is the only option for tourists.

What is your message to the government?

We want the authorities to take a serious view of this industry. Hospitality can become one of the major breadwinners for the country. Given the right support, hospitality and tourism have the potential to turn the clock around. For this, the government has to stop imagining or perceiving the industry as an elitist one and recognise its capability and potential. Both FHRAI and HRAWI have been constantly engaging with the concerned ministries at the state and all-India level. It remains to be seen how serious they are about our survival.

Is there any positive follow-up from the tourism minister of Maharashtra?

We understand the apprehension of the governments and the authorities. We also appreciate the



Hotels occupancies in the state of Maharashtra are in single digits, that is, below 10%, but we are hopeful”



GURBAXISH SINGH KOHLI

WELCOMING GUESTS PAN INDIA

Not just the staff but also the hotel owners and management are in the hotel premises most of the times. This is evidence of the fact that we take our safety standards very seriously and this should be a positive reinforcement for tourists considering travelling and making hotel bookings.

caution with which it is unlocking sectors. We are positive that the State Tourism Minister is doing his best and we have his assurance and support.

The unfortunate part is that, for over four months the industry has been in complete lockdown which has spelled doom for several establishments. Those that are managing to hold on to their businesses are walking a tightrope. With each passing day, these businesses are moving closer to a permanent shutdown scenario. So, we urge the government and the respective authorities to expedite the decision-making process to avoid a scenario which becomes irreversible in the future. We also assure the government of our commitment to ensuring guest safety and will be available for any further deliberations on the matter, if required.

Your message to travel agents from other states who are looking to send their clients on holidays.

Maharashtra's hospitality industry welcomes guests from across India. Needless to say, everyone is apprehensive and even today, there is no way to tell how long it will take before we are completely rid of it. But what we can assure our patrons is our commitment towards their safety. Our staff has been trained and prepared for guest management under COVID-19 handling procedures. It should be kept in mind that not just the staff but also the hotel owners and management are in the hotel premises most of the times. This is evidence of the fact that we take our safety standards very seriously and this should be a positive reinforcement for tourists considering travelling and making hotel bookings.

Occupancy, ADR to recover quickly

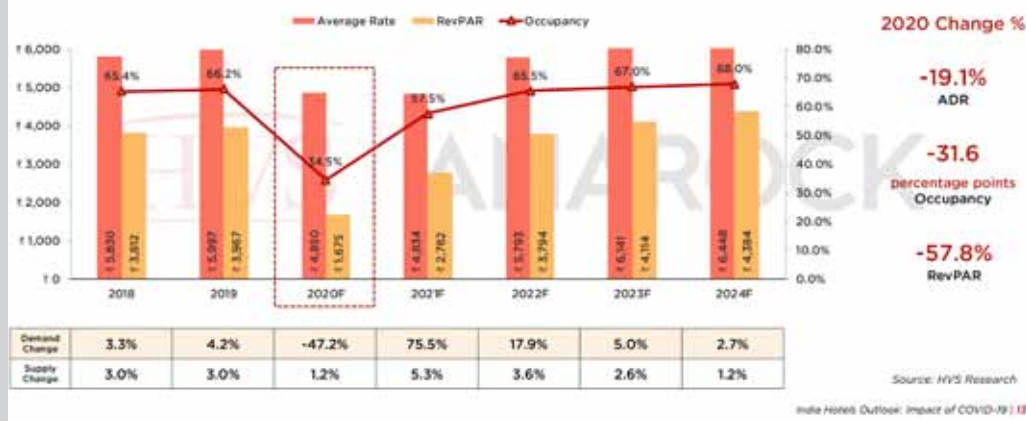
In its report titled 'India Hotels Outlook: Impact of COVID-19', HVS ANAROCK expects secondary and tertiary markets to hold up better than gateway and metro markets, which are expected to witness short-term volatility.

Going by predictions made in HVS ANAROCK'S latest report that not only analyses the performance of the Indian hotel sector under the current COVID-19 pandemic but also compares its recovery to events of the past (9/11 and the Global Financial Crisis of 2008), occupancy and ADR are expected to reach pre-COVID levels by 2022 and 2023, respectively, with supply growth expected to remain dormant. This is assuming recovery from COVID-19 begins in the second half of 2020.

We anticipate Occupancy & ADR to reach pre-COVID levels by 2022 & 2023 respectively

HVS ANAROCK

The following forecasts for the India hotels industry reflects the current outlook of market participants, assuming recovery from COVID-19 begins in the second half of 2020.



OUTLOOK FOR SUPPLY GROWTH

As of May 2020, supply was forecast to increase at a CAGR of 2.8 per cent during the 2020-2024 period. Given the recent events, supply growth is now expected to be lower, and at a slower pace, than previously anticipated.

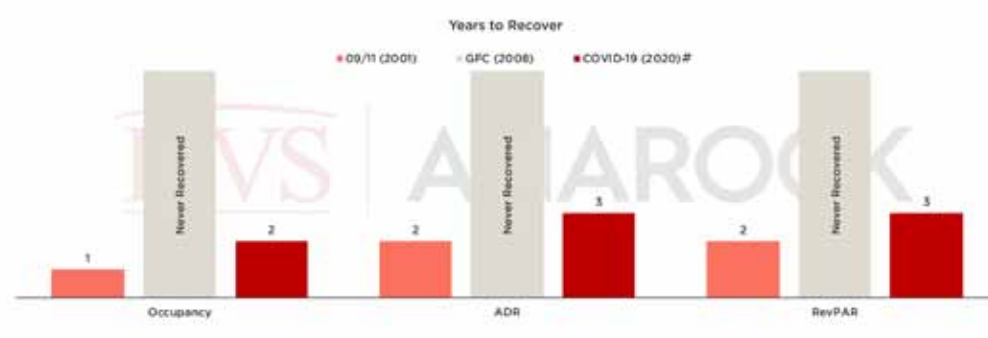
The report states that some properties are likely to be repurposed to other asset classes such as hospitals, student housing, and co-living spaces.

- Under-construction projects may face delays on account of labour shortages and issues pertaining to vendors and supply chain.
- Muted market conditions will likely lead to delayed openings; some projects may be on hold pending recovery.
- Financing challenges on account of negative sentiment for the sector is likely to delay projects.
- Changes in market conditions may render proposed projects infeasible; as a result, some projects may be postponed or cancelled.
- Some properties may close on account of financial stress and not reopen for an extended period of time, resulting in negative supply growth.

Current forecasts in a historical context

HVS ANAROCK

'Years to recover' reflects the time from the event year to levels immediately prior to the major event. Both Occupancy and ADR will recover much quicker in this cycle due to limited supply growth subject to vaccine being in place not later than 2021.



The report reveals that both occupancy and ADR will recover much quicker in this cycle due to limited supply growth, subject to a vaccine being in place not later than 2021. According to the analysis, while business midscale and economy hotels will recover faster than their luxury and upscale counterparts, the case will be quite the opposite in the leisure segment. Here, luxury and upscale hotels will recover quicker than their economy and midscale counterparts.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Secondary and tertiary markets are expected to hold up better. Gateway and the top 10 metro markets will witness short-term volatility.
- Supply growth is expected to slow significantly, as new or under constructions projects are delayed or abandoned and several highly leveraged assets are shutdown.
- The pace of immediate demand growth is co-related to the level of stimulus infused by the govt, besides the availability of a cure and vaccine.
- The transaction market will witness high activity due to likely softening in values and increased availability of stressed assets.

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Wyndham to expand

Nikhil Sharma, Area Director, Eurasia for Wyndham Hotels & Resorts EMEA, shares that the brand is ready to open new properties across India, catering to different segments.



Nisha Verma

Please share the expansion plans by Wyndham Hotels in India.

We recently shared the news of our expansion across the Indian sub-continent, showing Wyndham Hotels & Resorts' strong growth trajectory in the region with the openings of our first hotels in Nepal and Bhutan. Our economy brands such as Days Hotel and Hawthorn Suites continue to show momentum, together with our most dominant mid-scale brand in the region, Ramada by Wyndham. We expect to open our 50th Wyndham branded hotel in the Indian sub-continent next month, highlighting our commitment to growth across the region.

Why did you think of coming up with Hawthorn Suites in Dwarka?

We see tremendous potential in religious holiday destinations across India. Dwarka is one of the four main pilgrim destinations for Hindus, which made it the perfect location for a Wyndham branded property. We currently have various hotels in religious destinations such as Varanasi, Amritsar, Ajmer and are currently exploring opportunities in Tirupati, Vrindavan, Shirdi, Kathmandu among others. Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham in Dwarka is a villa development, which makes it an ideal property for families that are searching for a hotel that can accommodate them for an extended stay.

Aligarh is a different choice as a destination. What kind of business are you expecting?

Over the last few years, we are seeing a significant uptick in interest for internationally branded hotels that offer large meeting and event spaces. Aligarh is a Tier-III city, as well as an industrial city, located in Western Uttar Pradesh, famous for its brass and meat processing industry. It is also home to public sector undertakings such as Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC), making our Ramada by Wyndham Aligarh GT Road a convenient, amenity-rich location for meeting, event and industry-specific business travel.

What kind of business are you looking at from your Pune property?

Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Pune Hinjewadi is strategically located in Hinjewadi – India's largest IT Park, as well as home to the Balewadi Stadium. This prime



NIKHIL SHARMA

location garners significant business from international and domestic IT and automobile companies and also offers sports fans a great home base when travelling for sporting events taking place at the nearby stadium.

How are you engaging with the travel industry for boosting the sales?

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts' newest promotional offerings such as 'Welcome Back', 'Travel Again' and 'Stay for Two Nights', help us to engage with our guests and in turn boost sales. Our regional sales team is also working on deploying a variety of sales initiatives including Wyndham Easy Book that offers discounted rates for small to medium sized businesses. This new initiative was designed to build on Wyndham's already strong presence in the corporate travel space. These small to mid-sized businesses are a critical business segment to attract domestic travel, which as we've seen is dominant in today's market.



Wyndham in Dwarka is an ideal property for families that are looking at an extended stay”

‘We met like a family’

Jean-Michel Cassé, former Chief Operating Officer (COO) – India & South Asia, Accor, retired from his position recently. In his farewell interview, he shared what makes the Indian market so dynamic.



Nisha Verma

How was your experience in India?

I have been associated with Accor and the hospitality industry in this region for more than a decade. This journey and experience, with the support of our partners and colleagues, has been a tremendous one. From being just one hotel in Hyderabad to now more than 50 hotels, I have seen the group progress at every step as each of these properties is unique with individual memories attached. Our current portfolio is a healthy mix of diverse quality brands that also enjoy the benefit of great locations.

How is India different from other countries you have worked in before?

An amazing quality which sets India apart from other countries is the sense of cooperation and oneness. This industry never treats you like an outsider. Be it our employees, our partners, media fraternity – it is like a huge family gathering with deep-rooted values, and this is true for every city I have been to and every person I have met along the way. We have so many competitors in the market, but when you meet them at various conferences or meetings, there is never a sense of any rivalry. In fact, we all met like a family and as an industry that sees a great potential in the region for everyone.



Do not drop rates as occupancies will return in due course; reducing rates will take the industry back by 10 years”



JEAN-MICHEL CASSE

CASSÉ'S MESSAGE TO INDIA

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our owners and partners, especially InterGlobe Enterprise, for the tremendous support in the brand's growth through the years. My journey would have been incomplete without the help of the Accor team

What makes Accor a household name in India?

All our efforts and innovations have been possible with the help of our owners who trusted us and helped us in the growth. There have been various initiatives, campaigns and innovations through the years. ALL – Accor Live Limitless, our loyalty programme, is a feather in our cap in terms of a key growth initiative. Our teams have been working to provide exclusive customer experiences through various partnerships and campaigns. Another important aspect is food innovation – not just at our restaurants but also for our MICE segment.

How well do you think Indian hospitality industry is dealing with the COVID-19 situation?

All hotel groups have been announcing recovery plans, offers and vouchers to entice consumers, implementing strict safety and hygiene measures and much more. To revive the industry, my suggestion would be to not drop rates now because occupancies will return in due course, however, if rates are cut down, it will take the industry back to where it was 10 years ago.

What is your opinion on how events at hotels would change?

The hospitality industry and banqueting venues will have to rethink their strategy, ensuring that all available spaces be utilised in the most productive way to make up for reduced capacity. When it comes to F&B at events, self-service buffets are not a recommended option for the foreseeable future. Seated dining is the alternative option. Direct contact between the guests and associates will be minimal.



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Well-being & wellness

Vikas Ahluwalia, General Manager & National Head, Zone by THE Park Hotels shares how they are focusing on the health, well-being and wellness of their guests amidst the pandemic.



Neha Rawat

How are you preparing for activities in the new normal?

We have put in place various protocols as advised by the relevant authorities and incorporated it in SHIELD, an abbreviated form for S: Sanitisation, H: Hygiene, I: ISO Standard Equipment, E: Excellence, L: Luxury Redefined, and D: Distancing. This is an all-encompassing programme that brings the best of luxury, design, hygiene, safety and service excellence, all under one roof.

As health-wellbeing-wellness has become a top priority for travellers we have incorporated the same in our menus and guest offerings

Do you have different rules/guidelines for large groups and small ones?

The guidelines are the same – strict precautionary safety and heightened hygiene and sanitation practices. We have implemented measures at all our hotels along with steps to assuage the concerns of people about busy public areas due to the nature of the virus.

Will you be continuing with buffets? What precautions will you take for food service?

We have stopped buffets at our hotels for now, but in banquets we are offering various options for our guests to choose from – interactive cooking station, meals on a plate, etc. However, if guests particularly require buffets then we have laid down SOPs for the same.

What steps will you take if someone tests positive for coronavirus?

We have laid down Standard Operating Procedures, guidelines in our SHIELD programme for someone who tests positive in our hotels. We work closely with local



**VIKAS
AHLUWALIA**

“
We have stopped buffets at our hotels for now, but in banquets we are offering various options for our guests to choose from”

MICE FACILITIES

- Zone by THE Park Kolkata has 5,000 sq ft of space in the hotel and is attached to Biswa Bangla Convention Centre Kolkata, one of the largest convention spaces in India.
- Zone Palace by THE Park Jaipur has 1,10,000 sq ft of indoor and outdoor venues.
- Zone by THE Park Raipur offers 9,500 sq ft of indoor banqueting spaces.

health authorities and take all the necessary steps as per the local guidelines.

Are you looking at the Indian wedding market as well?

Weddings are a critical part of our social space and will keep happening though with certain changes. We have hosted few small weddings as permitted by the administration across our hotels immediately after the restrictions were removed post the lockdown.

As of now, we are working with our partners and service providers to follow various protocols of safety and offering customised packages.

How are you planning to cater to the needs of business travellers?

In the new normal, a drop of face-to-face meetings is anticipated with more demand for high-quality integrated-hybrid-virtual-live streamed meetings and events. We are prepared for the same.

Truly(y) destination weddings



Naresh Arora, Managing Director at Truly India Hotels & Resorts talks about safety measures and 'lockdown destination wedding offers' in the current scenario.



Neha Rawat

How are you preparing for activities in the new normal?

The industry will experience rapid changes in all areas. We'll remain committed to the well-being of all guests and employees with our unique thought "Our Hospitality Is An Opportunity To Show Love And Care," in mind. We are also keeping abreast of the most recent updates on social distancing measures.

What precautions will you take for food service?

Food sanitation and safety regulations are paramount to ensure the health of consumers. We will adjust menus based on demand, avoid exotic/wild animal meat and limit options to globally accepted livestock, and include more organic and healthy items. Guests will want to see gloves, masks, and surfaces being wiped down often, practically after every usage. Food displays and buffets need to be protected by food shields (sneeze guards), and proper equipment will be installed to keep the food temperature safe.

What steps will you take if a guest tests positive for coronavirus?

Thermal check points are present at the entry, if we suspect anyone with symptoms then the nearest COVID centre will be informed and he/she will be admitted. We will immediately provide surgical mask to the guest and check his/her travel history to the affected area or contact with an affected person. We will also provide hand sanitiser and advice the guest to stay in the room, ensuring that the infected person maintains at least 1-metre distance from other people. We will make sure



**NARESH
ARORA**

that the guest's room is locked and the entire floor, reception and all common areas are deep cleaned and fumigated. In addition to this, linen and other items will be washed separately.

Are you looking at the Indian wedding market as well?

The pandemic has shrunk the big, fat Indian wedding and financial advisers say the newlyweds should be glad. Indian weddings are elaborate, with multiple ceremonies and large gatherings of up to 1,000. But amid the COVID-19 outbreak, the Home Ministry's guidelines don't allow more than 50 guests. With the number of infections mounting every day, the restrictions aren't expected to be eased soon. Fewer guests mean smaller, cheaper weddings. To lure hesitant couples and drive business during the slowdown, hotels and banquet halls are now offering special packages. At Truly, we have come up with 'lockdown destination wedding offers' for 50 pax, charges for one-night are ₹2.99 lakhs and for two-nights, ₹4.99 lakhs. This package includes all meals (decent menus); mineral water in rooms; tea coffee 24/7; 25 rooms on double occupancy; mandap set up (decent decoration); and DJ set up. Also, for an extra person sharing the same room, we charge ₹3,000 per person per day.



Food displays and buffets need to be protected by food shields; equipment will be installed to keep the food temperature safe"



Luxe @ The Roseate

The need of the hour was to design a new drivecation package that provides a luxurious, safe & hygienic experience, says **Kush Kapoor**, Chief Executive Officer, Roseate Hotels & Resorts.



Ncha Rawat

How has the response been for your new drivecation packages?

Drivecation packages were always popular because of the incomparable comfort and luxury they offered but now they are becoming even more so because of prevailing pandemic conditions in which social distancing has become an important factor while planning any vacation. Since our luxury resort, The Roseate Ganges is at a motorable distance from Delhi-NCR, we have introduced new drivecation packages and they have instantly gained popularity. We know that people are eager to plan holidays to rejuvenate themselves after being cooped up post the lockdown yet are hesitant to travel because of the fear of coming in contact with more people, especially by the means of air travel. We realised that the need of the hour was to design a new drivecation package that provides a luxurious yet a safe, hygienic experience.

What kinds of experiences do you offer?

The drivecation package offered by the hotel includes an ideal experience of direct transfer from a guest's home to The Roseate Ganges in a luxurious BMW with two nights stay in a deluxe villa inclusive of breakfast and lunch or dinner, WiFi and a rejuvenating yoga session with our compliments. This unique experience is valid for Delhi-NCR only. One can avail this offer for just ₹44,444, all inclusive. Other experiences during the drivecation which guests can opt for are a mindful session on the 'three



KUSH KAPOOR

gunas' of life and moksha; Vipasana meditation – India's most ancient technique of meditation; an Ayurvedic and Podikizhi massage at Aheli spa; or a private dinner by the white sand beach, hearing the sounds of the river Ganges at additional cost.

What measures are you taking to ensure the safety of guests coming to your retreat?

The Roseate Ganges in Rishikesh is nestled in the green foothills of Himalayas and offers stunning views of the adjacent lush forest covered hills and crystal clean rushing water of Ganges. At the retreat we are following our standard touchless hospitality procedures under "Care by Roseate" to ensure no contamination enters via any route. The measures involve thermal screening at entry gates of all passenger vehicles. Display of "Safe" status in Aarogya Setu app for staff and guests, wearing of masks is a must to enter the property premises. All hotel vehicles are disinfected at entry points and after every use. Sanitisers are kept in all prominent locations within the hotels and resorts. Guest luggage is disinfected from outside upon arrival. To enable seamless, remote check-ins, 'touchless check-ins' are facilitated via an app, in which all information is already pre-registered. After check-out, the same room is allocated only after 24 hours post being thoroughly disinfected. Roseate Hotels and Resorts also follows an alternate room occupancy policy to maintain social distancing. Moreover, our staff wear Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).



Guests can opt for Vipasana meditation; massage at Aheli spa; or a private dinner by the beach"

Time to ‘Go Domestic’

Sharing a few words of positivity during a period of mostly dejection is **Saurabh Tuteja**, General Secretary, Enterprising Travel Agents Association (North India).

Being at home for almost five months now, everyone is looking for a change. When the world is still fighting a negative mindset and insecurities, people are indeed looking for the first opportunity to break the monotony and take small holiday breaks. Let it be a weekend to a drivable location or a drive to a hill station, which is of course a safer location in these COVID times. Here comes the bigger responsibility for the tourism sector to play. We can't forget that the world is opening not because it's now 100 per cent safe, but it's the need of the hour to bring life back on track, to support a dying economy. It becomes really important to check how safe a destination and property are before being suggested to the client. The next couple of months will surely see some movement happening, and the key to success is 'Go Domestic'.

This is the time to move the steering to beautiful local destinations, drivable destinations to begin with. This is surely the perfect time to get the right value of a client's money, with most domestic properties offering massive discounts to fill their rooms. Luxury properties are available at nearly 40-50 per cent discount and that surely gives an opportunity to clients to upgrade their holiday. It is indeed a time when your aspirations of staying in a palace property or utmost luxury becomes affordable at a much lower price. With packages including pick and drop from home, which may be a few hours' drive, by luxury cars to inclusion of all meals and private pools at a certain price, clients would surely love to indulge. I personally believe that this is the time to explore offbeat destinations that are close to nature and activities that are in sync with the current need of social distancing, such as trekking, mountaineering, wildlife camping, wellness, etc. The idea of picking up a nice wellness resort in the lap of



**SAURABH
TUTEJA**



nature with a smaller inventory of rooms is like nirvana. Yes, people are hesitant to move out, so we need to check, recheck and then assure them that the place they are going is safe to stay, eat in and roam around in.

It is so interesting to see that our industry has understood the need of the hour. Innovative SOPs are being prepared by leading players in the trade to ensure that domestic tourism gains the confidence of the guest and can act as a stress buster for them to move ahead in life. With a major shift towards safety of guests, it is definitely a positive sign for the industry to open and welcome the world. This is the perfect time to go domestic and tell the world that 'We are open'.

(The article has been written by Saurabh Tuteja, General Secretary, Enterprising Travel Agents Association (North India), the views expressed are the author's personal views.)



Luxury properties are available at nearly 40-50% discount; clients can upgrade their holiday”



Learning in the new normal

The ongoing pandemic has made students realise the importance of upskilling at all levels and adapting to any situation in order to continue their growth trajectory.



Neha Rawat



KULMOHAN SINGH

**Professor of French and English, In-Charge of Placement and International Internships & Member of the Outreach Programme
Vatel Hotel and Tourism Business School**

With hotels losing 90% of their business, do you think students would still be interested in a course in hotel management?

In order to reinforce a promising future for those who pursue a course in hotel management, we have conducted several webinars in which experts and professionals have expressed a concerted opinion that COVID is merely a 'pause button' – the industry will surely bounce back. Yes, the admissions might be slower at this time, but we are optimistic and will fill up our capacities as usual.

What careers do you expect students to make in this crisis?

There is a marked increase in demand for young graduates in

Europe, especially in the UK, France and Germany. Our students, who are proficient in foreign languages, stand a bright chance in hotels, airlines, travel trade, event management and retail.

However, once the domestic markets reopen, several new doors will open for them. Healthcare is emerging as a new domain.

Your students have been attending classes from home since almost four months. How have you maintained the academic rigor in your practical classes?

The dynamics of internet and YouTube have made everything

possible. We have been conducting theory and practical classes, marking attendance, checking assignments, holding exams and declaring results the same way as before the COVID-19 virus erupted. Even our college meetings, staff trainings and appraisals have been conducted online.

How are you making your students ready for the expectations that modern hoteliering imposes at the international level?

The world is a smaller place and 'industrial connect' is the key. Though the level of hospitality and personal care, as offered in the Indian hotels are unmatched, our students are being allowed to undergo internships and exchange programmes at any of the Vatel campuses located the world over.



Our students are being allowed to undergo internships at any of the Vatel campuses located the world over"

POONAM BAJAJ

Assistant Professor, School of Hospitality & Tourism Studies
DY Patil University

What is happening in the catering colleges in the new normal?

With the rapidly evolving situation, the hospitality industry is also going through radical changes and therefore educators must change the teaching and learning technique to prepare the students to stand firm and confident against any crises. Training and learning have shifted from offline to an online mode where the focus would be to help students understand the importance of multitasking.

How is the curriculum for students changing?

Institutions have to make a serious modification to the conventional curriculum to prepare students for the industry to work under crises. Educators will have to add a new protocol on receiving, cleaning and sanitising techniques, hygienic food preparation, providing contactless food serving etc. They will have to sensitize the students towards workplace hygiene, new work protocols for health, safety and space

hygiene, use of technologies like thermal scanners, contactless check-in and check-out procedures and knowledge of other contactless services in the hotel operations. In toto, educators will be responsible for restructuring of the contents to achieve learning outcomes.

Are there any changes in the techniques imparted for the Culinary Arts and Hotel Management studies?

The culinary as well as the hospitality students will be updated on change in processes like sanitising checklist, sanitisation of receiving area by sodium hypochlorite, segmentation of

kitchen in the critical operation area, non-critical area and pre-preparation area, hygienic food preparation, use of 100 ppm chlorine for sanitising non-vegetarian items and 50 ppm chlorine for vegetarian items, no reuse of amenities etc.



In an online learning mode the focus would be to help students understand the importance of multitasking”

CHEF STÉPHANE FRELON

Executive Chef cum Cuisine Chef Instructor, Le Cordon Bleu

What steps are you taking to deal with the ongoing pandemic?

We have adopted Le Cordon Bleu Health and Safety COVID-19 standards and incorporated some SOPs applicable locally to adapt to the new normal for the safety of our students. Also, we have always had an intimate class size with a 16:1 student-teacher ratio. To adhere to social distancing guidelines, we are teaching the theory lessons online as this minimises the contact duration. During practicals, our students are well spaced.

When we re-opened our campus, we sanitised the whole facility as the health and safety of our students is our priority. But the sanitisation efforts didn't just stop there – it has now become a regular practice and all stations and classrooms are effectively sanitised after every use. We have also installed air purifiers and diffusers to maintain clean & healthy air and as is normal, everyone must wear masks. All these efforts have inspired a lot of confidence in our students.



Are there any upcoming new programmes/courses?

During these times, it's important to give back to society and help those who might have lost their jobs –



We have adopted Le Cordon Bleu Health and Safety COVID-19 standards and incorporated some SOPs applicable locally”

the best we can do is equip them with skills and knowledge to enable them stand on their feet again. The government has provided aid to reskill the workforce, which has resulted in us developing a 5-weeks short course programme that will run for three months. Eligible youth will be trained so that they can start their own home-based businesses or even get employed in restaurants.



'Go digital is the new mantra'

Hoteliers share details on the safety measures in place for customers, how they are training employees to deal with the current crisis, strategic changes for business, redesigning of menus and plans for the future.



Neha Rawat

What are you doing for customers for a safe experience in this time of crisis?

We have introduced intensified hygiene and sanitation measures to ensure our employee and guest safety further by launching the ALLSAFE Label. This programme has ensured that we captured the essence of hospitality & retained our brand philosophy while indoctrinating the new hygiene and safety goals into individual, department and guest activities. These entail from temperature checks for guests & staff to health reporting mechanism



IRFAN KHATRY
General Manager
ibis Bengaluru
City Center & ibis
Bengaluru Hosur Road

for team members, cleaning chemicals & special purpose disinfectants to sanitisers, face masks, face shields, PPE kits for the employees to trainings session for the vendors on basic hygiene and sanitation.

How are you training your employees?

In order to receive the ALLSAFE Label all operational team members were mandatorily asked to attend the specific training modules and implement the same in their daily shifts. This allowed us to verify and translate the requisite action and also monitor the responses and assess the effectiveness and highlight any discrepancy and inconsistency from the SOPs suggested by the state and Central government.

Any innovative plans for the future?

We see the role of technology increasing in our new world of contactless menus & digital payments. We intend to keep our eyes open for new technology as we adapt to the ever-changing business environment.



We intend to keep our eyes open for new technology as we adapt to the ever-changing business environment"

What are you doing for customers for a safe experience in this time of crisis?

At Cygnett, cleanliness and comfort always went hand-in-hand. Now, with the “new normal” we are further implementing several sterility practices, keeping in mind the safety of our staff and our guests. We ensure consistent sanitisation of all our premises on a daily basis; all our employees use PPE kits; we provide contactless experiences to make the guests more comfortable; and we are very strict about practicing social distancing. Additionally, we have updated our Property Management System to provide contactless check-in & check-out using mobile apps; introduced QR code-based menus for a more comfortable in-house



SARBENDRA SARKAR
Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels and Resorts

costs, which I feel is not a good idea right now. We pay special interest to a guest’s experience post check-out to understand whether they had a good stay with us, what ticked for them and what did not, thus constantly helping us better our services. We are confident that with our new image makeover and implementation of our ‘Health & Safety Assured’ programme, we will capture the market soon enough.

Any innovative plans for the future?

Right now and for the immediate future our paramount priority is to ensure the safety and health of our guests as well as our staff. With this in mind, we have launched a campaign titled, “We



dining experience; and included health and immunity boosting foods in our menus.

How are you training your employees?

We have created a well thought-through learning and development procedure to ensure the safety, comfort, health and hygiene of our staff & guests. We have followed and implemented the hygiene standard set by the WHO to the “T” and are training our staff on similar lines. Also, our ‘Organisations Operations’ and L&D teams have set a comprehensive programme known as “Health & Safety Assured” in adherence with the guidelines set by the local and Central healthcare agencies.

Any strategic changes for business?

We intend to concentrate on our core business — Stay and F&B. At this point, with the market being volatile, exploring new streams requires investment and may not provide expected results. In fact, we would be converting our fixed costs to variable



With our image makeover & safety programme, we will capture the market soon enough”

will travel again”. This campaign highlights/communicates the safety measures that we have initiated; emphasises on our contactless check-in/check-out policy, the QR coded menus and our contactless food experience.

We are conveying the following message to our customers — “Hotels are safe havens that enable travellers to get about their business/life without having to stress about basic necessities.” Currently, digital platforms are our preferred marketing tools. We are highlighting our messaging via social media platforms; communicating with guests/potential guests via personalised calls, emailers and online chat mechanism (website). Additionally, we have now started WhatsApp marketing and reach out to our customers and encourage them to do the same.

What are you doing for customers for a safe experience in this time of crisis?

From sanitisation of rooms, public areas, linen, air-conditioning, contactless check-in or check-out, QR codes have suddenly taken the front seat. Go digital is the new mantra. Norms and protocols set by the government is the foundation and hotels have gone beyond to create trust amongst the guests. Creating the awareness through various social media platforms has been another challenge.

How are you training your employees?

We have trained our staff in all our core operations and support functions. The core functions include the guest cycle which starts from the pre-registration to check-out involving reservation, front office, housekeeping, food and beverage service and production. Our guests can



**NABENDU
ACHARJEE**
General Manager,
Hometel Chandigarh –
A Sarovar Hotel

now check-in and check-out absolutely contactless. The guest can order his food orders through the QR coded menu in the room. The orders are delivered in bio-degradable disposable plates and bowls. Each room has a table outside where the order is placed, and a guest can pick up his orders. Rooms are sanitised by ULV Fogger before and after guest arrival and departure. Baggage is sanitised by using a fogging machine. Shoe sanitisers for guests and staff ensure that we have cleaner areas. All our lifts have pedal operated sanitiser dispensers. Also, temperature of guests and staff is monitored and recorded.

What about menus?

The menus revolve around easy to cook and easy to digest food options. Guests too prefer to have healthy and safer options that has lesser raw or ready to eat food.

Any innovative plans for the future?

There is constant brainstorming on what can be done better to communicate the safety assurance to our guests. There have been online weddings happening where the guests witness the ceremony online and party. Innovation is expected in laundry operations. However, I feel the entire hotel operating system would gradually get restructured and it will affect HR and Finance as well.



From sanitisation of rooms, public areas, contactless check-in or check-out, QR codes have suddenly taken the front seat”





What are you doing for customers for a safe experience in this time of crisis?

Lords Hotels & Resorts' focus has always been on safety first and the well-being of our guests and associates. Our hotels have implemented revised health and safety standards for their guests and employees as per the new norms.

We have upgraded our standards, practice, technology and tools as per the new government guidelines. As of now, right from touchless lobbies to spread out banquets and exhaustive pandemic protocols, everything is being implemented.

How are you training your employees for the new normal?

Lords Hotels and Resorts has resumed operations with heightened precautionary measures. The Group has elevated its Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) through the new initiative "Karona safe Rahona Safe". Our safety and hygiene programme is based on the guidelines issued and updated by WHO, FSSAI and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).

Our staff have been extensively trained as per the new sanitation norms. These procedures are regularly monitored by way of checklists, mystery auditors and regular reports from the units.



AJAY PAWAR
Regional General
Manager, Lords Group
of Hotels

As a procedure our sanitised guest rooms are checked by the unit head. Each unit has a designated COVID warrior for each area. The warrior ensures that all systems are in place and are adhered to by guests and staff. The warrior also solicits guests' feedback on how the hotel can further fortify efforts to their satisfaction.

Any strategic changes for business?

The Group has enforced quality and safety standards across all its properties. Each property has met cleaning quality requirements and completed the COVID-19 checklist and hygiene audit.

The enhanced protocols include social distancing, contactless check-in, sanitisation, in-room dining, thermal screening of guest, allotting room to the guest after 48 hours of the previous check-out, to mention a few.

Are you redesigning menus to make them more flexible and economical now and in the future?

Most of the hotels have redesigned their menus by adding dishes and beverages that are believed to improve immunity. Digital menus have been introduced since they enable contactless self-ordering system and table service for customers to communicate with restaurant staff.

Any innovative plans for the future?

Artificial Intelligence is the need of the hour. We are looking at upgrading our hotels post the COVID-19 pandemic. We will be introducing voice control solutions shortly. These solutions will comprise Artificial Intelligence-based solutions in various areas like voice activated elevator, thermal screening, facial recognition, to name a few.



We will be introducing AI-based solutions in various areas like voice activated elevator, thermal screening, facial recognition"

V-shaped recovery

A panel discussion conducted by 1524 Delhi recently brought some wedding planners together who shared their perspectives on how this segment is likely to unfold.



Hazel Jain

MAHESH SHIRODKAR

Managing Director, Tamarind Global

I have stopped making predictions; there is too much uncertainty. We are currently only engaging with HNI clients and vendors. Everything will be ruled by government mandates. There are weddings in November and December, but the window of finalisation is going to be crunched.

What could happen also is that wedding ceremonies might take place in India but couples may look at short-haul destinations in Southeast Asia and Middle East for post-wedding events. Hotels must look at having a loyalty programme for wedding planners to incentivise them.



RAJEEV JAIN

Director, Rashi Entertainment

Technology has its own place; it is a great value addition, but it can never substitute the real thing. A Zoom call versus taking a selfie with Alia Bhatt, which one would you choose? Of course, it is happening now, but these are substitutes. Don't worry, keep the faith – the real thing will

be back, albeit with safety measures in place. Even if it is small in the beginning, we need to execute our events with maximum sanitisation and build confidence. Profit margins will be reduced, but celebrations and weddings will sustain our industry till corporate spenders are back.



VANDANA MOHAN

Founder, Wedding Design Company & Backstage Productions

Destination weddings will take a backseat this year and the segment will eventually see a V-shaped recovery. I'm sure that when the demand returns, it will be back with a flood. For now, we are not encouraging our clients to travel much. If they do want to travel, we advise them to travel either

to driving distances or do a charter for a group, and travel within India if possible. What hotels must look at meanwhile is to conduct virtual tours for planners and list down the specifications that are available for them to use during an event. This usually gets missed out.



SUSHIL SHAMLAL WADHWA

Founder & CMD, Platinum World Group

Until we have a real cure in sight, weddings and celebrations will be small, intimate affairs of around 50-60 people. The hotels stand to gain in the first wave, but the wedding planner may not have a big role to play. It may not be a viable proposition for us to put in that much

effort for 50 people and not make that sort of revenue. So, hotels might be the bigger gainer. We will need to gear up with adequate resources and team members to be ready to handle the V-shaped recovery. I think we will see the real upswing from October 2021.



DINAZ NORIA

Founder, 3D – Design & Décor by Dina

In the south of India where I live (Hyderabad), everything happens according to the muhuratam, which is the auspicious time and date for the ceremony. In fact, it is so important here that we have already started getting inquiries for weddings in August and October. But due to the

restrictions for events, a lot of these families are asking if they can do their weddings outside India. The big question however is, how and where. Charter flights are one option, but sanitisation of the aircraft is a question and so is safety in hotels.



KARAN SINGH

Chairman & Co-Founder, 1524 Delhi

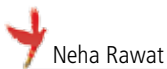
Encouraged by the feedback received from some of India's leading wedding planners, we are optimistic that the wedding industry will see a V-shaped recovery post the pandemic. Ultra-wealthy clients will continue to favour destination weddings.

In the early part of the upcoming wedding season, we expect the demand to be largely for short-haul destinations requiring no more than one flight, such as Dubai, Turkey, Bangkok, etc. Post February, clients are likely to venture further afield & explore destinations in Europe and beyond.



‘We need clarity’

Survival has been challenging as cash flow has come to a grinding halt since the third week of March, says **Upendra Shanbhag**, GM, Toshali Sands Ethnic Village Resort, Puri.



Neha Rawat

How is your resort faring in these tough COVID times?

Our business from both the rooms and Food & Beverage division has suffered very badly, as we can count the number of days that we have been functional as per the local authority's directives, due to the pandemic. Survival has been challenging as fixed costs are constant and cash flow has come to a grinding halt since the third week of March this year.

What challenges did you face when the hotels & resorts opened up?

There has been too much hype and contrasting opinions are being circulated on social media platforms regarding the pandemic. There is no single organised and official source of information offering clarity or transparency on the issue. Hence, consumers have yet to regain their confidence on the health and safety concerns while planning to stay at hotels or simply venturing out for a meal, without being afraid of repercussions.

Have you come up with new practices in your resort?

We have ensured that our Front of the House staff facing guests undergo some sort of local and national safety inspection certification programmes like those being offered by FHRAI, as well as eminent agencies specialising in that domain. We are displaying small clips featuring all safety norms and processes being adhered to by us, and this is being shared with our potential clientele & database. On arrival, a Guest Relation Executive could in short explain to the guests the basic procedures followed by the organisation for prioritising guest safety and health. From the pick-up of the guests and check-in to the check-out and drop, all due mandatory COVID related norms are strictly being followed.



Consumers have yet to regain their confidence on the health and safety concerns while planning to stay at hotels”



UPENDRA SHANBHAG

What measures did you take to support employment of villagers?

We are in touch with local villagers within a radius of seven to eight kms in order to provide them with job opportunities, with a focus on those who have lost their jobs elsewhere due to the pandemic. We are also offering small time contracts in masonry / carpentry / electrical jobs and any such skill available amongst local community members to help their sustenance in these times, rather than giving away the same to larger well-known contractors from cities or metropolitan areas.

Anything else that you would like to mention?

There has been a drastic decline in the business due to:

- Absence of clarity from the local authorities on the exact dates of removal of lockdown / night / weekend curfew, due to an unstable pandemic situation, which ultimately results in the loss of faith of potential travellers / diners.
- Inability of the general public to reassure themselves that the danger period for avoiding travel is over, and they can venture out safely without any health related doubts, along with their families and friends.
- Not enough modes of transportation as the frequency of trains or flights still remains erratic.

Our industry leaders and co-hoteliers should come together to sort out these bottlenecks with concerned authorities and ensure that the remedial measures will be published for the knowledge of the industry's potential clientele. Such dissemination of pertinent information through various media and platforms will pave the way for returning to normalcy of operations.



Opting for ‘back to basic’ products

Steve Borgia, CMD, INDeco Leisure Hotels, says that by cutting costs and getting local guests & weddings at hotels, they have been able to make a profit in June 2020.



Nisha Verma

In the time when businesses are struggling to survive or even exist, INDeco Leisure Hotels, have managed to make profit in the month of June. However, according to Steve Borgia, it wasn't that the lockdown didn't hit them hard. "We were amidst the third failed tourism season and we have not seen a hit like this in the last several decades. We had to grope with issues one after the another. Shutting down the hotel was sad and strange, with packing staff home, paying their salaries and settling all the local suppliers. Finding a committed hands-on team to stay back to guard, maintain was a challenge, including feeding all with the markets shut. From 120 employees, we ran our hotels with 15 people. We needed to look at survival," he opines.

Claiming that like earlier times, the business had to be owner driven, he says, "We decided to create a team with multiskilled and responsible, low cost staff. We focused on continuous visible cost control initiatives and increasing productivity. The main idea was to enhance tourist experiences, while abiding state and country laws. We chose to deliver back to basic products. April and May were just to earn our salaries. June was for making small profits, and July was to get into normal grind.

We offered unimaginable and perceivable discounts in tariff to attract the young and risk takers. Crowded city apartment dwellers wanted to escape to safe spaces. We reached out to them for long stays. We conceived 'staycation', promoted sustainable and responsible products that are perceived as corona safe. The entire families moved in." A major move was to reach out to the local population.



STEVE BORGIA
CMD
INDeco Leisure Hotels

“
We conceived
'staycation'
and promoted
sustainable products
that are perceived as
corona safe”

"‘Love thy neighbour’ is a very special product for our immediate neighbourhood, which we never focused on earlier. It provided rooms and take away food at enviable discounts. In the ‘Pay as you like’ programme, we invited friends, our client base and the elite locals to walk in, check-in, choose their room and enjoy our hospitality. Staff was trained to enthrall them and excel expectations. At check out, the guests paid whatever they liked. We were ready to receive even nothing. However, the minimum we received in this programme was ₹2,500 and surprisingly in some cases, we received more than the published tariff, which was an achievement. Through ‘long stays’, we offered corona safe programmes for senior citizens. We connected with NRIs staying across the world and offered to take safe, appropriate care of their parents back home in Tamil Nadu," he shares.

A timely move was to go for the quick to yield farm products, which was a hobby programme that greened the entire hotel campus with quick to yield vegetables and fruits. "From month two, we had enough produce for in-house staff. INDeco Hotels Swamimalai always produced a lot of fruits and vegetables inside the hotel estate and purchased the balance from the villages around," informs Borgia.

Stressing that all these measures created revenue opportunities, he adds, "Not very enviable though, but our continuous cost control is what helped us score small time profits. This coupled with 50 pax corona period limited guest wedding ceremonies and photo shoots gave us the real comfort and helped us score profits in June."

A difficult phase

J.K. Mohanty, CMD, Swosti Group says that there is a need for the government to incentivise the hotel industry in Odisha so that it is on a par with other states. Also, changes in policies would help the industry to survive.



 Nisha Verma

J.K Mohanty, CMD, Swosti Group, has said that they have been in touch with the government at all levels to represent the plight of the hospitality sector. “On behalf of hotel industry and tourism sector, we are continuously interacting/following-up with both Central as well as state governments, highlighting various issues that are being faced by the hotel industry during this COVID pandemic. Although both the governments are extending some relaxations in terms of EMI payments to the banks, bar license fees, etc., we are hopeful that the government would declare a good relief package for the hotel industry for its survival,” he informs.

When asked about the demands they have raised, he shares, “Our demands to both the governments are deferment of bank loans and interest free loan; appealing for restructuring of loan having outstanding more than ₹25 crores; waiver of BMC holding tax; waiver of bar licence fee; exemption of ground water fee; waiver of minimum demand load of electricity and payment of electricity bill on actual demand load; financial assistance for payment of salary / wages, ESIC etc.; special relief package for the travel & hotel industry for revival etc.”

Talking about the impact on his own business, Mohanty shared that like every hotel in the country, Swosti Group, is going through a very bad phase with zero occupancy and zero income since end of March 2020. “All our hotels and resorts have been closed. During this period the hotel industry is facing serious problems in paying salary/wages, ESIC, paying bank loan, interest, overdrafts, holding tax / bar licence fee / electricity fee, ground water fee etc.,” he says.

Mohanty believes that the hotel and tourism industry will take a long time to come back to its normal levels.



J.K. MOHANTY



For hospitality sector, the business will start at least 12 months after lifting of the lockdown period”

RECOMMENDATIONS

State governments need to extend attractive incentives for people to invest in the tourism infrastructure such as hotels, resorts, eco-tourism, MICE tourism etc.

Around 5,000 additional number of hotel rooms in different star categories should be set up to compete with the hotel infrastructure of the other states of India.

The government should allow 30% capital investment subsidy up to a maximum limit of ₹25 crores and 5% interest subsidy up to 11 years on repayment of term loans. If the subsidy is given only for three years many hotels will come up as required.

“For hospitality sector, the business will start at least 12 months after lifting of the lockdown period declared by the Government of India because people will be scared to travel by air and rail. They will think twice before attending meetings, conferences, weddings, social functions etc., as social distancing would become a standard practice. The hotel industry, which is dependent on transport, air & rail travel, is bound to take a beating for the next 12 to 18 months,” he adds.

He claims that the most important factor for hotel industry during this pandemic is to maintain the hygiene standards of their property. “I am sure that domestic tourism will be driving recovery for the tourism sector. Although domestic tourism flows have also been heavily affected by restrictions, they are expected to recover more quickly once the lockdown is lifted. The focus must be on the vast potential of domestic tourism & a vigorous marketing plan is required,” he points out.

'Sustainability is not a choice'

The COVID-19 crisis may have expedited the adoption of sustainable practices in the travel and tourism world.



Nisha Verma



One thing that the COVID-19 crisis has reignited is the focus on sustainability, and more importantly, its necessity in the post-COVID world. While earlier the subject of sustainability being part of all tourism activities was often debated, today, it only gets a resounding yes from all corners of the travel and tourism world.

Shoba Mohan, Founder, RARE India, says that while there are people who feel sustainability needs to be followed as a strategy, some others believe that it has to be set aside. "It's all about individual understanding. Today, with nature reviving itself, I hope people take cognisance of the fact that sustainability is not a choice. While COVID-19 might affect many of us, climate change affects each one of us. With earthquakes, locust swarms, etc., what more does one need to be told that we are in the throes of a massive climate crisis?" she questions.

Mohan insists that sustainability is not difficult to follow. "One doesn't need to do much. All you need is legal compliance to be put up by the government, you need the ministries to put up some policies for overtourism, etc. As a tour operator, one just has to ensure that you make your operations sustainable, try and keep away from plastic, try and use hotels and services that are really focused on these things. We can all work towards sustainable tourism. Change happens not when everybody is doing all the things under sustainable travel, it happens when each one of us does at least some of the things that make up sustainable and responsible tourism," she asserts.

Steve Borgia, CMD (Creator, Mentor, Developer), INDeco Leisure Hotels is an advocate of responsible and sustainable tourism. He has made sure that the brand has the ethos of sustainability and responsibility at its core. He believes that sustainability is the second name of spirituality. "Tourism that does not benefit local communities is not fair tourism. We need to understand sustainability as the other side of spirituality. Just like



SHOBA MOHAN



All you need is legal compliance to be put up by the government"



STEVE BORGIA



We need to understand sustainability as the other side of spirituality"



RAKESH MATHUR



Sustainable and responsible practices must become the norm"

spiritual rules, we need to frame sustainability rules and make India live longer. We need to have a new relationship with Earth. We must transform our products and the way we offer services. We have to offer them in a way that guests want and feel safe with," he shares.

Some brands, in fact, are already bringing in that change. **Rakesh Mathur**, Director, Lords Hotels & Resorts, says, "In warfare parlance, in such a situation, you take no chances. You adopt a zero-risk policy towards guests, staff, suppliers and all stakeholders. This is the guiding principle behind any workstation, process, service design, procurement that we have to adopt. Hygiene, sanitation, sustainable and responsible practices must become the norm. This is what we have implemented at Lords Hotels. Sustainable tourism practices are here to stay in the post-COVID world, even when a cure is found. Hotels being high consumers of resources and high producers of effluents play a vital role in this. We took initiatives to implement sustainable tourism practices even before COVID-19 spread. Initiatives like minimising plastic, use of glass water bottles, use of dispensers for daily hygiene amenities, water recycling, plants inside the property for cleaner air, etc., to mention a few, were adopted."

Tapping offbeat locales

Hoteliers need to manage their inventory & cash flow proficiently while riding new trends in tech to evolve rapidly in the post pandemic world.



HT Bureau

The cloud has been one of the most emergent hospitality tech trends since the past few years and has now gained even bigger traction since the global lockdown. Lots of hoteliers around the globe are 'joining the cloud' with their newest tech innovations and suite of solutions for a sagacious reason. Cloud-based multi-property accommodation management technology is real-time, fail-safe, can integrate with a broad range of other software and hardware solutions, and can be curated to cater to the specific requirements of the community therein offering unparalleled opportunities for expansion and growth.

Both large and small hoteliers who have started shifting to cloud-based solutions are already witnessing a big rise in productivity. All they require is a computer, tablet and a steady internet connection. The centralised dashboard offers a state-of-the-art built-in front-desk management system, channel manager, POS functions, housekeeping supervision, rate shopper, reputation management, website builder, payment gateway, booking engine, reports, analytics and more. Accommodation providers can manage multiple properties, operations, business relations, guests, travel agents and corporate clients from anywhere 24X7.

A new age indigenous entrant who is making waves in the hospitality management technology domain is Streetgooser. Founded in 2019 by three visionaries, Shakthivelu M, John Varghese and Deenath Sharma, the trio collectively bring together decades of rich expertise and diverse experience across the global travel, tourism, airlines, hospitality, entertainment and IT sectors.

Starting out from humble village backgrounds and working their way up into leadership positions in various domains around the world gave them a unique bird's eye perspective of the potential of Tier-3 towns and small villages in offbeat locales, bursting with potential and opportunity in the accommodation sector but not having the capability to reach out to consumers looking for that rare exotic destination for their MICE engagement or holiday requirements. This led to the trio designing a unique hotel management software with an interesting ideology 'We want to change the Neighbourhood into a



The trio has designed software with an interesting ideology 'We want to change the Neighbourhood into a Destination'



SHAKTHIVELU M
MD & Co-Founder



JOHN VARGHESE N
CEO & Founder



DEENATH SHARMA
CTO



Destination'. This hi-tech driven property management system offers hoteliers a suite of products and solutions that are cost-effective and efficient with an aim to ease all their operations by providing them with a platform and intuitive apps that are smart, easy to use, and reliable therein ensuring an increased market reach and seamless streamlining of daily functions via the easy to operate technology backbone.

With more and more travellers keen on visiting unexplored exotic locations and opting for cozy homestay options that minimise the risk of crowds and contraction of the virus, Streetgooser seems to have hit the jackpot with their pioneering bespoke technology platform. Some of the offbeat destinations that have seen an upsurge in bookings since their inception in 2019 and through this lockdown via this platform include Agra, Coorg, Goa, Adimaly, Chikmagalur, Boracay, Chiang Mai, Myanmar and Laos.

In an effort to conjointly fight back the COVID-19 pandemic and give back to the travel fraternity, Streetgooser has also committed free of charge (FOC) technology support to all their clients until the travel and tourism scenario returns back to normalcy.

With the COVID-19 outbreak putting hotels all around the world on halt and technology steadily seeping in to take control of the hospitality industry management, cloud-based technology entrants like Streetgooser seem to be on the right track.

Offering the best of new age technology and a suite of solutions, accommodation providers can now take the next big leap by investing in these cloud-based property management systems to fearlessly enter a VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) decade with the best of technology and support to empower them in the journey ahead.

Oak Stockholm by Mikasa

Amidst a hectic lifestyle, we don't exactly look forward to tidying up the house. To ease your maintenance blues, you could opt for Oak Stockholm by Mikasa from the house of Greenlam Industries. With this engineered real wood floor's easy maintenance and durability, one doesn't have to worry about deep cleaning. Pair its light brown shade with neutrals to infuse a refreshing vibe. You can also go curtain-less allowing some natural day light to illuminate your interiors. Complete this look with your favourite antiques to add a visual aesthetic to your décor.



Fair Play laminate

For imparting an urbane look to your kitchen area, explore the trending concept of closed cabinetry adorned in premium wooden laminates that are resistant to surface wear and tear, considering a kitchen's heavy usage. You could opt for Fair Play laminate from NewMika which comes with resistance to cracks, stain, heat and scratch, making it an ideal choice. Moreover, like a cherry on top, its light grey shade will take you to a contemporary world.

Beverly Bar Cabinet

The contemporary style Beverly Bar Cabinet by IDUS is designed with artistic embellishment of indigenous materials like best quality wood including rich red velvet in its interiors and diagonally crossed steel legs at its base. The cabinet has sufficient storage space and additional sections like shelves and columns to hold the bottles and other bar essentials. With an easy-to-use latch, Beverly Bar Cabinet has been specially designed for storing liquor. It comprises a separate section to store over 10 wine bottles and separate drawers for additional storage. The cabinet allows you to keep your beverages collection dust free.



Myprotein dosa mix

À Myprotein has taken a step forward in aligning itself closely with India's vision of going local, with their latest launch – the Protein Dosa Mix. Identifying accurately that Indian households by the millions turn to the humble dosa as a quick and easy breakfast fix, they have given it the added benefit of a protein boost. This is the first introduction in their healthy product range to be manufactured locally. Made using soy protein isolate, each container contributes 26g of muscle-building protein to your family meal, serving up to eight dosas of about 35g each, with no sugar whatsoever.





Design panels from Havwoods

The home of Havwoods' herringbone, Chevron and Versailles pattern wood flooring, the Design from Havwoods collection includes both engineered and solid construction planks, alongside the introduction of a select range of genuine reclaimed wood sourced from a multitude of mills; each distinctive design is presented in a breath of beautiful wood tones and quality finishes. Havwoods offers a choice of timber – Oak, Pine, and even Elm to create most of the design panels. Most of these are engineered boards, which mean that reclaimed wood is backed by a further layer of multi-layer birch ply making it stable. It is available in 16 different designs in the tile pattern.

Beyond Designs Home unveils tableware



Beyond Designs Home has unveiled a collection of exquisite tableware which promises to transform everyday dining into a refined experience. Playing on the eternal allure of the blue and white palette, the dinnerware and serveware range pays homage to spring motifs. Floral patterns, vines, frolicking birds, etc., lend the collection a typically classic look that is charming and ageless.



Outdoor furniture

The Outdoor Furniture Collection from IDUS comprises the elegantly designed daybed and seating that are made out of rattan loops that artistically imbibe the combination of old technology with modish designs, shapes, and curves fastening rattan onto the different frames to create a variety of sensuous forms. The seating resembles either random doodling or a crescent-shaped frame with a distinct central crest or a boat or the one with a simple, solid design. Available in silver, pale grey and yellow colours, the collection is made of native, natural materials, including palms, seagrasses, bamboo, abaca, and rattan.



Turkish style knotted rug

OBEETEE, India's largest hand-woven carpet makers have launched their latest hand-loomed Turkish patterned collection, Rumi. The collection is a potpourri of myriad colours, textures and revelations which are amalgamated into a unique and stylish pattern curated to soothe your eyes with its minimalism. For this collection, the fibres of bold textural shades are knotted using a Turkish technique and combining it with a modern contrast with the intricate Islamic designs flowing on this elegant Rumi rug. These have been crafted from a tri-colour hand-spun woolen fibre with soft colours and exquisite knotting which make them alluring for all.



< ABINASH MANGHANI
CEO

WelcomHeritage

In a career spanning three decades, Manghani has traversed his professional journey wearing several hats primarily in tourism, hospitality & real estate advisory services. His last position was Area Manager & Head, Travel Industry Sales, ITC.



< BASTIEN BLANC

Managing Director, KSA and Bahrain

IHG Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

In his new role, Blanc will be responsible for driving both growth and performance for IHG in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. He has also been leading IHG's Saudization efforts which he will continue to drive further.



PUNEET DHAWAN >

Senior VP Operations, India & South Asia

Accor

Dhawan will handle the group's operations and strategies in India & South Asia. He has been with Accor for over two decades and has held key positions across countries such as Australia, Vietnam, Hong Kong, etc.



ANJALI MEHRA >

**Vice President Marketing
The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts**

Mehra brings with her over two decades of experience in hospitality brand marketing and communications. Her last position was Senior Director Communications ME and Africa, Marriott International.



< TANVEER KWATRA

General Manager

W Goa

Kwatra will be setting the pulse for the team by re-energising the sought-after W experience with their innovative Whatever/Whenever philosophy at India's first-ever W Hotel in Goa. He was part of the pre-opening team with W Goa in 2016.



< RAVI SANTIAGO

Cluster General Manager

R Hotels

R Hotels has appointed Santiago as Cluster General Manager of Ramada Hotel & Suites by Wyndham Ajman, Ramada by Wyndham Beach Hotel Ajman, and Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche. He has been with the R Hotels group since 2009.



RAJAT TULI >

General Manager.

DoubleTree by Hilton Gurgaon

Tuli brings with him over two decades of industry experience having worked in several well-known brands such as Hilton, Taj, Marriott, ITC, and Radisson amongst others. From 2008 to 2015 he worked with Hilton India, across a number of their hotels.



< ERIC MASALAWALA

Director of Rooms

Radisson Blu Hotel, Ajman

Masalawala brings with him more than 13 years of experience. He was Rooms Division Manager at the Hilton Abu Dhabi which was rebranded as Radisson Blu Hotel Abu Dhabi Corniche in 2019. His new appointment will be his third stint within the Radisson Hotel.



SUDHANSHU KUMAR SINGH >

General Manager

Marriott Courtyard, Nashik

Earlier to the assignment, Singh was GM at Fairfield By Marriott – Visakhapatnam, Marriott Hotel & Convention Center – Hyderabad, Marriott Courtyard – Hyderabad, Fairfield By Marriott, Indore. He has been a recipient of the 'Athithi Devo Bhava' award from GOI.



< ANUP KUMAR

Director of Sales – Chennai

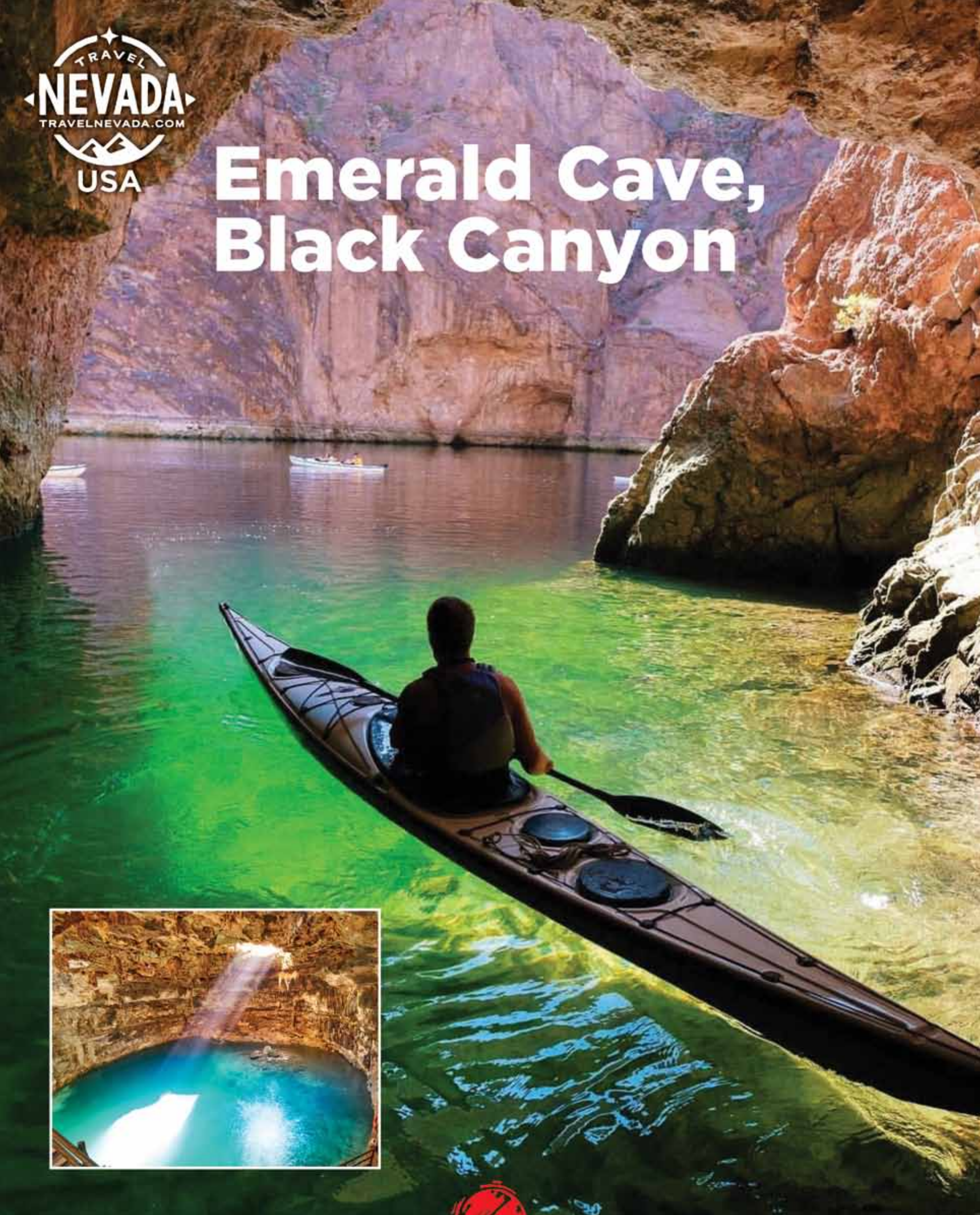
Ascott

Kumar will be responsible for sales & distribution strategies for the 187-unit Somerset Greenways Chennai & the 269-unit Citadines OMR Chennai. He has been with Ascott since 2012 and has been instrumental in implementing various initiatives to drive revenue.





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