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HAMMER

HOTEL

Business Review

An Exclusive Business Magazine for the Hotel Industry



Business
Revving up the Revenue

Feature
The Growing Role of Contactless Dining

F&B
Coping Up The Impact of Pandemic Challenges

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After government allowed hotels to start operating in various states of India, there was no question that the hotel experience is likely to undergo a major change. As restrictions ease up in different spheres of public activity, there is much talk about adapting to the "new normal". Precautionary safety and heightened hygiene and sanitation practices and measures were implemented across all hotels. The Cover Story discusses how the hospitality industry, which has been adhering to the SOPs and operating in a highly regulated fashion, has been seeing an uptrend in the occupancy rate. The corona virus outbreak has affected various trade activities, which has adversely affected the hotel industry globally. Due to the lockdown thousands of people lost their jobs and some had to be content with receiving trimmed down salaries. The Business Story reviews the steps taken to tackle and revive the situation in hotel industry. To prevent the menace of Covid-19 from invading the guests and staff at hotels and other foodservice places, contactless dining has become the key issue. The Feature story dwells upon how the industry has opted for contactless dining, which can instil a heightened sense of assurance and confidence among the guests. Further in F&B section, F&B professionals talk about how they are upbeat and hopeful about regaining the confidence of their guests through planned strategies. The hospitality industry is all set to overcome the most challenging crisis the world has faced since the Second World War and has already started witnessing some recovery signs.

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News Scan

ITC Hotels 'Double the Joy' by Introducing '100% Back' Offer

In order to provide guests with the flexibility of enjoying their stay and indulging in services as per their individual preferences, ITC Hotels has launched the versatile '100% Back' offer which will provide consumers the required flexibility by giving them hotel credits that can be utilized against services as per their choice, during the course of their stay on this package.

The '100% Back' offer allows guests to book at any of the participating ITC Hotels and Welcomhotel, and receive the full amount as hotel credits that can be instantly redeemed towards exquisite experiences including delectable Food & Beverage, relaxing spa treatments & more. Guests can enjoy a scrumptious meal at any of highly acclaimed speciality restaurants like Bukhara, Dum Pukht, Ottimo, or pamper themselves with a signature treatment at the Kaya Kalp spa, indulge in luscious beverages at the bar or enjoy a rejuvenating session at the salon, using the hotel credits.

Anil Chadha, COO, ITC Hotels said, "At ITC Hotels, we are committed to delivering world class experiences guided by our 'Responsible Luxury' ethos. Catering to the growing sentiment around 'getting away' many people are looking for safe ways to restore some semblance of normal life. Activities that were postponed due to the lockdown are now being revived. There is an urge to reconnect with our loved ones. Re-unions and smaller family get-togethers are being planned post lockdown. At ITC Hotels we understand how special these moments are. Helping our guests make memorable experiences, we have launched the '100% Back' offer which gives guests hotel credits that are easy to redeem across gourmet dining, rejuvenating spa services and more. At a time when vacations seem like an indulgence, such attractive staycation packages literally double your joy".

The offer is available across 15+ ITC Hotels and Welcomhotels at over 10 destinations including ITC Windsor, ITC Gardenia, and is valid till 31st March 2021.

IHCL Signs 3 New Properties

Indian Hotels Company announced the signing of three Taj hotels - two in Kolkata, West Bengal and one in Patna, Bihar.

These new hotels are in partnership with Ambuja Neotia Group, who have already partnered with Indian Hotels Company, (IHCL), for two other hotels in the East - Taj Chia Kutir, Darjeeling, West Bengal and Taj Guras Kutir in Gangtok, Sikkim. These five projects will culminate to a total of 500 rooms.

Ambuja Neotia is a leading real estate company and has interest in hospitality, healthcare and education. It is one of the leading corporate houses based in Kolkata.

Commenting on the signing, Puneet Chhatwal, managing director and chief executive officer, IHCL, said, "We are very committed to the Eastern part of India as we believe that it has tremendous potential. With the announcement today, we are further strengthening our footprint in the region and building on IHCL's legacy in some of the most commercially and culturally important cities of the East. These signings also cement our relationship with the Ambuja Neotia Group."

The Taj hotel at Ambuja City Centre, Kolkata is strategically located in close proximity of the Biswa Bangla Convention Centre. The hotel, with 147 keys, has been in operation for over 10 years and is slated to undergo extensive refurbishments before it re-opens as a Taj hotel in 2021.

The Taj hotel at Eco Park, located in New Town, is a 57-room hotel overlooking Eco Park's 112-acre water body. The resort hotel is slated to open in 2021. The Taj hotel at Ambuja City Centre, Patna is located on Budh Marg in Lodipur. This will be the first branded luxury hotel to enter the city. The hotel will have 126 rooms and will open in December 2022. IHCL is South Asia's largest hospitality company by market capitalization. HCL has a portfolio of 207 hotels including 46 under development globally across 4 continents, 12 countries and in over 100 locations.



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Award for S. P. Jain



S.P. Jain, Managing Director of the Pride Group of Hotels has been announced as recipient to the prestigious award of Indian Hospitality Leadership Award 2020 by the Association of Hospitality Professionals Welfare of India. This award is designed to applaud the success & achievement of the hospitality fraternity, and is nominated by the hospitality fraternity itself. S.P. Jain was acknowledged for his contributions and

achievements in the hospitality industry.

"We are overwhelmed and honoured to be receiving this award as it serves as testimonies to the hard work and passion we at the Pride Group has put over the decade. The hotel group has grown from strength to strength, and within a short span of time has successfully established a formidable name in the hospitality industry. Such recognition further validates our efforts and will continue to strive for setting higher standards in all spheres of hospitality" said S.P. Jain.

Pride Group of Hotels is one of the fastest growing hotel chains in India, exemplifies a luxurious brand of hospitality with its facilities. With its presence around 20 great locations across India, Pride Group of Hotels boasts of 2500+ Rooms, 52 Restaurants and 73 Banquets and Conference Halls, reinforcing itself as the one stop destination for MICE.

Sayaji Group of Hotels Signs a New Hotel

Sayaji Hotels Limited, one of the fastest-growing hospitality chains across India, have expanded their presence in Gujarat with the signing of a new hotel in Morbi, anticipated to open by June 2021. Sayaji Hotel Morbi features 97 plush guest rooms that will offer luxurious accommodations to its guests with modern, best in class amenities and services.



"We are delighted to further expand our presence in Gujarat with Sayaji Morbi. We have maintained consistency in the quality of services and stays across all the Sayaji Hotels irrespective of the region we operate. With this hotel, we intend to establish our brand further in the region. The hotel is designed to cater to a large section of business travellers visiting Morbi. We look forward to welcoming guests to the new property in Morbi and offering them with our signature Sayaji hospitality" says Jameel Sayed, Director – Business Development, Sayaji Hotels Ltd.

Sayaji Morbi offers a world cuisine dining venue and a poolside lounge as well, each offering a different experience. The à la carte fine dine restaurant serves popular non-vegetarian dishes, wherein the coffee shop is the perfect getaway for some me-time or business discussions. It also offers 4500 sq.ft. Banquet hall and 1200 sq.ft. Conference room, as an ideal venue for MICE. Besides, the hotel also has a well-equipped gym, a fully-serviced spa, and a swimming pool that serves as a flexible social space or can exclusively be used to relax. The hotel is situated amid the historical beauties to an array of cultural attractions.

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Vivanta and SeleQtions Introduce – The Floor is Yours

The current times, demand for more social distancing and the need for private and exclusive spaces. Keeping this consumer trend and need in mind, Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) brands, Vivanta and SeleQtions, have introduced – The Floor is Yours; an offer that gives guests the option of booking an entire floor at the hotel, enabling them to enjoy their holidays with family or friends in a safe and private haven.

Designed to provide a sanctuary for travelers, the offer will allow guests to experience celebrations, bond with family or just enjoy a relaxing and rejuvenating break with loved ones. Guests can choose from across cities and towns like New Delhi and Pune, as well as exciting leisure destinations such as Goa, Srinagar, Ooty, Jaipur and Varkala. The special package features many surprising elements, curated meals, goody bags on arrival, and a complimentary room for every eight rooms booked. The exclusive stays will be available from 1st December 2020 – 31st July 2021.

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Saraf Hotel Enterprises Celebrates 90th Birthday of Radhe Shyam Saraf

Saraf Hotel Enterprises celebrated the legacy of a great visionary, philanthropist and hotelier, Radhe Shyam Saraf, Group Chairman of Saraf Hotel Enterprises on 10th September 2020. The auspicious day marks the occasion of Mr. Saraf's 90th birthday. On this momentous occasion, Sunjae Sharma, Vice President & Country Head at Hyatt Hotels Corporation honored him with a plaque for his exemplary contribution in the travel and tourism industry with their deepest gratitude for his leadership, care and support.



Radhe Shyam Saraf, under Saraf Hotel Enterprises, unveiled the first hotel, Yak & Yeti in the heart of Kathmandu, Nepal in 1977. In 1980, Mr. Saraf, as the founder promoter of Asian Hotels Ltd., initiated the construction of Hyatt Regency in New Delhi. The 550-room hotel opened to receive guests for the Asian Games in 1982 with a record completion time of two years. Mr. Saraf, with his extraordinary perspective and skills also launched The Grand, New Delhi, a 400-room project that opened for guests in 2000. Following that, the group began developing Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. The 40-acre property was the largest private sector development for tourism in Nepal. Saraf Hotel Enterprises went on to launch Grand Hyatt Mumbai, India's first mixed-use development that began operations in 2004 and immediately gained iconic status in the city.

Saraf Hotel Enterprises has several projects under its banner and has emerged as a pioneer in propelling the hospitality and tourism industry in the country.

Social service has always been synonymous with the name Radhe Shyam Saraf. As a founder of Modern Indian School in Nepal in 1979, Mr. Saraf, guided the school to rise as one of the best educational institutions in the country. In recognition, His Majesty the late King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev conferred Mr. Saraf with the prestigious Gorkha Dakshin Bahu Award for his great contribution to Nepal.

Lemon Tree Hotels Ltd. Debuts in Jhansi

Lemon Tree Hotels Limited, through its management subsidiary Carnation Hotels Pvt. Ltd., announced the opening of the Lemon Tree Hotel, Jhansi. This marks the entrance of the brand in this historic city of Uttar Pradesh. Located in the heart of the city, overlooking the historical Jhansi Fort, Lemon Tree Hotel, Jhansi, is an aesthetically designed hotel easily accessible from the railway station.



The hotel features 61 well-appointed rooms and suites, which combine understated elegance with modern amenities and facilities. The innovative interiors and the inspiring artwork of this hotel make for a setting that is refreshing, contemporary and stylish, while still reflecting a touch of the city's heritage in the artefacts.

Complementing the stay are a multi-cuisine coffee shop – Citrus Café, with an alfresco dining area – Citrus Patio, and a hip recreation bar – Slounge. There is also a business center, banqueting and conferencing facilities to meet discerning guests' business needs. Recreational facilities at the hotel include a rejuvenating spa – Fresco, a well-equipped fitness center and a refreshing swimming pool and deck where guests can easily spend a few languid hours for utmost relaxation.

The closest airport is Gwalior Airport at an approximate distance of 112 kms and the closest railway station is Jhansi Railway Station at a distance of 1.5 kms. The hotel offers easy access to major attractions such as Jhansi Fort, Rani Mahal, Jhansi Museum, Parichha Dam and the Barua Sagar Fort.

Due to the ongoing COVID 19 circumstances, certain services and facilities will be limited or unavailable, in keeping with our house rules and the prevailing government regulations.

Grand Mercure Gandhinagar GIFT City Receives 'Gold Certificate'

Grand Mercure Gandhinagar GIFT City hotel has won the 'Gold level of certificate' under the Indian Green Building Council's (IGBC) Green New Building Rating System for being a sustainable and environment friendly building. The certification is valid for



a period of three years. Green building of the hotel helps in minimising the overall impact on the environment through the efficient use of energy and water and the use of environmentally friendly practices during construction of the structure. As a part of Accor group's Planet 21 programme, it is deeply committed to sustainable value creation, and focusing on implementations through which they can give back to planet and community.

Vineet Verma, Executive Director & CEO of Brigade Hospitality said, "It is a matter of pride to have our hotel at GIFT City – Gujarat, certified by IGBC. This certification stands testament to Brigade Group's commitment to sustainable development which is in tune with IGBC's goal of putting India on the map of global leaders in sustainable built environment."



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HHC an Interactive Platform for the Hospitality Industry

HHC (Happy Hotelier Club) is created by a passionate hospitality professional Taran Deep to bring hoteliers at a common forum for collaborations and learning & development. Conceptualised earlier this year, HHC objective is to develop a common platform for hoteliers to network, share and rediscover their own selves. The vision of HHC is for hoteliers to happily interact in a professional environment without any bias, to learn and exchange ideas.

The platform is supported by Ashish Gupta, a passionate Hotelier, Dheeraj Aggarwal, an IT expert, as the co-founders of HHC. Greesh Bindra, Vice President, The Surya, New Delhi and Himmat Anand, Founder, Tree of Life Resorts, has agreed to offer their support to HHC as the advisors to the platform.

In the past seven months, HHC has successfully conducted 24 webinars, 5 paid master classes, with 4756 registered participation and 35 paid HHC members. The idea of doing this initial activity by HHC was to analyse the pulse of the industry and to identify the related topics for future webinars. HHC will also be a one stop shop for all the Hospitality needs in terms of Learning, Development and collaborations especially for the standalone properties and restaurants.

The platform is completely AI enabled, for effective engagement with multiple databases and members in a consistent manner.



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Courtyard by Marriott Second Hotel in Ahmedabad



Courtyard by Marriott announced today the opening of its second hotel in Ahmedabad. Strategically located in the heart of the business district along Sindhu Bhawan Road (SBR), the new Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad marks the sixth property to open in the city by Marriott International.

"We are delighted to introduce our second Courtyard by Marriott hotel in the historical city of India. Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad on Sindhu Bhawan Road is Marriott International's sixth property in the city, attesting to the brand's popularity and also further compliments the company's commitment to growth in the country," said Neeraj Govil, Senior Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International. "Courtyard is one of our fastest growing brands globally and based on the success of the brand in India, we foresee tremendous opportunities for our new hotel in Ahmedabad."

Accentuating contemporary design that encompasses comfort and functionality, Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad on Sindhu Bhawan Road features 121 guestrooms including five executive suites. Spacious and thoughtfully designed to suit the guests' comfort, each room is fully equipped with an array of amenities including flat-screen televisions, a comfortable work desk and high-speed internet access. The window side lounge provides guests a perfect spot to recline and relax.

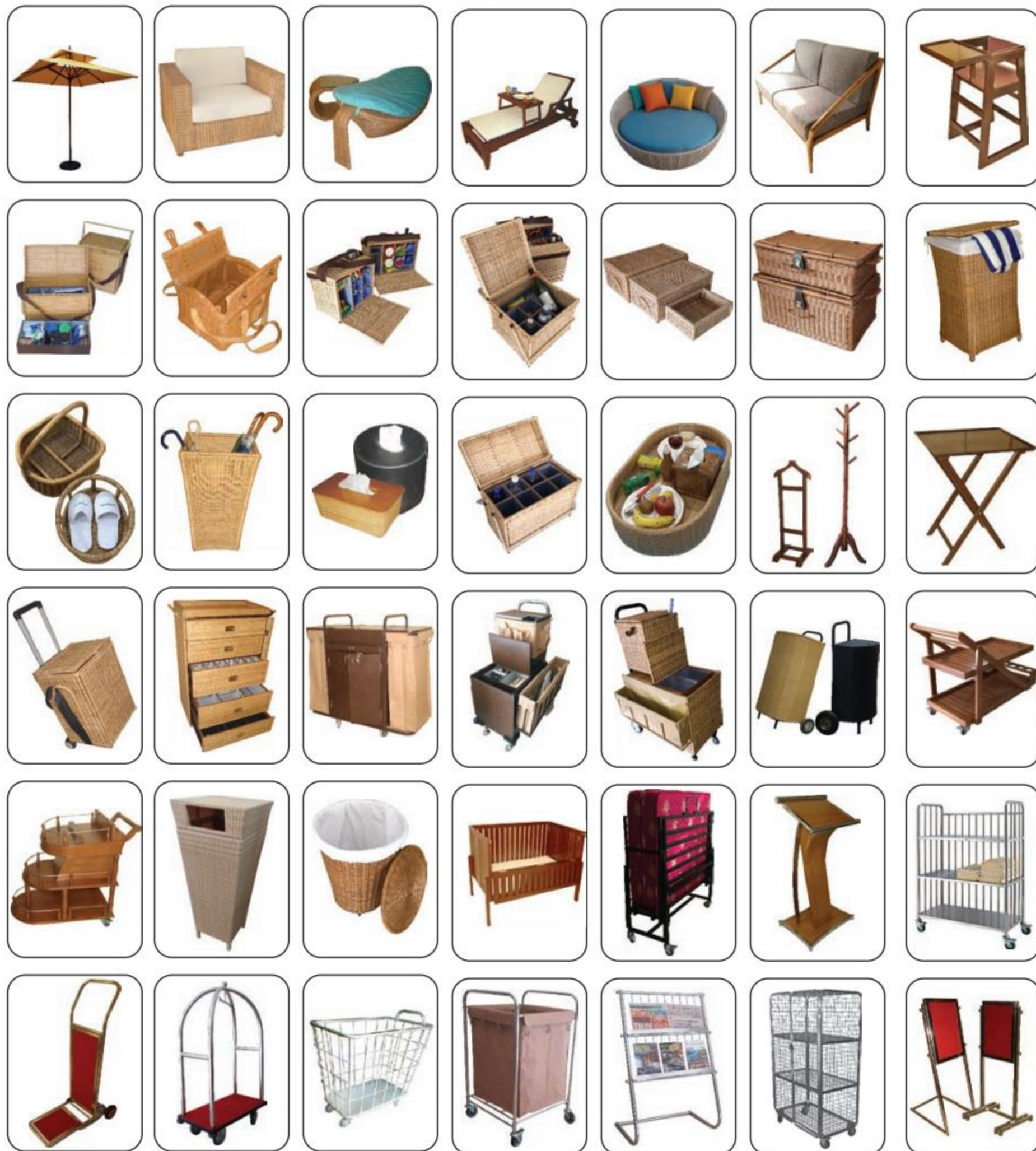
Committed to suit the palate of its global guests, the hotel's all-day dining restaurant Aura offers Indian favourites and cuisines from across the world. Latte, a 24-hour café that features indoor and outdoor seating areas, provides guests a space to indulge in the finest coffee with freshly baked cakes and confectionaries.

Other leisure amenities at the hotel include a fitness centre, an indoor swimming pool that overlooks the city for travellers looking to stay fit while on the road. The hotel also offers extensive facilities for meetings, business conferences and social events. The versatile event space spread over 18,126 square feet, which includes a 15,770-square-foot ballroom, can accommodate up to 600 guests.

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APPOINTMENTS


Devina Thapliyal

The St. Regis Mumbai has appointed Devina Thapliyal as Director of Housekeeping. Devina brings with her a decade of housekeeping experience. Graduated from the prestigious Oberoi School of Management, she started her role in housekeeping with The Oberoi, New Delhi & Gurgaon followed by a stint at the Vivanta by Taj Ambassador, New Delhi before her foray into Marriott International with the JW Marriott brand.


Sudeep Mukherjee

Sayaji Hotel Indore has appointed Sudeep Mukherjee as the new Market Director of Sales-Indore. A focused and analytical hospitality professional, he with him over 12+ years of rich and varied experience in sales and marketing. Prior to this, he has worked with reputed brands such as Crowne Plaza Kathmandu Soaltee (IHG Pvt. Ltd.), Grand Mercure Bangalore (Accor Hotels Pvt. Ltd.), Marriott Hotels India Pvt. Ltd, ITC Limited – Hotels Division and many more.


Kiran Challojuhas

Kiran Challojuhas been appointed as the Portfolio Director of Sales & Marketing for a portfolio of 10 Holiday Inn Express hotels under the SAMHI ownership effective 23rd Nov 2020.

Kiran comes with around 17 years of rich experience in spearheading Sales and Marketing operations and has worked with brands like IHCL, Oberoi Hotels and Resorts and ITC Hotels.

His last assignment was with Ginger Hotels within the IHCL, as Corporate Director of Sales.

Kiran has Bachelor's Degree in economics from Nizam's College in Hyderabad and did his Executive Program in Management from Shailesh J Mehta School of Management at IIT-Bombay.

The Leela Palace New Delhi Elevated the Air Purification System

To ensure safety and well-being of guests under its holistic safety program – suraksha, The Leela Palace New Delhi have elevated the air purification system at guest floors and rooms with installation of electronic air cleaner system. Each of 254 guest rooms and suites are engineered with dedicated multi-layer air filtration system.

This mechanism not only treats the air but filters PM 2.5 particulates, harmful gases and works on maintaining healthy AQI levels. Apart from guest floors, all other areas of the hotel are well equipped with competent air purifiers to maintain clean air quality at the premises at all times.



Niraamaya Launches Niraamaya Retreats Suryavilas, Solan

Niraamaya Wellness Retreats, known for its picturesque locations, distinctive hospitality, and bespoke wellness is launching the Niraamaya Retreats Suryavilas, Solan. This Himachal retreat is spread across 15 acres and nestled at the foothills of the majestic Himalayas with bracing mountain air and breath-taking views. Surrounded by the pine & deodar forests, this luxury hideaway is the perfect choice for a relaxing sojourn.

Niraamaya will be introducing its path breaking functional medicine and bespoke wellness to guests in this serene location. The Retreat offers 54 rooms out of which 36 are exquisite rooms and 18 luxury log huts that provide spectacular views. This retreat has been created with lush, manicured gardens and exotic blue colour schemes. The Himalayan Glamping Log huts offer a perfect luxury camping experience with complete facilities while enjoying the rugged outdoors. The other room categories offer a mixture of the aesthetic beauty of nature interspersed with the comforts of modern luxury. The bouquet of services and facilities includes a gym, an outdoor swimming pool, a speciality restaurant as well as spacious banquet hall for weddings, conferences, events, and private functions.

The newly introduced Niraamaya Spa will offer its internationally acclaimed Ayurvedic as well as western therapies. The famed Cafe Samsara has chefs bringing the unique taste of the local cuisine and world-famous dishes to the table.

Manu Rishi Gupta, CEO Niraamaya Retreats elaborated on the expansion, saying "With Niraamaya Retreats Suryavilas Solan, we bring to the Himalayas and the North of India, the rich experience and expertise in curative and restorative wellness. This is the first time that a chain like Niraamaya has entered this region and brought with it, these life-changing therapies which have been hitherto unavailable. The functional medicine programs will focus on chronic lifestyle issues and will be providing holistic healing experiences to guests. We plan to introduce a whole range of programs including Metabolic Obesity, Immunity Rejuvenation, Mindfulness, Stress Management, Gut Restoration, Aesthetics, and Deep Detox Program. The Himalayas have themselves been known for the search for Nirvana with their high altitudes, fresh air, medicinal herbs, and fresh springs. This is an ideal location for anyone looking for long term wellness and we offer a bouquet of services ranging from Yoga, Ayurveda, functional medicine programs to relaxing spa treatments."



Sinclair's Hotels Launches Sinclair's Gangtok

Sinclair's Hotels Limited has announced the launch of its eighth property at Gangtok, Sikkim. Sinclair's Gangtok is a scintillating brand new property located at the posh Zero Point, minutes away from the bustling MG Market, affording wonderful views of Kanchenjunga range. Like all other hotels in the Sinclair's chain, the premium location is a great advantage as compared to other hotels in the hill town.



The hotel has 60 rooms and suites offering different types of accommodation. It is a stunning building comprising ground plus six floors housing rooms and other facilities, while there are two basements for car park, services etc. The built up area of the hotel is around 45,000 sq.ft.

It has a spacious multi-cuisine restaurant Magnolia, which offers daily fresh selection of expertly prepared meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The hotel has an expansive Guras Bar & Lounge with spectacular views of the Kanchenjunga range. For business conferences and social meetings, there is a two level conference venue – The Cherry Hall, which is furnished in the traditional Sikkimese décor. For leisure, there is an infinity Swimming Pool with a separate kids area, facing the mountain range. Other recreation activities include Indoor Games, sightseeing, etc.

Sinclair's already has four properties in the region at Siliguri, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Dooars. The opening of the Gangtok property will now enable the company tremendous advantage in offering customized packages to tourists visiting the region.

Post relaxation of the lockdown, all the eight properties of Sinclair's Hotels are now open for business and are following the recommended SOPs. The occupancies, while low at present have been showing a distinct upward trend and are expected to improve steadily with the easing of restrictions.

Taj Chia Kutir Resort & Spa Debuts in WB

Indian Hotels Company's (IHCL) iconic brand, Taj, today announced the opening of Taj Chia Kutir Resort & Spa, Darjeeling in the state of West Bengal.



The resort is situated in the world renowned Makaibari Tea Estate, founded in 1859, and home to the world's first tea factory.

Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, The Indian Hotels Company, said, "IHCL with its pioneering spirit has put many destinations like Rajasthan, Goa and Kerala on the tourism map. We are delighted to step into another new destination in the East – Darjeeling. Taj Chia Kutir Resort is a welcome addition to our existing hotels in the magnificent Himalayas."

Nestled amidst sun-kissed tea gardens, Taj Chia Kutir Resort & Spa is spread over 22 acres. The 72-room resort, often enveloped in mist, has panoramic views of the rolling hills. The design is inspired by the meandering tea terraces and blends with nature.

The culinary choices include The Chia Veranda, the all-day diner, perched in the natural surrounding serving world cuisine. Sonargaon, the fine dining restaurant, offers North West frontier, Punjabi and Bengali cuisines. Guests can enjoy an elaborate high tea and tea tasting session with the Tea Sommelier at the charming Makaibari Tea Lounge. The elegant all-glass bar offers enchanting views of the tea gardens.

Flanked by hilly slopes, the resort is an ideal destination for elegant events and intimate social gatherings. It will also offer signature therapies and treatments from Jiva; our spa brand deeply rooted in Indian traditions of healing.



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Hyatt Announces 'Hyatt Loves Local' Initiative



Hyatt Andaz



Hyatt Chennai



Hyatt Kolkata



Hyatt Pune

Driven by Hyatt's purpose to care for people so they can be their best, Hyatt Hotels Corporation announces the 'Hyatt Loves Local' initiative, a global effort by Hyatt hotels to uplift and collaborate with small businesses that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 60 Hyatt hotels and resorts in destinations across the Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe and the Middle East are providing complimentary resources and exposure to select local businesses that have struggled during the pandemic.

"By always listening to our guests, members and colleagues, we understand their strong desire to not only experience the Hyatt hotels' destinations but also to have the opportunity to support local communities," said Amy Weinberg, senior vice president, brand loyalty, brand marketing and consumer insights, Hyatt. "We have been caring for the communities in which Hyatt hotels operate for more than 60 years, and we are proud so many Hyatt hotels around the world are finding new, creative ways to lift up beloved local businesses in this time of need through 'Hyatt Loves Local'."

From culinary and wellness to fashion and art, 'Hyatt Loves Local' community collaborations span a variety of industries and are taking place at Hyatt properties now and rolling out through the fall.

A few ways Hyatt hotels are embracing Hyatt Loves Local across India include:

Fresh from the Farm: Andaz Delhi has committed to sourcing local produce from certified organic and sustainable producer, Tijara Organic Farms. A decrease in commercial clients like hotels and restaurants at the beginning of the pandemic left the team at Tijara struggling to pay its farmers. Andaz Delhi launched this ongoing collaboration to help Tijara rebuild its business while staying true to the hotel's sustainable ethos. Their produce will also be available for purchase at the

property's mini market.

Nurturing Local Produce for Queen of the Deccan: Hyatt Regency Pune & Residences tapped innovative, Pune-based farm The Indian Organics to supply produce for a weekly on-property farmers' market, as well as for the European-, Mediterranean- and Indian-inspired menu at in-house restaurant Zeta. The Indian Organics was formed as an answer to losses faced by farmers in the Nashik and Pune districts due to the pandemic. Launched in October 2020, the weekly farmers market will be available to guests through March 2021.

Empowering Women in the Land of Gods: Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty is collaborating with representatives from Kerala government-run female-empowerment mission Kudumbashree, which counts for five million members. To provide these women with a platform, Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty has invited the representatives to weekly Sunday brunches to reach new customers as well as to offer guests access to indigenous products made by women across the district. Launched in November, the brunches will be ongoing on Sundays through the end of the year.

Spreading the Joy of Creativity in Millennium City: Hyatt Regency Gurgaon, is collaborating with local artist and multi-disciplinary designer Maneesha Ahlawatto exhibit her art in the hotel lobby. An effort to support an independent female artist,

Celebrating Art and Fashion in the City of Dreams: Hyatt Regency Mumbai is collaborating with Rajat Mittra, to provide his company Asian Art House with a platform to showcase the talent of upcoming local Indian artists and their paintings. Due to the pandemic, local artists have seen sales of their paintings get adversely impacted. This collaboration also offers guests access to the varied styles of beautiful Indian Art. The exhibition will be hosted in February 2021 at on-property restaurant, Glasshouse.

Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel and Residences has committed to a series of markets with Ms. Ilishita Khanna, the curator of pop-up flea markets in Mumbai. Scheduled in January 2021, the market will consist of pop-up stalls offering guests an array of local artifacts, garments, jewelry and accessories, as well as providing local vendors with access to customers.

Promoting Sustainability in the land of Poorams: Hyatt Regency Thrissur is working with curated travel company, The Blue Yonder, on an artisan exhibition to support the River Nila Project - an initiative aimed at preserving the deteriorating River Nila in Kerala, India. Hyatt Regency Thrissur has invited artisans indigenous to the region to sell local products at an ongoing market, with the goal of bringing financial prosperity to the community. Launched on November 1, 2020, this collaboration will continue till March 2021.

Tea Tales in the City of Joy: In August 2020, Hyatt Regency Kolkata teamed up with organic, carbon-neutral, single-estate tea brand, T-Tales, to provide beautiful, fresh teas in all guestrooms and on-property food and beverage venues. Additionally, the property is hosting evening tea tasting rituals in the lobby, starting November 1, 2020 till February 2021. During the lockdown, tea estates like Jalinga were closed for months which resulted in a decrease in tea production (and available work) in the country's North-East region.

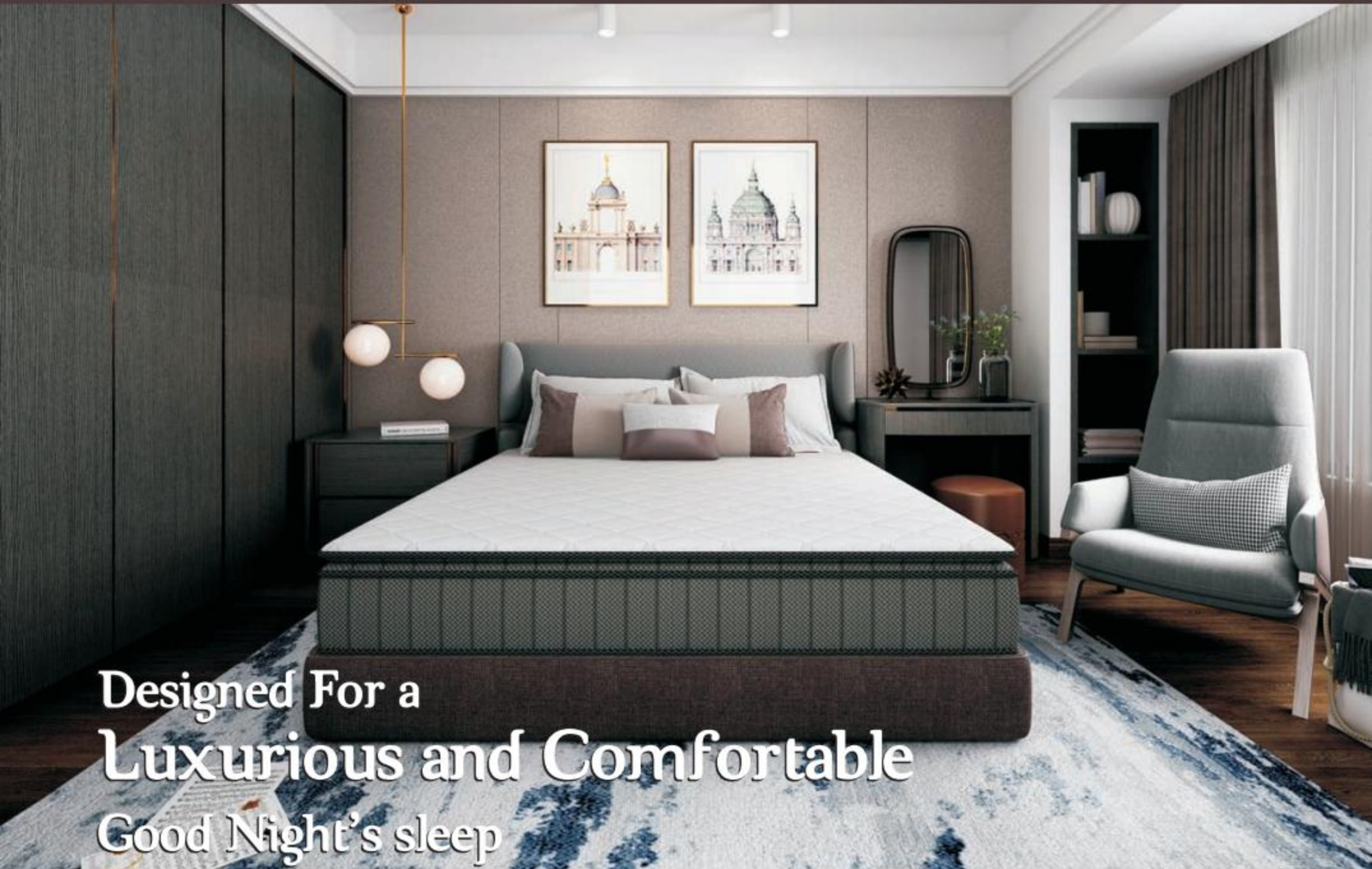
Fashion in the Culture City: Hyatt Regency Chennai has collaborated with local, minimalist men's and women's fashion designer Vivek Karunakaran (VK) to create a special and safe shopping experience for guests and locals. Due to a decline in business as a result of the pandemic, VK's flagship store got closed and the brand had to downsize its team by 75%. Launched on September 1, 2020, the pop-up store will be ongoing through December 2021.



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Safe Abodes

Over the past several months hospitality industry has been undergoing a major setback due to corona virus pandemic. However, as lockdown rules relax across various states, it is found that nothing is now holding people up from hitting the highway. The hospitality industry, which has been adhering to the SOPs and operating in a highly regulated fashion, has been seeing an uptrend in the occupancy rate. It has been undertaking several measures to attract guests who, getting tired of being cooped up in their homes, have been visiting these properties for staycations, workations, etc. The industry has been adopting techniques and technology to safeguard their guests, while catering to ensure that all their needs are satisfied. **Ashok Malkani** takes a look to gauge how the industry is fulfilling the guests' needs and reassuring them of their safety.

The corona virus pandemic has dealt a crippling blow to the Indian travel and tourism industry and the entire value chain linked to the sector, including the hospitality industry. According to a study by the Confederation of Indian Industry and hospitality consulting firm Hotelivate, the entire sector is likely to lose around Rs 5 trillion.

As the industry was reeling under the effect of lockdown The Ministry of Home Affairs issued a circular on May 30 allowing hotels and restaurants, outside the containment zones, to reopen from June 8 with SOPs issued by the State Governments.

The hotels are opening their portals and are embarking on extensive sanitization measures and adopting other safety precautions. Right now thinking about the hotel industry and it returning back to normalcy one is reminded of the famous quote from Robert Frost - The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep. Yes, the industry is continuously battling to ensure that the guests' stay is not only safe but also pleasant and memorable.

Safety Measures Followed by Hotels

Most of the top hotels which have reopened are taking utmost precautions for the safety of the guests.

Sascha Lenz, General Manager of Park Hyatt Chennai avers, "Park Hyatt Chennai has implemented a holistic system based on Hyatt's Global Care & Cleanliness Commitment, focusing on the safety and wellbeing of colleagues and guests. We are proud to be GBAC STAR™ certified. GBAC is a part of ISSA, the leading worldwide cleaning industry association. With this certification the property has implemented enhanced



cleaning and disinfection protocols and has been audited on critical elements that establish our commitment to the program"

He lists some of the key guidelines followed across the properties thus:

- All guests are required to follow social distancing guidelines
- The use of a face masks is mandatory when moving around in public spaces of the hotel
- We require a mandatory thermal screening while entering the hotel
- Increased frequency of cleaning with hospital-grade disinfectants of all high-touch surfaces and shared spaces
- Colleague certification and trainings for hygiene and cleanliness
- Guest welcome sanitation pack in all rooms (Masks, hand sanitizers, disinfectant wipes)
- Hygiene & Wellbeing Manager to help ensure new protocols are being met

- Regular wellbeing and temperature checks for all colleagues including paid COVID tests and sick pay

- Protective masks and other equipment for hotel colleagues
- Prominently placed hand sanitizer stations throughout the hotel public and employee areas
- Revised restaurants layouts that encourage social distancing, utilizing contactless technology for menus
- QR code menus in restaurants and In-Room to view menus on your personal mobile device
- Implementation of enhanced food safety and hygiene protocols for restaurants, room service and events
- Cars are thoroughly disinfected and sanitized after before and after every use while the driver is separated by a shield from the passengers
- Social distancing guidance in public areas across the hotel
- Removal of certain high-touch items from guestrooms
- Dedicated WhatsApp number for guest communication
- Daily housekeeping services in rooms only on request.

He adds, "Park Hyatt Chennai remains dedicated to continuously improving itself to have a sustainable process long term and provide safe and clean environments to guests and colleagues."

Dinesh Rai, General Manager of Four Points by Sheraton Kochi states, "Our hotel has implemented, and is following,





Gorav Arora



Dinesh Rai



Sascha Lenz

every safety and hygiene guidelines of the government and local bodies like Social Distancing, Personal Hygiene, Training in elevated sanitization and cleaning processes."

He adds, "We have made screening of body temperature for guests, associates and vendors mandatory & also trained associates to create awareness to follow the New Normal as per the protocol & Commitment to Clean guideline - Global Cleanliness program by Marriott International."

"The hotel has social distancing stickers, collaterals explaining the importance of masks & social distancing, cleanliness brand videos playing at the venue showing guests that the hotel is ready to welcome them back with a new normal."

Gorav Arora, General Manager, Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach disclosed, "To ensure the safety of guests and employees amid the pandemic, Accor elevated its hygiene and safety norms even further by launching a unique cleanliness and prevention label, ALLSAFE, our global cleanliness and prevention standards which have developed with and vetted by Bureau Veritas. The ALLSAFE label communicates to guests that these standards have been met in hotels. An ALLSAFE Officer is also appointed, who strictly monitors that safety and hygiene standards are being adhered across the hotel."

"Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach is accredited with the ALLSAFE certification and we have put all mechanisms in place for the safety of guests and staff. Anyone entering the hotel undergoes mandatory thermal screening and is required to wear a mask inside the premises. Dedicated hand sanitizer stations are placed at high touch points, single use items are optimized across the hotel and disinfecting wipes are used for consistent cleaning of different surfaces. Signages with hand washing and social distancing messaging have been placed across the hotel. Guests are also encouraged to view online menus of restaurants on their own devices. The number of chairs and tables in the restaurants has been reduced as per the guidelines to ensure social distancing."

"Apart from wearing protective gear, our staff is given regular practical and theoretical training under the ALLSAFE modules, which enables them to understand the situation and act accordingly."

All this leads one to the conclusion that since most of the hotels are following the new policies, rules and regulations, the

visitors can enjoy their vacations fearlessly.

Staycation, the New Norm

Perhaps that is the reason why people who are feeling bored and depressed of being cooped up at home have now ventured out and are now visiting hotels for a vacation, terming it as 'staycation' a combination of 'staying in' (which is the new norm during the pandemic) and enjoying a vacation.

Gorav concurs with this view and says, "A potential rise in occupancy in hotels has come from families who are tired of staying at home for several months and want a change in location. The world is moving towards a new normal and the idea of a staycation has become one of the biggest holiday trends. Staycations are great for a short break as well as time to celebrate special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries."

Speaking about the attractions at his hotel which appeal to the aesthetic senses of the guests, he says, "Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach, located at the beachfront is an ideal venue for staycations. Many of our 203 rooms and suites have a magnificent view of the expansive sea with mesmerizing sunset views, easy access to the beach, multiple dining options and good internet connectivity. The rooms have been recently renovated and they offer an energizing aspect of the Mumbai city, along with modern comfort. The suites are refurbished in a warm and vibrant palette with a spacious layout. We are continuing to get a strong response for staycations, especially during this festive season."

Dinesh declares, "Staycation is very popular now - The package is specially curated for families who come and unwind with their spouse and kids at the hotel. This guest segment in becoming increasingly popular post COVID 19 as State has opened destination tourism officially. We are seeing an increase of booking in 'weekend escape' packages from domestic travelers."

"Majorly, people who opted for work from home since lockdown find this package attractive to spend a relaxed weekend in the lap of luxury. At Four Points by Sheraton Kochi, we follow strict regime to ensure the guests enjoy a healthy and happy time. Concepts of social distancing, open spaces & dining are observed rigidly. People now find it safe to choose 5 star hotels for their 'Staycation'. This package, at our hotel, is specially curated with breakfast & dinner for two. In the evenings there are also

special activities for kids. 'The Home Away from Home' concept is very popular within family & couple crowds; we see a spike in staycation check-ins on weekends."

He adds, "Travelers are planning for short vacations in drive-in locations and we expect to see a surge in getaway demand."

Sascha adds, "Staycations are quite popular these days, especially since a preferred mode of travel is by road. After a long stay at home people are longing to head outdoors to unwind. The priority is of course safety and hygiene protocols and that's where the trust in the brand steps in. Park Hyatt Chennai has always been at the forefront of offering the best in amenities, food & beverage offerings and wellness for the luxury traveler. We have had guests in the recent past appreciate our contactless



services, hygiene standards and new style of Sunday brunch through reviews on online platforms. This is also reflected by our 5 Star Cleanliness rating on TripAdvisor."

Social Distancing

With staycations, and workations, as well as relaxation in travel and tourism, the hospitality sector is now seeing a degree of uneven recovery after the prolonged lockdown. The main driver behind this partial recovery is the domestic leisure traveller, seeking to shake off the cobwebs and cabin fever of several months of lockdown and work-from-home routine.

However social distancing is now a necessity so what are the steps being taken by the industry to insur this and what has been its effect on the industry?

Dinesh declares, "Social distancing has become a norm in today's COVID-19 world and hotels have re-evaluated and updated their SOPs to adapt to this change. During

reopening we, at Four Points by Sheraton Kochi Infopark, were also ready with a 'Prevention Plan & Revival plan' which communicated critical Covid-19 information to guests and staff through videos, stickers & collaterals.

"For the public area we have identified touch points:

- We sanitize all floors, door handles, elevator panels & buttons, house telephones every 30 minutes in public area.
- Every guest luggage would be sanitized before handling for scanning & Luggage scanner sanitized in every 30 minutes.
- Four stages of carpet cleaning cycle are introduced to ensure proper sanitization.
- We do disinfect all the furniture at the public area periodically

"The reception lobby is structured with acrylic covers, social distancing stickers all the way & for the guest transport, the car is disinfected after every trip."

As far as the effect of social distancing on the hotel industry is concerned he says, "With social distancing weddings have become smaller and more intimate. We ensure guest safety by following all prescribed protocols in our events and also make social distancing a big mandate - our seating layouts are also planned accordingly. Besides compliance with staff hygiene and protective gear protocols during events, we have to ensure our staff safety.

"We also have hosted luxurious weddings in the most hygienic way. We have created a buzz in the social segment across the country with our lucrative wedding packages including eye catching wedding set ups. We have new banquet seating styles considering

new social distancing guideline in place."

Sascha disclosed that at Park Hyatt Chennai they followed the following norms:

- All guests are required to follow social distancing guidelines
- The use of a face masks is mandatory when moving around in public spaces of the hotel
- Space markers are placed on the floor in the lobby, elevators and restaurants
- Seating in both our restaurants has been rearranged to increase space between tables
- In-room dining orders are left at a safe distance in the corridors allowing the guests to move the food trolleys inside themselves

Speaking about its effect on events in the hotel he said, "Corporate meetings have reduced as companies have limited or stopped travel for the time being, although we do foresee this picking up in the coming year. Social events on the other hand have picked up well and local residents are organizing intimate gatherings while following Government guidelines. At Park Hyatt Chennai we are at an advantage as our events spaces have a residential style look and feel and are ideally suited for these kind of events. Ample natural light and choice between indoor and outdoor spaces makes our event spaces perfect."

Gorav asserts, "In accordance with our ALLSAFE cleanliness and prevention label, an extensive set of hygiene and sanitation procedures have been implemented to ensure the safety of guests and employees. Digital screens and posters with social distancing messaging have been put up across the hotel to ensure guidelines are

being followed and common areas and high touch points are regularly sanitized. Routine checks are carried out by our housekeeping supervisors to ensure all sanitization and cleanliness requirements are conducted and documented. In addition to the housekeeping team, we also have the ALLSAFE Officer, who is responsible for ensuring the guidelines for hygiene and sanitation are monitored and added measures are introduced wherever necessary."

He adds, "In the current scenario, business travel has been limited and hence there is a reduction in the number of corporate meetings and events. Weddings were always popular at Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach and will continue to be a crucial segment in driving revenue. In pre-COVID times, weddings generated around 60% of banquet revenue and currently we are seeing major revival from this segment which we are capitalizing on. Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach is an ideal location for those who want a destination wedding in the city, Nestled amidst the shores of Juhu beach, the hotel overlooks the magnificent Arabian Sea and is a picture-perfect location. The venues offer natural lighting and a glimpse of the vast ocean."

"Currently, more intimate gatherings have become the need of the hour. The hotel's outdoor sea-facing space allows greater flexibility and movement that comply with current guidelines. To ensure distancing is maintained, layout of indoor venues has been rearranged. Tables are set at least six feet apart, with fewer guests seated together. Guests can steer away from self-service buffets and opt for staffed food counters or plated dinners. The Novotel brand has launched 'Vivaah at Novotel', an initiative aimed at enhancing the contemporary virtual wedding experience in the new normal."

Hotels' F&B

The whirlwind arrival of COVID 19 proved once again that humanity can't count on a status quo remaining in place indefinitely. The Hotel s' F&B sector was also playing a significant role in the progress of the hospitality industry. But corona virus affected this segment of the hotel industry as badly as the occupancy one.

The hotels are, therefore, also making efforts to ensure the growth of this segment. Different hotels are adopting distinctive and unique methods to ensure the success of this segment. Since nothing inspires innovation

as well as necessity, hotels globally have pivoted to embrace new ways of providing F&B service to the consumers. These include contactless methods of booking and payment, ordering meals ahead of arrival, outdoor dining spaces and others

Sascha disclosed that to assure the diners of the hotel's efforts to maintain their health and safety the restaurant seating is adjusted to allow for social distancing. He continues, "A QR code to view menus on personal mobile devices is provided to guests once they are seated. Once seated at the table guests may take off their masks for comfort, while our colleagues will be wearing protective personal equipment at all times."

He stated that for the hotel guests, in-room-dining service is available 24 hrs along with contactless food delivery options. The menu was available as QR code in the room. The food is placed outside the door and the guests had to move the food trolley into the room themselves to allow for a maximum in safety.

"We have reintroduced our Sunday brunch called 'A Sunday Reunion' which is spread out in the indoors and outdoors of The Dining Room. The food is mostly prepared at live stations, which are fitted with acrylic shields, so that the food is presented fresh and can be personalized upon the guests, request. The concept of buffets and guests lining up to take food is completely gone. Any items on the buffets are served by our chefs or served directly at the table by our team," he added.

Dinesh declares, "Diners, who in the pre-COVID phase would prefer dining out, are now scaling up on takeaways and online food delivery as food safety and hygiene has become the key factor. In the wake of this situation, our restaurants are implementing several safety strategies. To double up the safety standards and to gain back customer trust, we are making use of double-layered packaging, one-time-use utensils and cutlery, ensuring delivery persons are equipped with gloves and masks, and above all, cashless payments."

"Marriott has its own Food delivery platform Marriott On Wheels - this is a concept of bringing our signature recipes to your home from the award winning restaurants. We have also partnered with the other food delivery platforms like Swiggy/ Zomato & started an operative outreach program reassuring the customers about the safety involved in ordering food online."

"Hotel is also seeing increase in the foot

falls for our Sunday brunches & weekend dinner. The restaurant follows social distance in seating & has a temperature check as guest walks in."

Gorav states, "From April 2020 onwards, Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach introduced a takeaway and food delivery menu, and it continues to support us even today. We ventured into this concept amid the pandemic and are using it as an opportunity to deliver food to our guests who were unable to come to the restaurants due to the restrictions. For delivery services, we partnered with food platforms like Zomato and Swiggy and have been receiving a good response."

"Food and beverage are an important aspect of our hotel contributing to 50% of revenue and we have always been innovating and incorporating local as well as seasonal offerings. Currently, three of our restaurants: Sampan- our Indo-Chinese restaurant, The Square- our all-day dining restaurant and Gadda Da Vida- our sea-facing lounge bar are operational, adhering to government guidelines. In addition to the ALLSAFE hygiene and sanitization measures, we have introduced a contactless menu option where guests can view the menu from their own devices. Individual plating and smaller portion sizes have been introduced for safety measures and to avoid wastage. Our in-room dining menu also includes signature specials from all our restaurants."

"With our dine-in services open again, we have seen a gradual rise in diners with regular guests coming back."

Future of Travel & Tourism and Hotel Industries

Though the hotels have commenced operations; with no clear roadmap it will be an uphill task. Since the travel & tourism and hotel industry are interconnected one needs to gauge the progress of the two in totality. The question uppermost in the industry is when will travel & tourism and hotel be able to flourish and prosper?

Sascha is hopeful of the domestic business travel making a slow and steady return. He reveals, "It is nowhere close to 2019 levels, but it has revived at a better pace than expected. We anticipate International travel to begin towards the start of Q2 2021. Chennai is not a particularly leisure destination and even in pre COVID times was not heavily reliant on International tourists. Given that, the inbound tourism will only start towards

mid-2021. Domestic tourism moves more towards the ECR resorts, Mamallapuram and Pondicherry. Whilst it is early days yet, there is every indication that overall business sentiment will rebound faster than anticipated. The one segment that is really performing for city hotels is social MICE (weddings and related events).

"While we forecast business levels to continuously and gradually improve throughout 2021, we expect a full recovery to pre-COVID business levels – especially on the ADR side – only to manifest sometime in 2022. Depending on the business mix of certain hotels, this might even take longer depending on the overall recovery of international air travel and effective distribution of vaccines throughout next year. Even beyond the final recovery, certain COVID measures like increased and enhanced sanitation and cleaning policies are here to stay and will become part of every hospitality company's staple service."

Gorav declares, "Given that business travel has reduced, and MICE activity continues to remain low, it is anticipated that the domestic leisure market will be

a key focus over coming months with staycations, workcations and dine-in opportunities driving growth. Within the hospitality industry, there has been a slow pick up in business, however, each week is looking better than the previous week.

"Guests have become more tech-savvy during the lockdown and digital interaction has gained popularity now more than ever before. We are adjusting to the new normal and changes are being made at every point in the guests' journey; right from meet and greet to sustaining long-term relationships. The focus has now moved towards connecting with existing and potential guests across various digital platforms and re-iterating promotional activities and safety measures taken by the hotel.

"We are all adjusting and working in the new normal of hospitality. In the current situation, travellers want to be assured that the places they are staying and dining at are safe and sanitized. Once their confidence is restored, we believe more and more people will be motivated to travel more often and enjoy hospitality experiences. Our key messaging continues to be to assure our

guests of a safe and hygienic environment with the ALLSAFE measures implemented at our hotel. We have seen a strong response so far and, together, as a team, we are working harder towards welcoming more and more guests."

Dinesh is of the view that hotel industry in the country is on the path of recovery. He avers, "The next two quarters are looking positive and the industry is expecting a recovery-through staycations & domestic travelers. Markets are poised for good growth, provided reforms continue to roll. Hotel will give guests a more digitalized – contactless – personalized experience."

He discloses, "There has been an increase in the number of tourists opting for domestic leisure travel. They have started visiting domestic destinations which has increased the demand of hotels and resorts in these places. As of now the industry will have to depend on the domestic tourists only as international tourists are still restricted from travelling.

"As the International flights open we expect more tourist's/business travelers/ medical tourists traveling to Kerala state." ■



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Revving up the Revenue

The corona virus outbreak has not only impacted travel in affected regions it has also caused the cancellation of some of the world's biggest exhibitions, which has adversely affected the hotel industry globally. Though the lockdown for India's hospitality sector was lifted from June 8 by the central government several states have continued with curbs on usual operations. This has affected the industry on several fronts. **Ashok Malkani** reviews the upshot of the pandemic on different aspects of the industry and the steps taken by it to tackle this situation effectively.

As hotels reopen after the lockdown, with all SOPs in place, the question foremost in the minds of the entire hospitality industry is: when will things come back to normal? Due to the lockdown thousands of people lost their jobs and some had to be content with receiving trimmed down salaries. Even after opening their gates the hospitality industry, which was reeling under the lockdown, is not sure of the response of general public which is scared to venture out of their homes. With constant advice of shelter-in, the travellers – both domestic and international – are reluctant to hazard out. This poses a serious problem for all marketing and revenue managers of various properties, whether small inns or large hotels.

As per Hospitality Valuation Services (HVS), demand has not yet revived because corporate travel is on a standstill. Leisure travel has also not seen any uptick in states which have eased restrictions because of increasing Covid cases in the country. Since

hotels are operating with very low occupancy, revenue strategies are being reevaluated.

Boosting revenue

With several restrictions being imposed on the hotels several changes are anticipated in the operation of hotels. The changes would be on several fronts ranging from technology to ideas for supplementing revenues lost due social distancing.

Vineet Verma, CEO & Executive Director Brigade Hospitality Services Limited, states, "The global pandemic has left a grave and detrimental impact particularly on the hotel industry. Revenues have plummeted to an all-time low across all segments of hotel business and we have no visibility on how the traditional sources of revenue generation will fare in the short to mid-term. In order to survive and sustain, hotels will have to step on to uncharted territories and come up with hitherto unexplored options."

He believes, Institutional packed box catering with astute focus on hygiene,



sanitization and safety protocols is one such option that many corporates are now considering in the short term.

He continues, 'Pop-up Restaurants' in the private setting of an opulent suite is a popular option to engage with social segment for celebrations and special occasions as well as small group from corporates who prefer meeting once a month or fortnightly to catch up with their team's progress.

"With the constantly evolving situation across the globe and temporarily suspended projects in the IT industry, a lot of Indian technology companies are bringing their workforces back to the country in specially chartered flights. This allows hotels a great opportunity to tie up with such companies that will want their returning employees self-isolate as a matter of abundant precaution. Customized room packages aimed at self-isolating in the safe environs of a hotel and a consolidated value offering including meals, laundry, virtual fitness lessons etc. is gaining prominence.

"Home delivery of food and curated brunches, delivered over the weekend, have also been gaining popularity.

"With the requirement of limiting attendance to 50 for social functions, hotels are now curating 'designer' events in all inclusive package offerings."

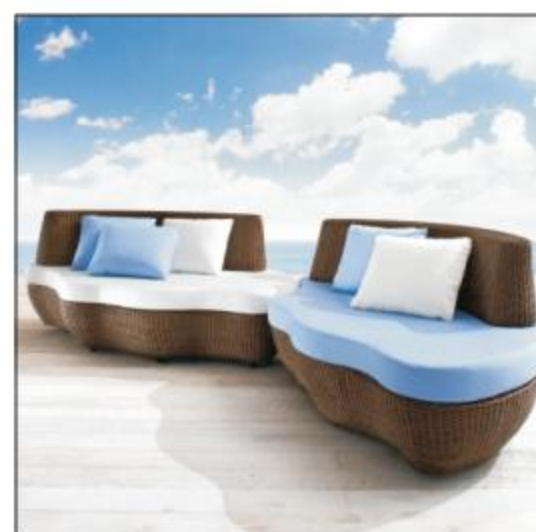
Ravi Rai, Cluster General Manager, Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach, Novotel Vijayawada Varun and The Bheemili Resort managed by Accor, avers that there will be several operational changes in hotels. He clarifies, "First and foremost 'change' means to adapt to the new normal

by following the strict ALL SAFE guidelines of safety and hygiene. For our sea-front property Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach, weddings were the key driver for business and with the new norms of the post lockdown world; this sector has been largely impacted. So now, to keep the celebrations alive even while following the set norms, Novotel has introduced Vivaah at Novotel. Leveraging its 20 properties across 15 gateway cities across India, Novotel is providing its guests an opportunity to connect with all their relatives and friends to join in for both physical and virtual celebrations, while maintaining social distancing norms.

"With Vivaah at Novotel, guests get to select a host hotel in any city as their wedding venue. To bring the couple's dear ones closer to them on their wedding, the host hotel extends the web telecast of the wedding to their relatives and friends present in different cities. The host family of the wedding gets a chance to share every moment of the wedding with their loved ones in real time - the joy of togetherness, the singing and dancing during the baraat, the rituals, the ceremonies, even from miles apart. The two distinctive features of this initiative are Dawat by Novotel and Shagun by Novotel for food and gift hampers respectively which are the two integral parts of any Indian wedding."

Shibil Malik, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway discloses, "The hotel reopened early in June but we plan to open all our dining venues gradually, in a phased manner.

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Shibil Malik



Vineet Verma



Ravi Rai

'Commitment to Clean', our new initiative that aligns with expert health & safety protocols. All the necessary measures and precautions have been ensured for utmost safety and hygiene for our guests and associates which is our top most priority."

Speaking about revenue generation, he states, "We have introduced various new formats of revenue generation, like the experience of office spaces based out of the hotel, offering reliable and safe plug & play workstations to just-in-time meeting spaces. One aspect that has already taken lead, post Covid-19, is the business of food deliveries. Our Food and Beverage team has introduced some interesting concepts to meet the immediate rising demand in various segments ranging from 'all-inclusive bento boxes' and 'Brunch at Home' to 'celebration menus' as dine-in and delivery options, further enhancing the dining experience basis guests convenience."

He added, "We have recently introduced all-inclusive 'intimate weddings' package which has been quite successful in the current times. The team has also rolled out a self-isolation package. One can stay socially responsible and self-isolate themselves in the comforts of the specially curated rooms, making the most of a host of luxe amenities extended. Guests can book their all-inclusive special stay for 7 nights or more and keep themselves away in the luxurious, clinically sanitized rooms along with exclusive offerings like an unconventional In-room restaurant dining experience, Virtual fitness sessions by trained experts, Fitness equipment's on demand and ergonomically designed workspaces.

Home Delivery of F&B Items

To meet revenue shortage several top-end hotels have started home delivery of food. It is believed that 15 per cent of food & beverage segment revenues in the second quarter of the year, in the case of Indian Hotels came from food home delivery.

Shibil affirms, "Delivering food & beverage is the 'New Normal' for various 5 star hotels across the country. Our hotel, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway, entered into partnerships with the online aggregators few months ago and we have understood the dynamics of this model. The delivery segment will increasingly expand in the future as people are consciously choosing freshly prepared meals dropped contact-free, at their doorstep.

"Recently, the hotel has received great response for our food delivery services. With the recent 1 week lockdown in Bengaluru, we introduced the 'Brunch at home' offering, where guests can choose from a 5 course menu and experience an array of dishes delivered at the comfort of their home. This concept received a lot of appreciation and has been actively preferred by guests in our vicinity."

He iterates, "We will definitely continue to explore this medium of revenue generation even when we leave this behind us."

Ravi, stated that the cluster of restaurants under him are also offering home deliveries in partnership with delivery agents the food to the required destination in a hygienic and prompt manner.

Speaking about new innovations, he disclosed, "We have curated a special takeaway brunch meal box where people can relish the Sunday brunch at the comfort of their home. The meal box consists of two preferences – vegetarian and non-vegetarian. The F&B team has also come up with a concept called virtual dinner. We recently sent across the same meal to 40 members of the Rotary club who were a part of a zoom call giving them an experience of dining together but virtually."

Vineet, said, "At hotels owned by Brigade we have already started the contactless experience of home delivery right at the early stages of lockdown. To increase our local visibility, we have also partnered with aggregators to leverage their platform to promote sales. We have noticed that varied corporates have a unique demand in this segment. They craft customized home-delivered F&B experiences for their teams during the virtual events. 'Pre-paid Vouchers' loaded with fixed value for an extended validity is also proving to be great incentive by many companies to their employees."

Workations

Another novel idea dreamt up by the hospitality industry is "workations". This concept allows all those who have temporarily, due to the pandemic, decided to work from home but feel claustrophobic to work from the hotel where they can laze around in the lounge or relax at several other places while working.

Ravi reveals, "We have incorporated the concept of 'Workations' at all our three properties and they have been quite successful. Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach and The Bheemili Resort Managed by

Accor have soothing ocean views of the Bay of Bengal from almost all the corners of the hotel which makes it a popular choice for the corporates. The guests can unwind and work at the lounge bar, the primer lounge, by the pool side or even from the comfort of their room; the soothing ocean view with great WIFI connectivity remains constant."

He continues, "If the guests get too stressed we have a mini theatre at Novotel Visakhapatnam for them to relax along with interesting F&B offers to choose from. The outdoor and indoor play arena at The Bheemili Resort is a perfect place for the guests to get some fresh air and the access to which is a part of the workation package. Novotel Vijayawada Varun is centrally located in the business hub of the city that houses various amenities like meeting rooms, lounge bar, apartments, rooftop pool side, and more, for a perfect workation setup. With a host of impeccable facilities offered at all the three hotels, we have seen a great traction of guests that has further helped us to increase our occupancy and F&B revenues."

Shibil says, "Understanding that almost everyone is following the current 'work-from-home' concept we thought of



giving them some flexibility; especially to those who are travelling or are looking for a change. We have introduced the experience of office spaces out of the hotel, offering reliable and safe plug & play workstations to just-in-time meeting spaces. The main focus of this package is to offer highest levels of hygiene and safety to our customers while they work and play. The response is gradually increasing and this will only work till the time office spaces are shut. After things get back to normal, people will slowly start opting for such 'smart office spaces'. This includes daily curated packed meals at work desks, complimentary car parking, exclusive discounts on hotel services like Food & Beverage, Spa, Gym memberships and more."

Vineet avers, "The 'Workation' demand

is largely driven during the lockdown periods and by the companies in the close proximity of the hotels. Alternately, since Brigade group is an established name when it comes to building smart office spaces, we are looking at leveraging this strength and help in temporarily converting the available underutilized space in our hotels into functional work places. Our unambiguous strategy is to target the MSMEs and other offices which are housed in business districts who are looking at rationalizing costs by reducing the amount spend on rentals and surety of disinfection and hygiene protocols. The additional advantage with hotels is that you get access to a bouquet of ancillary services like access to fitness center, preferred rates at our venues, spa and laundry, access to the concierge facilities etc. This option, if managed well, can become a much needed support and will help to mitigate the lost room revenue to a certain extent."

Layoffs

Few industries have been as hard hit as the hospitality sector which, to meet the diminishing revenues, experienced mass layoffs and furloughs across the globe.

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The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) has, in a letter to the Indian PM, Narendra Modi, declared, "As a result of this pandemic, Indian tourism industry is looking at pan India bankruptcies, closure of businesses and mass unemployment." The World Travel & Tourism Council has recently warned that COVID-19 pandemic could lead to a cut of 50 million jobs worldwide in the travel and tourism industry. The hospitality industry in India is likely to be hit hard. Experts suggest that domestic hotel companies will face a weak Q4 FY20 and a weaker Q1 FY21. According to FAITH a large percentage of total tourism business activity of India, which is estimated at USD 28 billion+ in forex and upwards of Rs 2 lakh crore in domestic tourism activity will be at economic risk through the year.

Several hotels are believed to have either curtailed the employees' salaries or reduced the employees. With lower number of employees, can the hotels offer the same standards of service they are known for?

Shibil declares, "With the current situation and the rising number of COVID cases, there is decreasing confidence among the people of travelling and staying in hotels. Hotels forecast their average occupancy for the coming months and then it is compared to the previous year and accordingly the employees are asked to report to work. The service and experience for guests is always the top priority for hotels and they make sure that enough employees are there to cater to everyone's needs."

"With the unprecedented impact on the industry, like many others, we, at Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway, also had to take the decision of right sizing employees via a sabbatical/leave without pay programme and having said that we



have built an internal system of constantly engaging with them with an intent to get them back to work soon."

Vineet adds that Brigade Hospitality has critically analysed the manning ratios to the current business requirement. He discloses, "We are only operating limited floors and restaurants. Multitasking is a pivotal attribute to be embraced and is going to stay. The talents are being cross trained in various functions to offer seamless and qualitative guest experiences. For example our Front Desk associates are trained to deliver service in restaurants and banquets and Food & Beverage associates are qualified to take check in and check outs of guests. Banqueting events are ably assisted by Chefs as and when the need arises we have hire the trained manpower on daily allowance."

Ravi reveals that his hotels, too, have planned manning based on the business requirements. He however assures, "We have made sure that in no case we are

compromising on the hygiene quality, safety and service standards."

He asserts, "This pandemic has taught us how to be more frugal in our approach when it comes to operations by looking into every line item and stopping wastage. It has also boosted up the benefits of multi-tasking and strengthened team work in order to balance out the operations. Adhering to the norms of social distancing, and taking the advantage of rampant technology, we are offering contactless services like contactless menu and payment options, contactless check-in & check out at the reception and more."

Promoting Domestic Tourism

The Pandemic has severely affected international travel and tourism sector. The most visible and immediate impact of Covid-19 is seen in the hotel and tourism sector on all verticals – leisure, adventure, MICE, etc. – particularly on the inbound segment.

This pandemic is the biggest challenge

that any country has ever faced, as international travel could be adversely impacted by up to 25 per cent this year, which is equivalent to a loss of three months of travel.

With restrictions on international tourism, hotels in India are taking steps to encourage domestic visitors.

Shibil concurs with this and adds, "Hotels are now focusing more on domestic travelers and the repatriation business which, in my view, will remain the key segments until the international travel resumes. Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway intends to fill this vacuum by focusing on enhanced hygiene and safety levels and offering value added packages specially curated to meet the needs of our domestic traveler, be it through providing office space solutions at our hotel premises to packed food boxes delivered to offices or family staycations within the city."

Ravi asserts that technology has played a great part in gaining back customer confidence during the pandemic period. He discloses, "To keep the customers abreast of the developments at our hotels we are communicating to them about the

safety and hygiene protocols at our hotels. We conduct online classes around food and wellness and we have also started promoting wellness at home packages, food deliveries, and take away."

He continues, "All our 3 properties – Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach, Novotel Vijayawada Varun and Bheemili resort Managed by Accor – are ALL SAFE Certified, which follows the stringent safety guidelines suggested by Bureau Veritas and MHO Guidelines. Our proactive measures have also aided us in attracting a lot of destination weddings as we have the largest banquet hall in the city that further helps the guests be well assured that we have the capacity to follow all the social distancing and safety guidelines. Our festive staycation packages are also attracting a good set of domestic travellers."

Vineet asserts that people are eager to travel and would do so as soon as the situation normalizes. During the lull period, he disclosed, they were preparing their staff to welcome the guests when they come back on normalisation of the situation. He stated that they were concentrating on offering services that would aid in safer

and contactless experiences for the guests.

He sums up the present situation and the future of the industry thus: "Hospitality industry continues to reel under the present crisis and there is no visibility as to when it will truly recover. According to industry experts, it may take anywhere from 18 months to 2 years before we see business reaching Pre-COVID levels. It has therefore become essential that hotels continue to keep a strong check on expenses and do what it takes to reduce them to bare minimum levels. At the same time, it is important that such reduction is properly planned so as to not hurt the hotel in the long term. It is important to also keep our hotels in a state of readiness to take on larger occupancies at short notice. Overall, it needs to be a balanced approach.

"Going forward, there will need to be a larger focus on enhanced digitization/automation in hotels and this may require additional CAPEX that can only come once business improves. So, it is more like a 'Catch 22' situation. Having said that, we are hopeful that the Hospitality sector should bounce back once a cure is found and people regain confidence in travelling again." ■

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The Growing Role of Contactless Dining

By Jhuma Biswas

Contactless dining has become a buzzword for India's food service industry in these trying times. It can be helpful in preventing the menace of Covid-19 from invading the guests and staff. Several restaurants in India's food service and hospitality industry have opted for contactless dining, which can instil a heightened sense of assurance and confidence among the guests.

However, contactless dining can be effective in restaurants only if carried in tandem with a comprehensive range of government prescribed hygienic measures like mandatory wearing of mask for guests and as well as restaurant staff, recording of the body temperature of every guest entering the restaurant, having seating arrangement while keeping the social distancing norms in mind, etc.

Digital and Traditional Routes

"Other than taking all the necessary precautions like regular sanitation of the outlet and kitchen, and keeping a tab on the

personal hygiene of all the staff members, we have introduced contactless dining in our restaurant as well. We live in a digital era so why not make good use of it. With us, now the customers view the menu online instead of the physical menu," informed Shivam Sehgal, Founder, Josh-The High Energy Bar, located at Pitam Pura, New Delhi. One of

the integral facets of contactless dining is digital menu.

La Pino'z, Noida is one of the many restaurants in India's food service industry, which has also introduced comprehensive changes in its dining process to prevent the entry of Covid in its outlet. "We are providing menu link or leaflets instead of laminated



menu. Leaflets are disposed off after every use," asserted Shweta Saran, the Owner of La Pino'z, Sector 104, Noida.

Of course, not all initiatives towards comprehensive hygiene at restaurants are digitally routed; some are perhaps nothing but reinforcing of the old fashioned impeccable hygiene standards which we had conveniently forgotten but are now forced to recollect and practice, and some are based on the new and disturbing but essential culture of social distancing.

"Our seating arrangements have been made keeping the social distancing in mind. Disposable gloves are being used by our staff to service the customer and after every dine in, the tables and chairs are properly disinfected. Moreover, we have started using sachets instead of bottles," disclosed Shweta.

"We disinfect our raw materials and wash the vegetables and other food items every time before using them. The Chef caps and gloves have been made compulsory in our kitchen. It is mandatory for the delivery boys to dispose off their gloves and wash hands after every delivery. Our staff has been trained and groomed well as per the norms of WHO to ensure every hygiene rule



Shivam Sehgal

is being adhered to," she explained further.

Cutlery at Josh-The High Energy Bar is also sanitised and sealed packed until it is used, which is a reflection of impeccable hospitality that is so apt for these disturbing times.

"We have changed the set up of our tables. The new set up includes individual sanitiser bottle, tissue box on each table and replacing the cloth napkins with use and throw paper napkins. The most used facility in a table set up apart from the cutleries and glass is the cruet set. So we have started using sachets of salt and pepper.

By this we have eliminated the multiple contact involving the cruet set. Also we have ensured all the tables are sanitised after each use to emphasise on maintaining the highest possible level of hygiene," explained Prasanna Kumar, Food & Beverage Manager, Oakwood Premier Prestige Bangalore, while talking of comprehensive hygiene initiatives taken at the hotel's three restaurants; Soul City - a chic bistro offering global cuisine ranging from Indian, Continental to Thai, La Bistro, and the roof-top bar & restaurant Ozaa.

Of course, that is not all at Oakwood Premier Prestige Bangalore as far as hygiene measures go. "Our staff has been strictly advised to use gloves and face masks all the time inside the restaurants and while attending tables they wear face shields for additional safety. We have also installed the sneeze guard for the buffet to increase the hygiene of the buffet, and guests are also requested to wear masks when they go to pick up their food. Besides these, all social distancing norms are strictly adhered to in all our three food service outlets - Soul City, La Bistro and Ozaa," Prasanna commented.

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Nandu Das



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Shweta Saran

Bangalore has also introduced digital menu to enable contactless dining. "Digital menu is a good initiative which we have adapted as well. It not only reduces unnecessary contact, but it also offers us an opportunity to showcase our menu with proper photos and illustrations. Also it helps us in ensuring social distancing while taking orders as with the help of the digital menu the guests themselves place the order without having to talk to the waiter/s," Prasanna elaborated.

Along with contactless dining, in keeping with the demand of the times, contactless payment is also gaining currency in India's food service and hospitality industry. "We are also encouraging the online payment methods to make sure there is least physical contact between our guests and the staff members," Shivam informed further. "We are encouraging wallets and card payments," pointed out Shweta.

And not all restaurants have embraced contactless dining options. "We have tried our best to make sure that we follow utmost hygiene level for each of our guests and staff while retaining the traditional way of taking orders and maintaining personal touch with the guests. This includes sanitising hands and taking temperature of each customer before his/her entering the restaurant to keeping sanitising bottles on each table. Besides when guest leaves we sanitise the table and chairs. Moreover, we are also maintaining temperature log book of all the staff members. Besides that, our staff is using hand gloves and maintaining good distance from each other and guests as well," maintained Harsh Gupta, the Owner of Breakin' Brew. Breakin' Brew is a premier and authentic cafe located in East Delhi that is proudly serving the foodies.

"In my opinion hygiene is not limited to sanitising hands or keeping track of temperature; it is more than that. As we are witnessing that Covid can be transferred from different objects, such as vegetables, utensils, cutleries, etc. we are using government approved sanitising tablets to maintain hygiene level," he articulated further.

Exploring Digital Menu

Would digital menu become the norm in the near and distant future of India's food service and hospitality business, which include classy restaurants housed in star-rated hotels? "We will continue with digital menu till the time situation gets better," Shivam observed further. However, he

conceded that many consumers even today are uncomfortable with digital menu. "Going digital with such a basic thing as a menu is uncomfortable for many guests even today. Customers still ask us for the physical menu because it affords much ease and ordering through it is quicker than with digital menu. According to me, this trend is temporary and we would return to normal times even before the vaccine comes," he expressed.

Shweta too thinks that contactless dining wouldn't become the norm in the future, in India's food service and hospitality industry. "Customers will surely be more conscious than before but with the vaccine coming out, the fear of Covid-19 will start ebbing and slowly such fear will become a thing of the past. But there would be major changes in the lifestyle and approach of the guests," she pointed out.

Shweta feels that digital menu is contactless and hence more hygienic and thus enhances a feeling of safety among



consumers. "It can be better used for promotions and can have a wider reach as compared to traditional menus," she asserted. However, she agreed that with digital menu "guests tend to miss the traditional feel of looking at the menu and ordering." Moreover, according to her, digital menu's fonts are limited to the size of the phone screen, and thus sometimes the menu tends to be not legible, which can sometimes make customers miss out on a few menu items.

"Having a digital menu makes sense for those restaurants where they serve à la carte. This allows guests to order from their phone/ tablet and not touch the menu card, and this lowers the chance of spreading of infection. The concept is good and quite useful," conveyed Nandu Das, Branch Manager, The BBQ Company, which is located at Gardens Galleria Mall in Noida.

However, in the same breath he stated that there are few disadvantages of digital menu too. "Like guests who want to use digital menus are often forced to pay through

Feature

digital means only. Then there are issues with network connectivity and for those who are not mobile technology savvy for them digital menu has the potential to create lots of confusion," he observed.

"We are not sure if contactless dining with digital menu is something that should be continued in the long-run or not. The happy conversations of staff with the guests, suggestions of what would suit the guest the best, etc. are at the risk of vanishing if there is not much human interaction and contact," voiced Prasanna. And he is correct. Without the human touch, the restaurant business would surely lose its essence. Even the most sophisticated technologies cannot replace the role of human interactions in the human-intensive food service and hospitality business.

"Yes, contactless dining lowers the risk but we don't want to make the experience too automated where the human touch which makes the experience special, is lost," Prasanna pointed out, giving a balanced perspective.

"There are still a lot of guests, especially the elderly, who enjoy dining out but are not tech-savvy. We want to make them feel welcome and comfortable without imposing rules they are not used to," he pointed out further.

About the popularity of contactless dining in restaurants, Nandu has some reservations. "I don't think contactless dining is popular at present, even during the Covid-19 times. This is primarily related to the issues with its usage, which is quite complicated and troublesome," he said without mincing words.

However, Nandu agrees contactless dining is the need of our times. "Contactless dining does lower the element of human touch to some extent but safety is equally important both for the guests and staff, so all in all it is a good concept. Only issue is with respect to complications in its usage. Once those are sorted out, it is here to stay," he opined.

Harsh believes that contactless dining is more suited for QSR outlets, rather than for cafes, casual dining and fine dining restaurants. "Unless you don't meet the guests and explain the dish to them till then the cycle of customer service is not complete in a cafe or in a fine dining or casual dining restaurant," he asserted. "Sometimes guests need to change some things in their dishes, sometimes they may need to get updates about any allergies, sometimes the Chef may want to surprise the guest with an out-of-the-world dish, etc. where the involvement of the staff with the guests can be crucial," Harsh explained further.

The entrepreneur feels a perfect dining experience is not complete without human touch.

The Future Ahead

We can sum up from the above discussions that though contactless dining is the need of our times but it does compromise on the essential element of human touch that is so integral to the essence of food service and hospitality industry. So when things become normal after the introduction of Covid vaccines, we can hope to return to old school hospitality where lively interactions between guests and restaurant staff on the basis of paper menu would regain its popularity in India's food service and hospitality industry.

However, what Covid-19 has taught us, which includes our food service and hospitality industry, is that we need to give more emphasis on hygiene and thus this writer believes the present day exacting hygienic practices would continue to a great extent in many of India's restaurants and hotels even after the vaccines come out, and they should continue to do so. ■



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Coping Up The Impact of Pandemic Challenges

By Sharmila Chand

As with other industries, the food and beverage sector is making endeavours to bounce back in business. The impact of the pandemic has been a severe blow in a number of ways. Yet, the F&B professionals are upbeat and hopeful about regaining the confidence of their guests through planned strategies. We ask experts to share with us how they are gearing up to face the situation and adapted to the 'New Normal'.

Strategies & Processes In Place

Praveen Shetty, Executive Chef, Conrad Bengaluru

"As we were gearing up and redefining our safety assurance with our guests, our hygiene manager worked together to ensure every corner of the hotel, from lobby to guestrooms, to our back areas were hygienically well equipped and maintained.

Conrad brand always tries to aspire in every way, never just stay, stay inspired has always been experience. During the time when the lockdown phase was lifted and guests started visiting our restaurants and enjoying their staycations, to give them assurance on their very first step, with the global Hilton CleanStay programme already in place and with time and tested from our local traditional drink Kashayam infused with couple of immunity boosting ingredient were served as their welcome drink.

Conrad Bengaluru is accredited with ISO 22000 : 2018 certification where in preparation, cooking and serving food and beverages within the premises are in accordance with industries management standard procedure. And it is one of the few hotels to have this accreditation and to have an in-house Lab to check each and every process

since the pre-opening stage of our hotel. All food items were thoroughly washed. Fruits and vegetables (which are to be consumed raw) are being washed in 50 ppm chlorine and clean potable water before storage since the beginning of the hotel operations."

Sumit Sinha, Director of Food and Beverage, Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla

Heightened safety and cleanliness protocols:

It is mandatory for all the team members to wear gloves, masks and face shields at all



"Health, immunity and safety are the buzzwords of the season and our Menu Planning is based on primarily these three aspects. Assuring our guests with right communication strategy with respect to enhanced cleanliness protocols and safety measures is the key to infuse confidence amongst our guests"

Sumit Sinha, Director of Food and Beverage, Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla

areas related to operations. We have included measures such as separate entrance and exit doors at the restaurants, availability of hand sanitizers, reimaged table set up, updated floor plans, disinfection of chairs & tables after every use and revamped reservations system. No collaterals are kept on the table as we have gone digital with our menus and payments. Crockery/Cutlery is only placed, once the guest gets seated.

To avoid cross contamination, restaurant and bar areas are roped off during non operational hours. We have clearly demarcated the roles and sections for servers and runners and defined primary routes for flow of food and guests to limit interaction between guests and colleagues.

For In Room Dining services, the server would not enter the room of the guests. The guests shall collect the food from the trolley at the entrance.

Assisted Buffet:

We have discontinued self service buffets at our restaurants. We are offering Assisted Buffet Service at our all day Dining restaurant Edesia for (Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner), weddings and other social events to minimise common touch points and enhance safety levels. With our servers standing behind the dish counters and unloading food on the plates of the guests, multiple contacts with the ladle is avoided. Floor markers have been placed across the buffet station to ensure adequate distancing. Infact, if we have curated special Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner On The Table menus for the guests to enjoy the variety of dishes with a personalised touch.

Sumit Gulati, Managing Partner and Owner, Spice Market

• We did not fire a single employee and

did not give them any pay cuts. We motivated them instead to put in more efforts and help us take our delivery brands to greater heights through consistency of food quality, feedback mechanisms and speed of delivery.

- We did not shut a single day this year including Diwali night and used the lockdown as an opportunity to make new customers.
- We introduced new products and services during lockdown such as WhatsApp Ordering for all our brands, introduced Asian and Pizza cuisines in our brand 'Call Chotu.'

Focus in Menu Planning

Praveen Shetty, Executive Chef, Conrad Bengaluru

"As wellness came back to reckoning, we were a step ahead to ensure a healthy way of lifestyle for our beloved guests, hence we incorporated special Aayush Ministry approved ingredient based menu. Our innovation did not stop, for the first time a Studio was launched with culinary fair where fresh food was cooked in front of the guest and served from the pan to the plate and this was named our very own 'Culinary Studio'.

We expanded our food and beverage to every corner of the city and delivered it the way the guests wanted, this was when from 'take away' we came up with 'Do it yourself kits' as that was being preferred rather than stepping out of their safety zone.

Moving from one to the next, our teams kept innovating ways to keep our guests more excited and thrilled, during 4th to 16th Nov, this was a culinary fair of four states from Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, where in our Chefs showcased their culinary arts in form of dining option at our restaurants and which was themed as 'Battle of Chefs'.

Sumit Sinha, Director of Food and Beverage, Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla

Health, immunity and safety are the buzzwords of the season and our 'Menu Planning' is based on primarily these three aspects.

Health

Our food menu engineering is based on locally and seasonally produced items. This way we ensure that we use freshest and best quality ingredients for our recipes. Clean eating isn't just restricted to the ingredients we choose but also the cooking style we adopt. Focusing on healthy cooking methods such as slow cooking, baking, braising, broiling, poaching, roasting helps food retain



"As wellness came back to reckoning, we were a step ahead to ensure a healthy way of lifestyle for our beloved guests, hence we incorporated special Aayush Ministry approved ingredient based menu. Our innovation did not stop, for the first time a Studio was launched with culinary fair where fresh food was cooked in front of the guest and served from the pan to the plate and this was named our very own 'Culinary Studio'.

Praveen Shetty, Executive Chef, Conrad Bengaluru

its nutrients and introduce very less toxins as compared to methods such as deep frying, microwaving or grilling (in certain cases).

Immunity

Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla has always focussed on immunity and health in our menu planning. Owing to that we had launched a Wellness Menu for our Health Club members last year. With immunity being the buzz word of the year, our all day dining restaurant Edesia has launched a full-fledged Immunity Booster menu. Our chefs went back to their grandmothers and brought back those kitchen secrets to curate the flavour of the season.

Few of our best selling dishes are- Ginger Idli, TCCB (Tomato, Carrot, Cinnamon & Beetroot Soup), Poached apple with couscous, Pesto Pasta with Pine nuts, Almond & Ginger Soup, Soya Milk with Almond Raisins and Saffron, Soya Smoothie with Papaya and many more. Each guest is welcomed with an immunity booster shot for welcome. We have also installed an all day Kadha station to wow the guests.

Safety

Sharing platters are a strict no in our menu engineering keeping in mind the safety concerns of the guests. We are focussing

on individual portioned meals such as Indian Thalys, Bowl Meals as far as menu engineering is concerned.

Sumit Gulati, Managing Partner and Owner, Spice Market

"To keep everything fresh. Monthly updates to the menu as per seasonality and changing customer preferences."

Essential Tips To Bounce Back In Business

Praveen Shetty, Executive Chef, Conrad Bengaluru

"Hilton has always pioneered and advanced with technology and its hotel chains across the globe were the first to bring in 'digital check in facility' to the hospitality world. As most of our industry partners have implemented and focused on 'touchless' experience, we too made our menu visible through the guests devices by setting up QR code facility across all our restaurants.

At Conrad, the focus is always on showcasing our local culture and tradition. Be in a Strawberry tart sourced from Ooty, Or Cheeses from Kodaikanal, Hand crafted edible chocolate arts right from the Vidhan Soudha to Cubbon Park. It's a way to promote the local culture traditions and promote locally sourced ingredients.

We firmly believe in using locally sourced ingredients at all our Food and Beverage destinations in our hotel. Mikusu being an Asian Restaurant where we source the finest seafood for sashimi from Japan. But all the vegetables right from pokchoy to mushrooms and greens are now being sourced locally from Ooty to Mysore.

'Tiamo', our pool side Mediterranean restaurant features healthy soups, salads and grills where it is sourced locally including the fresh seafood. Our breakfast at Caraway is completely focused toward the Local cuisine right from the Benne dosa, Thatteidli to freshly made Mangalore buns. Even our coffee is sourced from Coorg Kodugu peppercorn also known as Coorg. These Black peppers are used extensively in all our restaurants right from traditional Korrigassi to our Signature dishes in Mikusu. Apart from Black pepper, local ingredients would be many and we tweak our menus according to the season. Like the Avarekai beans in Bangalore during winters, we include it in our menus for stews, even as accompaniment for grills. Strawberry from Ooty also are a major inclusion in our dessert menu.



"It breaks my heart to see chefs and restaurants suffering due to the pandemic. However one of the things I've always loved about being in the F&B industry, is how its one large family. Although we are technically competitors, it still means we can work to support each other. If you are having difficulties paying rent, the same goes for another restaurant and you can lease out space as a cloud kitchen for their delivery business"

Mariko Amekodommo,
F&B Consultant and International
Culinary Expert

As the wedding segment was locally boosting up, and keeping the government guidelines in place. The magnificent 285 rooms and suites overlooking the magnificent Ulsoor Lake, renowned for the gourmet offerings it hosts 5 distinct dining venues, and one of the largest banquet spaces with venues spread across 27,000 sqft. complemented by a dedicated banquet porch for customized arrivals. The ease of doing business and flexibility offered by our team of experts has been key in the weddings space with all Hilton CleanStay and Hilton EventReady being in place."

Sumit Sinha, Director of Food and Beverage, Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla

Win the trust of the guests

Assuring your guests with right communication strategy with respect to enhanced cleanliness protocols and safety measures is the key to infuse confidence amongst your guests. This can be done through intelligently crafted messaging via press & social media, safety signage, E-posters etc.

Innovate with your offerings

Break the clutter and be creative

with the staycation, wor-cation dining experiences. Curate unique experiences with lucrative price point and flexible booking window to stand out of the crowd. For example, At Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla, we are offering Sajankoth, traditional seated dinner experience for the guests in the weddings to ensure safety as well as memorable experience. Our work from hotel concept also includes value added propositions such as food credit and gym access apart from regular wifi and tea/coffee servings.

Train your team members

Regular trainings and briefings of all team members is very crucial to keep them updated of the cleanliness protocols, service standards and also enables them to create a safe environment for each other as well as the guests.

Chef Vijay, Executive Chef, The Hideaway, Greater Noida



Ensure that we create confidence for our Clients and educate them on our Best Practices for Hygiene and Sanitisation both for Hotel / Resort Stays as well as Dining

Promoting Drive to Destinations where guests can travel in comfort and safety

Stay connected through this period with our Guests for assurance and confidence

Create Experiences for our Guests so that it is much more than just a Stay in our Hotels

Sumit Gulati, Managing Partner and Owner, Spice Market

- Quality and Consistency despite all adversities

- Improving Efficiency in business through technology and effective SOPs rather than cost cutting measures that may affect brand quality

- Observing micro trends in business to find opportunities for growth.

Mariko Amekodommo, F&B Consultant and International Culinary Expert



"We did not shut a single day this year, including Diwali night and used the lockdown as an opportunity to make new customers. We introduced new products and services during lockdown such as WhatsApp Ordering for all our brands, introduced Asian and Pizza cuisines in our brand Call Chotu"

Sumit Gulati, Managing Partner and Owner, Spice Market

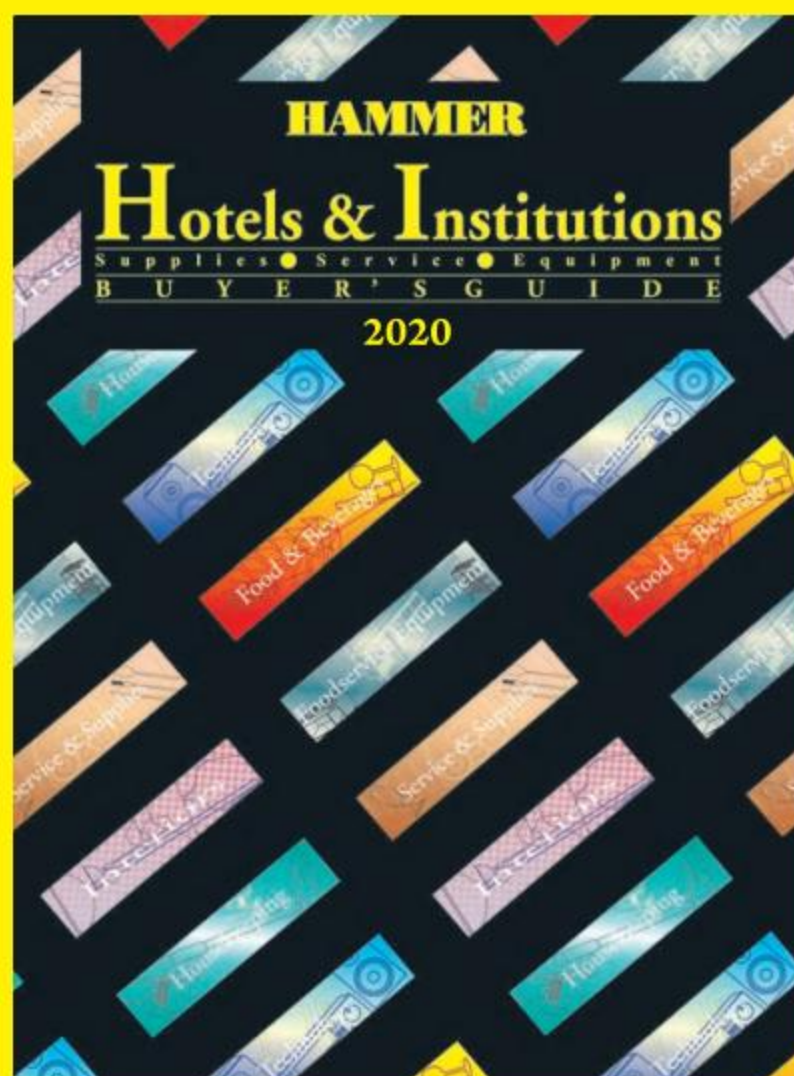
Offer Home delivery that provides an elevated restaurant experience at home. This includes innovative packaging and family style meal kits. I've seen Asian restaurants offering DIY hotpots that include a disposable aluminum pots and heating elements for making steaming pots of soups. I've seen Thali kits that include table size banana leaves for the authentic experience at home. In addition to giving your customers something new and different to try, it also makes their food more Instagram worthy, which just helps with virility and attracting new customers.

Customized drink kits (sans the alcohol) are becoming popular on many take out menus. Majority of customers enjoy a signature cocktail with their meal, but don't have all the ingredients at home. These cocktail kits allow the customer to try a signature drink at home. All they need to do is add their own liquor (or soda for a mocktail) and they have a high end beverage ready in seconds.

Investing in marketing and digital technologies. While it might seem difficult to spend money when business is slow, it's the only way people are going to know you are operational and see what you are offering. Make sure you are on 3rd party food delivery apps, you maintain good reviews and are optimized for high visibility. ■

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Rosewood Apartment Hotel - Gurgaon



Serviced to Hospitality

By Jhuma Biswas

Despite the temporary slump in India's hospitality industry due to Covid-19, one can say with confidence that in the near future, business travel in India would pick up its original momentum. In fact, not only business travel in India is expected to pick up its original momentum soon but it is expected to grow appreciably say five years down the line.

With the growth of the business travel, the serviced apartments too have huge potential to grow in India's hospitality industry. Serviced apartment is a happening trend in the corporate hospitality sector. Serviced apartments can be described as fully-furnished accommodations which can be used for short-term and as well as long-term stays.

Good quality serviced apartments can give the guests a home away from home feel along with all the trappings of post-modern day hospitality, such as gyms, swimming pools, restaurants or bars.

Mostly, serviced apartments are used by those high-end and middle-rung executives of companies or conglomerates, whose work demands staying outside their home town for several weeks, months or more.

Of course, serviced apartments can be and are used by leisure tourists too for short stay purposes.

Sometimes decent serviced apartments can easily give a mid-market hotel a run for its money in terms of facilities offered. No wonder, it is being often seen in India that mid-market hotels and serviced apartment chains competing for the same set of clientele.

And of course, an average serviced apartment is likely to give the guests more space than an average hotel room and generally their rent is much more affordable to the companies (who are the most usual clients of the management of serviced apartments) than the rent at good hotels. No wonder, several hotel chains operating in India have entered the serviced apartment category.

Experiencing Rosewood

Take the case of Rosewood Apartment Hotels, which projects itself as one of North India's first organised and professionally managed serviced apartment chains. It commenced its operations in 2008. The company is now owning and managing

luxury serviced apartments at multiple locations such as Pantnagar and Haridwar in Uttarakhand, and Gurgaon in Delhi-NCR. Rosewood prefers to call its properties comprising collection of serviced apartments as apartment hotels.

According to a spokesperson of the group, every Rosewood serviced apartment features high quality personalised service amidst stylish and exceptionally appointed living spaces which are conducive to both living and working.

The company claims that its apartment hotels have large rooms with options of studio and one-bedroom apartments, with all the facilities of a luxury hotel property. Each large size apartment is fully equipped with a pantry and comprehensive modern amenities and facilities. The group claims that its serviced apartments are crafted with thoughtful homely touches.

Rosewood apartment hotels have an impressive list of clientele, which include companies such as Tata Group, ITC Group, Bajaj Auto, Ashok Leyland, Greenply, Hero MotoCorp and Saint Gobain, to name a few.

Rosewood has also added two new

luxury retreat properties to its portfolio; a wellness retreat in Bhimtal, Uttarakhand and a snow retreat in the Himalayas at Dhanachuli, Uttarakhand. The properties of Rosewood are The Rosewood Apartment Hotel Pantnagar, The Rosewood Apartment Hotel Haridwar, The Rosewood Gurgaon, , The Rosewood Bhimtal, and The Rosewood Dhanachuli.

Located at a height of 8,432 feet, Rosewood Dhanachuli Retreat is surrounded by aromatic cedars and conifers, offering luxurious accommodation with mesmerising skylines of the Himalayan range.

The property comprises two and three bedroom suites. The spacious bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms are spruced with detailed woodwork, traditional rugs and commissioned furnishings. The private balcony offers spectacular views of the mountain range and rockeries, which can be best enjoyed with a cup of tea, coffee or in-room dining.

Rosewood in Pantnagar

Serviced apartments do have the possibility to gain popularity in small towns of India too provided they are frequented by business tourists. Here we explore Rosewood Apartment Hotel Pantnagar. The apartment hotel with 64 well appointed & furnished studio & one bedroom apartments offers 24-hour concierge and check-in facility. Here the guests can cook their preferred meals in the fully-equipped kitchen and eat in the comfort of their living area.

At Rosewood Apartment Hotel Pantnagar, the rooms are demarcated into four segments. They are Studio Apartment, Deluxe Studio Apartment, One Bedroom Apartment, and Deluxe One Bedroom Apartment.

The beautifully-appointed studio apartments offer integrated living and dining areas, plus a modern, well-equipped kitchen. The Studio Apartment has a floor area of 310 sq ft whereas Deluxe Studio Apartment has a floor area of 360 sq ft.

The One Bedroom Apartments in this hospitality property are ideal for guests with small family units. Each of these residences is beautifully appointed with separate living, dining, kitchen and bedroom areas, as well as en-suite bathrooms. Guests with large family units would find much comfort in the Deluxe One Bedroom Apartments. All of these are luxuriously appointed with spacious separate living, dining, kitchen and bedroom areas with en-suite bathrooms.

Hyatt Announces Launch of Hyatt Delhi Residences

Hyatt today announced the launch of Hyatt Delhi Residences in New Delhi, India. With an all-new luxury experience curated for the discerning traveller, Hyatt Delhi Residences include 124 well-appointed apartments, divided into 70 one-bedroom, 42 two-bedroom and 6 three-bedroom apartments, and 2 two-bedroom and 4 three-bedroom duplex townhouses, with spacious interiors paired with Hyatt's signature service excellence.

Located at the Aerocity, Hyatt Delhi Residences provides easy access to both New Delhi and Gurugram. In close proximity to cultural, recreational and business hubs in the city, Hyatt Delhi Residences will offer the best of comfort and luxury, ensuring guests feel at home while travelling on work.

Residences

Guests can choose from one, two and three bedroom apartments, or from two- or three-bedroom duplex town houses. The 124 apartments and townhouses are fully-serviced, fitted with elegant wooden flooring, practical kitchen & bathroom amenities and walk-in wardrobes, and provide views of the runway, the pool and lush green lawns.

Dining

Guests can also enjoy artisanal dishes at AnnaMaya – a 24/7 European Food Hall, eclectic gin-based cocktails at Juniper Bar, the best of modern Cantonese food at The Hong Kong Club, and the bespoke eatery Soul Pantry which serves nutritional flatbreads and locally sourced grains.

Facilities & Services

Hyatt Delhi Residences provide guests with a wide range of facilities to make their stay comfortable and convenient from check-



in onwards. Residents can avail the exclusive check-in service and a direct in-room check-in if they're arriving late. All apartments are fitted with advanced fire safety equipment. All rooms have key card-operated entry and exit points, peephole doors, sprinklers and smoke alarms, video surveillance, emergency guide, evacuation floor plans/fire exits. Residents will also be able to avail various amenities which include 24-hour in-room dining, valet and self-parking, executive business services, healthcare facilities, multilingual staff and much more.

Location

Hyatt Delhi Residences is strategically located between Delhi and Gurugram business districts, and provides guests with the opportunity to travel across both cities with ease. With close proximity to the airport, it is also well connected to other parts of the city through the Aerocity Metro Station. Guests can easily visit some of Delhi's renowned restaurants, shopping hubs and many local sites which are located in the vicinity.

Wellbeing

Residents looking to rejuvenate and unwind after a long day at work or travel, can access Hyatt Delhi Residences recreational facilities like the fitness centre, spa and the swimming pool.

The One Bedroom Apartments are spread across a floor area of 520 sq ft each, whereas Deluxe One Bedroom Apartments are spread across a floor area of 580 sq ft each.

Some of the facilities offered at Rosewood Apartment Hotel Pantnagar are in-house vegetarian restaurant, travel assistance service, Wi-fi facility, laundry facility, doctor on call facility, complimentary gym service, business centre, swimming pool, conferencing & banqueting facility among others. Needless to say each of the property's guest room is equipped with

individual split air-conditioners.

LCD colour television with multi channel cable connection, DVD player, well equipped kitchen with crockery & cutlery, refrigerator and tea/ coffee maker in each room, microwave and induction cooking range are some of the other amenities offered at the furnished studio & one bedroom apartments of Rosewood Apartment Hotel Pantnagar.

Here it deserves a mention that both Rosewood Apartment Hotel Pantnagar and Rosewood Apartment Hotel Haridwar have both been awarded multiple times by Tripadvisor.

Transportation and Holding Solutions

ScanBox supplies 'hot and cold transportation and holding solutions' for a variety of commercial kitchens including a star-rated Michelin restaurant, hotel establishments, catering companies, hospitals or even airline catering companies around the world.

ScanBox Banqueting and Catering carts have been manufactured in Sweden for the last 25 years. The company adheres to the highest standards using the latest



Scandinavian technology for the production of holding and transportation carts. The units are built around the needs of the busy chef whose main aim is to be efficient in the kitchen and most important of all, is to deliver quality food at the right

temperature every time. The focus on ergonomics, safety, heavy duty operations and ease of operation is unrivaled.

ScanBox is the perfect robust and yet lightweight unit for transporting food products, whether hot, cold or ambient. The product is designed around a flexible and modular concept. This allows for a wide product line, beyond what is found in the market present. The units are up to 50% lighter in weight than any other commercial hot-box in the industry which are generally made of heavy steel material.

The design is aimed at producing a versatile and lightweight product range using two strong components – anodized aluminum on the inside and plastic laminate reinforced by excellent impact-resistance fiberglass material on the outside. ScanBox units are therefore easy to transport and maneuver in any indoor or outdoor situation.

The units work on a 'single-phase' electrical connection, which means the units can be used in remote areas with ease. In addition, the 30mm insulation holds the temperature, without the need for electricity, for up to 5 hours.

ScanBox have paid attention to the exterior aesthetic of their product which comes in various colour options. Logos and special designs can be added.

ScanBox

paul.micallef@scanbox.se

Hospitality Linen

Home Comfort Texo Fab is a leading manufacturer and supplier of Bed and Bath Linens to Hotels and Hospitality Industry in India. The company has made its presence felt in this market with its quality furnishing



items. In sequence to constant expanding wings, the company entered into manufacturing and marketing quality Bed and Bath Linens under its brand name Home Linen. It has been catering to the ever-growing demands of the Home Textiles and Bed Linen, in the domestic markets (Retail & Institutional segments). The skilled and semi-skilled work force under watch full guidance of management with experience well over 20 years, are constantly working hard to maintain the quality of product to be supplied to their esteemed clients across the country. The company range of product includes from Quilted Duvet, Pillows, Cushions, Duvet and Pillow Covers, Mattress protectors are to name a few.

Home Comfort Texo Fab

sandeep@homelinen.co.in

Indian Stone Deck Ovens

The idea behind a pizza stone is to distribute heat evenly across the pizza base & other baked items to make it more crisp & tempting. The porous nature of the stone used to extract the moisture & make it more & more crispier. Stone holds the heat for a long time therefore highly energy saving. Akasa's range of stone commercial ovens comes in five different models. Less of electricity is consumed. Elegant, compact with fine exterior steel finish, thermostatically controlled for better efficiency & accuracy. Special imported device incorporated for safety of the product. Ideal for pizzas, garlic bread, patties, cookies, cooking meat, fish or toasting the surface of lasagna and many more delicacies. Outer body of the ovens having double insulation, keep the exterior surface cool. It is also has been incorporated with new improved high temperature gasket to prevent heat dissipation. The ovens have see-through toughened glass for the clear inner view. Temperature goes upto 300 degree centigrade and the temperature of both the heaters can be set to different values enabling required grilled top and baked base. The ovens are equipped with high quality thermostat. The bigger ovens has temperature indicator dial. The ovens are extremely user friendly with clear indicators and easy to clean.



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Product Preview

Guestroom Supplies

Established in the year 1975, "Modern Cosmetic India" is recognized among the noteworthy manufacturer and exporter of a broad assortment of Hair Shampoos, Bathing Gel, Herbal Shower Gel etc. The company also deals in third party manufacturing and contract manufacturing of products. These products are manufactured with modern technologies and skilled workforce. Due to their optimum quality these are highly acknowledged by their clients. To cater the bulk order requirements of the offered products, they have developed a highly efficient infrastructure unit at their premises. All units are operated by experts, who are well-experienced and versed in their respective domains. Furthermore, the sound storage capacity enables them to keep ready stock to meet the bulk and urgent requirements of the clients. As a result of quality assured products and timely delivery schedules, they are able to build a huge client base, sprawling across the market. They also export products in Oman.

Modern Cosmetic India

moderncosmeticsindia12@yahoo.com



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A Passionate Hotelier

Wajeed Bagwan, General Manager, Oakwood Premier Prestige Bangalore

Wajeed Bagwan, General Manager, Oakwood Premier Prestige Bangalore has over 27 years of experience in hospitality in India and the Middle East, specializing in setting up and launching new star properties. Having worked with world-renowned groups including the Taj Group of Hotels, Oberoi Hotels & Resorts, The Leela Group and Radisson Hotels & Resorts. As a specialist in pre-opening and operations, Mr. Bagwan has an excellent record of accomplishment of efficiency, which includes functioning and capacity building style of management.

In an exclusive interview with **Sharmila Chand**, he talks about his working mantra and more...

What is the USP of your property?

Our unique selling point is that we are the only luxury hotel and serviced apartments in Bengaluru with modern facilities that include fully equipped kitchenette, spacious rooms, with three restaurants at one of the most sought out addresses, the UB City signature collections mall premises. We offer Dining options along with night life within the premises.

What are the green initiatives undertaken by the hotel?

Pollution control for air, water and light.
Introduction of non CFC equipment's for refrigeration and air conditioning.
Only bio degradable materials are being used for products used in the property.

Tell about the sustainable processes in your property?

All the guest rooms and public areas are extensively covered with CFL/LED lighting.
Use of water savers in public area washrooms and bathrooms of apartments.
Entire waste water is treated and used for garden and lawns.
We use Timers for major electrical equipments.

Your marketing strategy to promote the property?

We consider mainly digital marketing in the current scenario. Since recall factor is very crucial with the supply increasing. Our target audience needs to be constantly informed.
Radio and print media are other periodical modes we use to portray our property and offerings.

What distinguishes your property from others in the same bracket?

Prime Location
Largest rooms in Bengaluru

Availability of kitchenettes and top of the line home theatres in all rooms.

What would you say the 'Differentiating Factor' of your F&B outlets?

We have a rooftop restaurant with poolside seating with a panoramic view of the city.
"Ozaa", is our Mediterranean speciality outlet which is a niche and one of the only one offering this cuisine within our radius.

We have a "mobile bar Lounge" which is used as a mobile lounge access across outlets and rooms. This acts as a bar on wheels concept for our residents who wish to have this experience in-room or at a private space on the roof top.

Could you reflect on the plans and new initiatives you wish to undertake in your property?

We plan to take up renovation for our restaurant to introduce a new progressive Asian cuisine concept.
We will soon launch the Mediterranean and Grill alfresco dining restaurant on our roof top and are already ongoing with soft refurbishments of the suites.

What is the most crucial issue to tackle in the Hospitality industry today?

The demand for hotel and tourism has dramatically transformed this year due to the pandemic. Our guest's behaviour in hospitality has also subsequently changed. This change has affected significantly on the management and marketing activities of the hotels across the globe. Over the year, new hygiene & sanitation normal, new expectations and new technologies have been evident in the international hospitality market.
Therefore, guest's satisfaction is the primary concern when it comes to hospitality. With such demands, the industry must react appropriately

to see the demands are satisfied.

What do you enjoy most about being at the helm of affairs at the hotel?

Receiving an encouraging feedback from guests continually drives me to excel more in my deliverance towards guest's satisfaction and this certainly makes me feel at the helm of affairs at the Hotel.

What has been the most rewarding moment in your career?

The most proud moment in my career was when Cornell University - School of Hotel Administration offered me a scholarship award to attend General Manager's Program, which is a 17-day executive education program focussed on strategic operations.
I was actually the only fortunate Indian to have received this scholarship award.

How do you de-stress?

I generally prefer to go on long drives and have good enjoyable food, which certainly relieves my stress and makes me happy.

What is your working Mantra, your guiding philosophy in work?

Being a passionate hotelier, I always believe in doing things with my best intentions and ensure a win-win situation in the end.

One advice you would like to give youngsters aspiring to excel in Hospitality.

We learn a lot more things during this journey of our beautiful life, but we get very few opportunities to make use of those learnings in real life.
I believe hospitality definitely offers many of these opportunities to make you a great human being!

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