

# MYSTIC EAST

...an unexplored horizon

A bi-monthly magazine by HRAEI | Vol 3 | Issue 3 | November - December 2017



**COVER STORY**

## HIGH GEAR FOR SAFE FOOD

FSSAI is enforcing safety standards  
at eating places at a war footing



A photograph of a man in a light blue shirt holding a young child in a yellow shirt. The man is smiling and looking at the child, who is laughing joyfully. They are outdoors with a blurred green background.

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“

Surprisingly, the hospitality industry is growing at a faster pace as compared to recent years and has become a key sector to increase foreign direct investment (FDI) influx

”

Dear Fellow Members,

According to a report by Boston Consulting Group and Google India, the hotel industry will grow at 13 per cent to reach \$13 billion by 2020. Another recent report released by India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) says the hospitality industry is expected to create 13.45 million jobs by the next few years.

Surprisingly, the hospitality industry is growing at a faster pace as compared to recent years. It has become a key sector to increase foreign direct investment (FDI) influx. Last November, the unexpected storm of demonetization was a big blow to the sector, especially it hit the unorganized side hard. However, the organized hospitality sector recovered quickly due to its practice of digital transaction. The sector also looks as with the introduction of goods and services tax (GST) players from the unorganized side will make a move towards the organized one.

However, with growth we are going face new challenges too. Liquor ban in several states coupled with the law banning liquor near the highways has considerably affected number of our members. A lower GST rate would have also helped the sector. In addition, now we have to counter stiff competition from nearby tourist destinations like Singapore, Dubai, Malaysia, Thailand, and China-- places with far lower GST than ours.

**Sudesh Poddar**  
President, HRAEI

# MYSTIC EAST

A BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE BY HRAEI  
Vol 3 | Issue 3 | November - December 2017

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## THIS ISSUE OF MYSTIC EAST CONTAINS 56 PAGES INCLUDING COVER AND BACK COVER

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## SECRETARY'S MESSAGE



“  
It's time for  
modernisation  
because nowadays  
social media linkages,  
chat options and a  
host of new elements  
are required to attract  
tech savvy travellers

”

Dear fellow members,

In the age of Internet, we tend to make judgements about people or a business based on their virtual entity—a website or social media link. There is no doubt that it's a snap judgement, but first impressions count.

So how you present your hotel in the first few seconds will determine if your visitor stays or leaves. Some of our members have realised this 'virtual' truth and have decided to spruce up their home page. Few of them have realised the importance of a contemporary design peppered with easy navigability of the website to give it a professional look.

Some of them offer professionally shot pictures of rooms, restaurants, poolside views and other facilities of their hotels. Sometime special offers are placed on the homepage to grab attention of a prospective guest.

But in most cases these websites have a rudimentary design. We urge our members to get to the next level. It's time for modernisation because nowadays social media linkages, chat options and a host of new elements are required to attract tech savvy travellers. As a large number of bookings are made online or through aggregators this has become an imperative.

These can help create a strong brand, allow a greater exposition of your property worldwide, drive sales, create and maintain better emotional links with customers and also provide the perfect tool to interact directly with them. The stronger the emotional connection a customer develops with your hotel or brand, the more chances there are of that customer coming back to you. Never forget that for hotels, customer retention is one of the main factors that will guarantee its success.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pranav Singh'.

**Pranav Singh**  
Secretary, HRAEI

# Cover Story

November - December 2017

# 26

## HIGH GEAR FOR SAFE FOOD

The central food regulator has become proactive on ensuring safety and high standards in the hospitality industry



# 7

### NEWS

Impact of high GST on hotels and restaurants

# 9

The new member of Managing Committee of the Hotels & Restaurants Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) for the year 2017 - 2018

# 12

The Legendary The Park, Kolkata, turns 50



# 14

Liquidity, the new digital platform for alcoholic beverages

21

▪ **NEW TRAVELLER**



We expose five myths about millennial travellers from budgeting to couch-surfing

33

▪ **VIRTUAL RESTAURANTS**



A new concept of kitchen chains has become the new sunshine sector in the F&B space



41

▪ **EVOLVING WORKPLACE**

Companies are creating a progressive culture in the global hospitality industry



46

▪ **VIRTUAL RED CARPET**

Online inventory distribution technology must be embraced by all to attract new age customers



50

▪ **ENCHANTING ANDAMAN**

These wildly exotic group of islands is a heaven for adventure tourists

# IMPACT OF HIGH GST ON HOTELS



**I**NDIA'S restaurant industry and food lovers seem pleased to be leaving behind a choppy year, bogged down by demonetisation, liquor ban and GST roll out

The country's Rs3 lakh crore (\$47 billion approximately) food services market suffered policy hurdles throughout the year—from liquor bans to the impact of a new tax regime. Yet, the market also saw the launch of new gastronomic delights, exciting food fests, and state governments taking steps to boost the sector, restaurateurs and industry experts told Quartz.

The chaos began in the summer with the ban on the sale of liquor along the country's highways.

Starting April 01, following a 2016 supreme court order, restaurants and hotels were barred from serving alcohol within 500 meters of state and national highways. This caused an uproar as restaurants and bars saw business drop overnight. Brokerage firm CLSA had estimated losses of up to Rs20,000 crore (\$3.01 billion) for states from the sale of liquor alone. The court's decision was, however, relaxed five months later in August.

Yet, the ruling left its impact.

“This has to be one the most challenging year's witnessed by the hospitality industry,” said Riyaz Amlani, president at the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI). Amlani, who also owns Impresario Entertainment and Hospitality, which runs the Social chain of restaurants, among others, added that the highway ban “literally wiped out small businesses.”

Next, in July, restaurant owners grappled with the newly implemented goods and services tax (GST), introduced to simplify India's complicated tax regime. The GST set tax rates for restaurants at 12% and 18%,



depending on the availability of alcohol and presence of air-conditioners. Confusion reigned over the new slabs as consumer complaints surfaced on the internet claiming that restaurants were over-charging them.

In November, in its updated list of GST rates, the government dramatically lowered the tax rate on eating out to 5% (except for restaurants located in hotels and outdoor catering). Although the move did benefit diners, restaurant owners weren't able to take full advantage of the new rates. That's because the government withdrew the input tax credit (ITC), which essentially allows restaurants to claim an offset on the tax they pay on raw materials or inputs. The ITC accounts for between 3% and 4% of a restaurant's profits. With no ITC, "it has become more expensive to operate restaurants even as the lowered tax rate is welcome news for customers," explained Amlani.

However, the year will draw to a close on a positive note. The state of Maharashtra has finally implemented a law that allows retail establishments in the state to remain open round-the-clock, starting Dec. 20. "Maharashtra

has taken a huge leap in policy," said Amlani, adding that hopefully more states will emulate such a model.

On the other hand, consumers showed early signs of spending more on eating out after the double whammy of the November 2016 note ban and the GST. The second half of 2017 saw firms such as Westlife Development, which runs McDonald's in south and west India, and Jubilant FoodWorks that manages pizza chain Domino's, post good numbers.

"The worst is behind us," Pratik Pota, CEO, Jubilant FoodWorks, told

**The country's  
Rs 3 lakh crore  
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the year**

The Economic Times newspaper earlier this month. In May, the firm announced that it would slash costs by shutting down loss-making stores. In its earnings for the quarter ended Sept. 30, Jubilant, which also operates Dunkin' Donuts in India, registered a net profit of Rs48.5 crore, a 124.7% jump over the same period last year.

"From a macro perspective, we believe consumer sentiment is steadily improving," Amit Jatia, vice-chairman of Westlife Development said.

Meanwhile, the country's top chefs continued to open restaurants for experimental Indian diners.

In cities like Delhi and Mumbai, they brought more regional Indian food to the mainstream. O Pedro, a Goan restaurant backed by Sameer Seth, Yash Bhanage, and Floyd Cardoz—the trio behind the Bombay Canteen—opened in Mumbai. In the national capital, Manish Mehrotra's much-acclaimed Indian Accent announced a reworked menu. Delhi also saw the opening of Jamun, a regional Indian cuisine restaurant, backed by entrepreneur Rakshay Dhariwal.

"We've had too much of a culture of multi-cuisine and pan-Asian...So I think you're going to see this whole shift to projects focussed on regional food and that do it well," Nachiket Shetye, founder, Cellar Door Hospitality, a culinary consulting firm, told Quartz.

Shetye also points to the popularity of flea markets, grub fests, and organic farmers' markets as one of the top trends that will trickle into 2018. In Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru, small dedicated entrepreneurs are bringing fresh produce from nearby farms to weekend flea markets. People are also going back to indigenous grains such as ragi, jowar, and bajra, Shetye added. "It isn't just about the quinoa anymore."

Source: Quartz India



# THE MEMBERS OF MANAGING COMMITTEE, HOTEL & RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION OF EASTERN INDIA (HRAEI), 2017-2018



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# THE PARK TURNS 50

**T**HE Park hotels, the iconic landmark of Kolkata (nee Calcutta), just turned 50. The golden jubilee of the pioneer of luxury hotel chains in India celebrated the milestone with elan, kicking off celebrations with 50 hours of partying at its flagship property in the city.

The late Jit Paul and late Surrendra Paul started Apeejay Surrendra Group's first hotel The Park, with 150 rooms on fashionable Park Street in Kolkata in November 1967. This was followed by one in Vishakapatnam

(1968), another in Delhi (1987).

Priya Paul, the current chairperson of Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels, and the daughter of Surrendra Paul, joined the company after graduating from Wellesley College (US) as a marketing manager at The Park New Delhi. She became Acting General Manager in 1989 and succeeded her father Surrendra Paul as Chairperson of the hospitality division of Apeejay Surrendra Group in 1990.

Ms Paul said, while the celebrations took off, "I never thought when

I started working with my father (Surrendra Paul) that The Park would become this fantastic hotel that has changed the way hoteliering is seen in India. I want to thank my family for supporting that idea and letting me just create and be free and wait sometimes patiently for those returns. I am happy to have started this celebration in Calcutta because November 1 is the birthday of The Park, Calcutta. My parents would have this fabulous party every November 1, which many people would remember,



► The Park hotels just turned 50, kicking off celebrations in Kolkata with 50 hours of partying on November 1, featuring burlesque, EDM and champagne. Guests, flew in from across the world to celebrate the milestone

and they would invite all of Calcutta to come and celebrate. That's a fitting remembrance to start tonight with."

Managing director of The Park Hotels Vijay Dewan joined The Park in 1991. "Our strength is derived from our culture and values. From the late Surrendra Paul, we acquired the values of teamwork, fairness and fun. And from the late Jit Paul, the values of reliability, trust and integrity. These values are our source of guidance and inspiration. In 1995, under the leadership of Ms Paul (Priya), a new vision was created. Since then we have been able to establish ourselves as a hotel known for events, entertainment, food and unique ex-

periences," said Dewan.

One of The Park's greatest strengths has been design, with each hotel reflecting the city it is set in. Ms Paul said to The Hindu, "Location drives the art and design. Hyderabad to me is all about spicy food and jewels. So the hotel reflects that. When we opened in Bangalore the tech boom was happening, so we played with a lot of colour. Chennai's property was set where the old Gemini film studio once stood. So that drove the design there. I am also a collector of film memorabilia, so I enjoyed putting that hotel together." The Park Chennai happens to be a member of Design Hotels, it is carved out of the

historic Gemini Film Studios.

With eight hotels in total belonging to The Park collection, six are in India's major cities and two are in the resort destinations. This year, sees the ninth Park hotel opening – The Park Mumbai. What's more, the brand is launching a mid-market design hotel concept, called Zone By The Park, with 17 properties in the pipeline slated to open in the next three years.

In an age of disruptors like Airbnb, Paul says they work hard on keeping things fresh as she believes that hotels have to be happening, global spaces. She's indeed built a colourful legacy that looks fresh and flourishing after five long decades.

# LIQUIDITY, THE NEW DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

**R**EVOLUTION is what has been the driving force in society for decades now, it is the concept, based on which our world today is being formed.

With due advancement since the turn of this millennium; there have been revolutions, on large scales, which have essentially transfigured the world we live in. Multitude of industries across the world as well as lifestyles, hobbies, passions and aspirations have all changed with this revolutionary spirit which man contains.

It is with this honest spirit, that we “Liquidity” have embarked upon our mission to transform the language of the food and beverage industry, on an unprecedented scale and in a non-pareil manner, a manner so lucid and subtle in its true essence yet so efficient in its operations as has perhaps never been witnessed before.

The locus of the idea is to provide a digital platform for facilitating the ordering of a vast range of alcoholic beverages complemented by a selective range of food items from different outlets that will be listed on our platform. It has a unique concept at its foundation however.

The ordering of the alcoholic beverages will take place on the basis of a demand-price algorithm which we have developed and further improvised upon and perfected for the fluctuation of the prices of different drinks at different outlets in accordance with the increase or decrease in demand for that particular drink at that particular outlet on that particular date.

It gives ease of use and comfort to the consumer given the fact that it enables one to make an order to be



consumed at the time they schedule at the outlet they desire and helps in table reservation on the busiest of nights. It is a two way street though, where the outlet is guaranteed the amount of business as per the quantity of the order even before the customer arrives there.

At the click of a button, the consumer can compare the prices at all listed outlets for any drink of their choice.

The outlet can levy prime-time charges for their busiest and most business-generating hours which can contribute greatly to increased profit margins for the outlet which makes our app a lucrative proposition for them.

With our app, no more will the consumer have to pay the unjustified menu prices at outlets and no longer will the outlet have to struggle to get rid of their bumper stock solely due to their high pricing.

On the contrary, it allows the member establishment to extract higher profits on drinks which are high in demand yet low in stock.

It is a win-win situation for both sides, all of it for nothing more than a simple download for the consumer and the signing of an enlistment form for the establishment.

Join hands with us, as we give our industry the change it deserves.

# FSSAI TO PRESERVE INDIA'S CULINARY HERITAGE



**F**OOD Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the government agency entrusted with the task of enforcing food safety and hygiene standards in the country, has embarked on a comprehensive initiative involving general public, stakeholders of the food and culinary industry and business and industry in the country, to digitally document the cuisines of India. This was announced by Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI in the sidelines of a national conclave on 'Indian Food Culture' organised by FSSAI in collaboration with YES Bank Global Institute in Delhi.

Speaking to media, Agarwal said that the idea is to create a repository of Indian recipes and get them validated by eminent chefs in the country

and then take it to the people through a digital 'FoodCast'. The purpose is to rediscover, revive and preserve some of the lost heritage of India in food. The FoodCast, Agarwal said will help people choose the right recipes based on the seasonal vegetables and food ingredients available in the market.

Later speaking to HospitalityBiz, Agarwal said that FSSAI will involve leading chef associations in the country as well as use "crowd sourcing" of recipes to create large repository of recipes on the platform. State governments as well as Tourism development corporations in different states are also asked to contribute to the repository, he added. "Currently, we have a small database of 200 recipes only. Objective is to make it as com-

prehensive as possible," he said.

Preeti Sinha Senior President, Yes Bank, and Global Convenor of Yes Global Institute said that preservation of food culture is part of the nation building exercise that the bank want to be associated with. Yes Global Institute had earlier partnered INTACH in Heritage Management and Heritage Walk as part of promoting India's rich culture and heritage. "We feel that India's food heritage, its organic nature, geographic indications are largely untapped. By promoting food culture, we want to encourage more entrepreneurs to set up businesses around Indian food and create livelihood opportunities for many in India," she said.

Source: Hospitality Biz India

# IN FOCUS

The 56th Annual General Meeting of the Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India was held at The Park, 17, Park Street, Kolkata-700016 on Wednesday, August 30, 2017. This included the presentation of the audited Balance Sheet and the Income & Expenditure Account for the period from 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. The meeting was followed by high tea at the venue



► The Annual General Meeting of HRAEI at The Park, Kolkata





► Members at an informal discussion during the tea break



► Mr Sudesh Poddar was re-elected as the President



► Mr T.S. Walia was conferred with the honour of President Emeritus



► The audited balance sheet of the past year was presented



► Members attend the Annual General Meeting

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# NORTH EAST INDIA NEEDS A LEG UP

**Vishwanath Goenka**, is the Chief Executive of the Guwahati and Bangalore-based VRS group. He has conceived and pioneered business into hospitality, agriculture and real-estate sectors. He was four time President of Hotels & Restaurant Association of Assam, and a senior member of HRAEI. He is also a founding and a previous board of director member of Guwahati Stock Exchange and a Board Member of Assam State Agriculture Marketing Board and President, Lions Club of Guwahati. Recently he spoke to **Mystic East** regarding the scenario of hospitality business in the North East India.

## What's the situation of hotel business in Assam and North Eastern India?

The Supreme Court order banning sale of liquor along national and state highways affected several bars and restaurants in Assam and North East. For years most of these have been operating by the highways. Many of the associations, including ours, had appealed to the apex court to relax the verdict so as to revive the business.

The second issue is that roads in the region requires improvement for conducive growth of tourism and hospitality in the region. The roads need to improve in the entire region. The Golden Quadrilateral of National Highways cover only a part of the North East. The third issue is a proposal that Guwahati can be turned into an airline hub with facilities for night parking for airplanes. International flights could take off from Guwahati. Bangladesh, Myanmar, China and South East Asian countries are close to this city. Flights from Delhi and Kolkata can be routed in the beginning. This may take time, but in the long run it will help development of tourism in the state and the region.

## In recent times, five star hotels have come up in Guwahati. Many more are coming up. But is there a market for all these?

Till now, there is only one five star hotel--Vivanta by Taj, Guwahati. Radis-



son Blu, though categorised as a four star property, its amenities are almost as good as a five star hotel. Since there was a vacuum in this area of hospitality they are apparently doing good business. One more--Novotel--is coming up. But I don't have the exact idea of the business they are doing. You have to talk to them for this information.

## What's situation of three star hotels?

These hotels are doing excellent business. Many new hotels are coming up in this category as there is a huge opportunity for them. They cater to a growing number of business travellers and tourists in the area. Of late, travelling HAS increased in North East India. The area is more or less peaceful now and there has been good publicity about the positive vibes. All these are drawing more tourists in the region.

## Do you think special incentive schemes like the now defunct North East Industrial and Invest-

## ment Promotion Policy (NEIIPP) would have helped to further improve the situation here?

The North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy (NEIIPP), introduced in 2007. It was supposed to have played an important role in positioning North East as a viable and competitive investment destination for the hospitality sector. Incentives and subsidies--on fixed capital investment and working capital loan, exemption of excise duty and reimbursement of insurance premium--were to be available for 10 years.

Although the scheme was supposedly valid up till 2017, on December 1, 2014, the department of industrial policy and promotion at the Centre had issued a circular, suspending the registration of new units under the scheme. Subsequently, on December 5, the ministry clarified that the scheme was neither cancelled nor withdrawn. So, the policy will be applicable for ongoing projects.

The policy has played an indispensable role in positioning the Northeast as a viable and competitive investment destination. More than 100 hotels have been set up in the north-eastern region since the scheme came into operation and several hospitality projects are in the pipeline.

We urge the government to revoke this suspension at the earliest and dispel any ambiguity over continuation of the scheme.

## SURVEY

# Myths around Millennial Traveller

We expose five myths about Millennial travellers from budgeting to couch-surfing. It's no secret that Millennials love to travel, and their wanderlust and spending habits are redefining the world of travel. Also known as Generation Y, Millennials are typically defined as young adults born after the early 1980s. But are they really so different from Gen Xers or even Baby Boomers

**W** EGO.COM, a travel search site in the Asia Pacific and Middle East, recently came up with a report aiming to clear the air of profiles and descriptions of what some are calling the second baby boom generation – the Millennial Travellers.

Considered the next baby boomers, Millennial Travellers in the US alone will reach 78 million by 2020, and outnumber baby boomers by 18 million,” highlighted Rick Mulia, Chief Advertising & Sales Officer,

Wego adding that by 2020, spending by Millennials on goods and services will reach USD\$1.4 trillion, up from US\$600 billion in 2013.

To effectively reach this market, largely born between 1984 and 2004, Mulia says that travel marketers need to rethink their approach and be able to sort through, and go beyond existing myths. “Some travel marketers are doing a great job, but unfortunately more are getting it wrong,” Mulia said. “It’s not quite as simple as relying on a set of common, and rath-

er vague signals, including reliance on travel review sites, the use of meta search, mobile usage, social media and continuous connectivity.”

“Travel reviews are popular, however Millennials are far more influenced by family and friends when it comes to making travel choices, and don’t rely solely on review sites to make their decisions,” he continued. “Another myth is that Millennials prefer travelling solo, yet a 2013 BCG study found that Millennials enjoy travelling in organised groups, or



## ► Millennials travelling solo is rather an exception than a norm

with extended family or friends, so if your strategy is focussed on individual travel experiences, you could be missing the mark.”

“At Wego we advise our advertising clients to approach Millennial Travellers by focusing on a good mobile experience, integrating clever social media and ensuring the path to purchase is as frictionless as possible,” Mulia added. “Their content needs to cut through the noise, communicate with authentic messaging and create a seamless process from planning, booking and undertaking a trip.”

“Yet another myth is that Millennials are extremely budget conscious,” Mulia continued. “However the truth

is that they want what we all do; great value without missing out on those added comforts, which make a huge impression on them. In this way they’re actually driving changes in the way the travel industry caters to them already.”

“Starwood’s Aloft Hotel, for example, which is designed to appeal to the Millennials with the slogan ‘Style at a steal’, removed their lobby restaurant and business centre and replaced them with a Starbucks-style, pay as you go, beverage and snack bar.”

“Hotels are evolving to become more frequently ‘un-hotels,’” said Mulia. “They’re rethinking the bed/bathroom concept to appear less like

a hotel room, and more like a home away from home. The smart, compact design, appeals to their desire for great style, but at a budget price.”

Airlines too are especially targeting Millennials with Premium Economy seats, delivering an affordable, yet slightly more comfortable flight experience. “Wego has now introduced the option of searching Premium Economy airfares and invested heavily in developing the Wego travel app to ensure the travel planning and booking experience is seamless and intuitive,” he said. “No matter what, if you’re in the business of travel its imperative you consistently evolve and deliver fresh experiences that provide great

value, and approach your marketing strategies in the same manner.”

“Forget the myths, the Millennial Traveller is smart, informed, tech savvy and mingles with a lot of like-minded travellers. Their presence in the travel market is still developing and smart marketers will remain open to developing with them, by remaining flexible and responsive to fully meet their needs,” Mulia concluded.

Now here are five myths about Millennial travellers:

### 1. Millennials are extremely budget-conscious when they travel.

This is a common tag for Millennials, and it makes sense, given that this generation, just beginning their careers, is concerned about money.

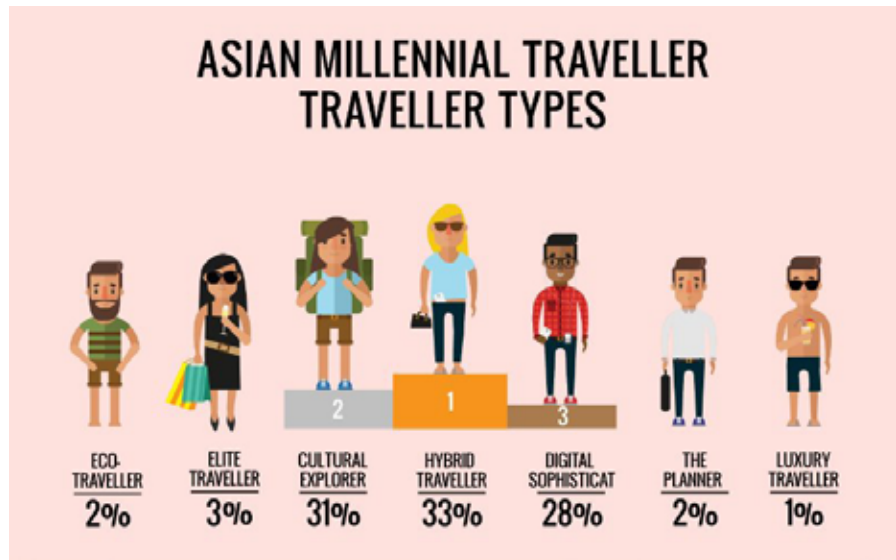
Many of them are bound by modest budgets, agrees Steve Lima, marketing manager of G Adventures, which is designed for Millennial travelers, “but we find that the typical Millennial traveling on a group tour with G Adventures spends, on average, \$2,600 per person before flights, and chooses trips that are 8 to 10 days in length. These are not ‘all-inclusive’ trips. Our younger customers are choosing to pay for local food, sustainable operations, and to tip local guides, whose incomes greatly depend on tourist dollars.”

Some Millennials will spend even more — a lot more, in some cases.

“We’ve had Millennials books safaris in Tanzania and boutique hotels in Bali,” observes Lisa Leavitt of Active Travels, a Virtuoso travel agent. “They just want to make sure they’re spending their hard-earned money wisely and enjoying memorable experiences.”

### 2. They only want to go to party destinations and hang with other Millennials.

It might seem that way from media reports and advertisements targeting



**This age group tread the world, affordably and in a immersive way, travelling to bucket-list destinations like the Taj Mahal, the Everest Base Camp and on jungle safaris in central India**

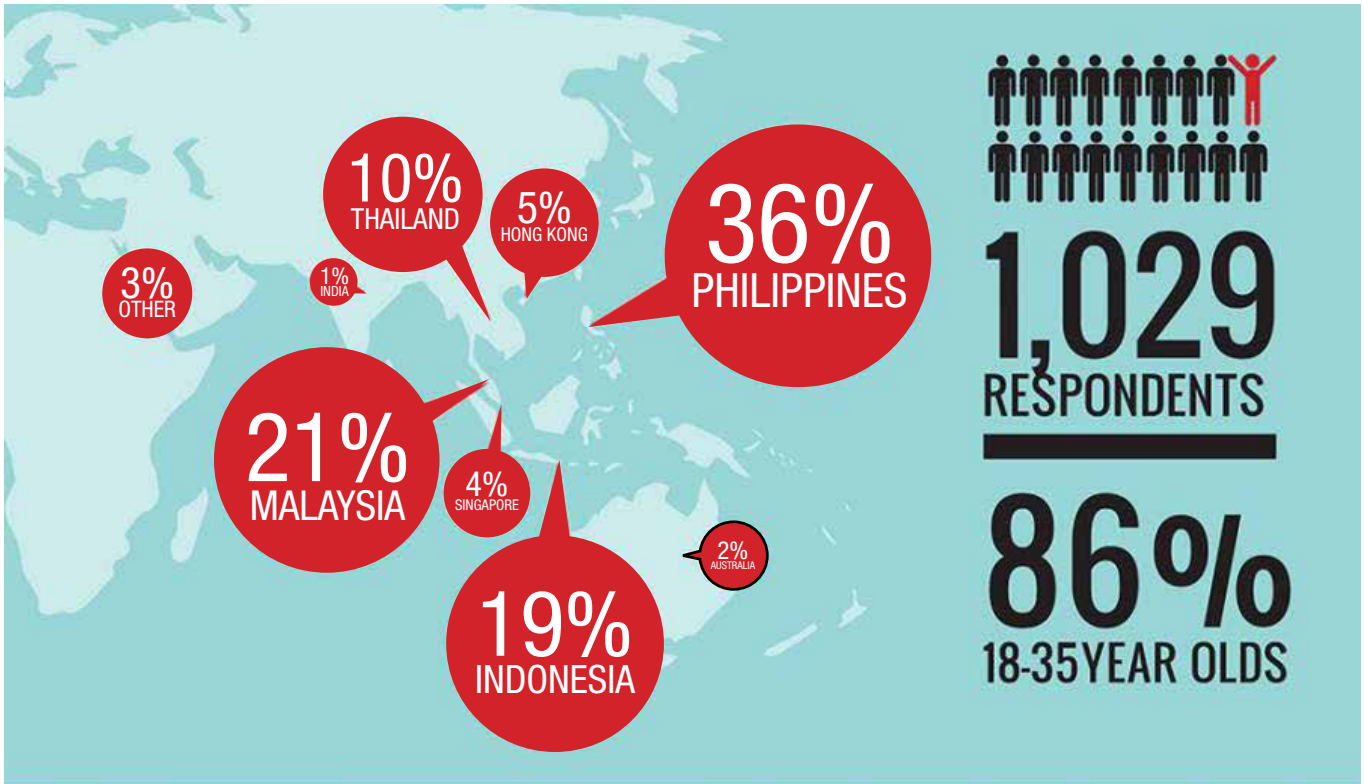
Millennials. But the truth is a bit different.

“Actually they strive for the most authentic experience, wanting to live like a local whatever destination they desire,” says Leavitt of Active Travels. “Many seek adventure and want us to get them there the most cost-effective way.”

It’s a similar story from Geckos Adventures, which organizes group adventure trips for travelers ages 18 to 29.

“We don’t do ‘booze cruises’ or similar types of trips,” says Leigh Barnes, North America regional director for Geckos Adventures. “We show this age group the world, affordably and immersive, traveling to bucket-list destinations like the Taj Mahal, Everest Base Camp, and on safaris in Africa and Bangkok. Take Morocco, for example. It is a predominantly Muslim country, and while not officially ‘dry’, there are rules around alcohol consumption and limited supplies of booze even in tourist spots. For Geckos Adventures, interest in Morocco is up 30% in 2017 among American travelers.”

While G Adventures sees some of their Millennial customers choosing



► Millennial travellers in Asia are not much different from their counterparts in other continents

popular party destinations, like Cambodia and Thailand, Lima says that “their motivations are well beyond booze and bars.” Their popular trips include physically challenging trips like hiking the Inca Trail, trekking the Torres del Paine “W” circuit in Patagonia, traversing the Druk Path in Bhutan, or ascending to the Andean “Lost City” in Colombia.

**3. They are obsessed with the Internet, so staying connected is their No. 1 priority.**

“It’s why we love this generation, because they’ll use all modes of social media — Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat — to post photos from their trip,” says Leavitt of Active Travels. “We get to follow every exciting moment of their journey.”



But not all of them fall asleep with their iPhones in hand.

“A number of them also just want to turn off, escape work, and get absorbed in the moment,” Leavitt adds. “This is especially true if they’re more active and spending their vacation biking, hiking and rafting.”

Lima says connectivity is important at G Adventures and that “to meet these needs, we are designing and upgrading digital connectivity on more and more of our vessels and overland vehicles, and improving our app to offer maps, currency conversion and add-ons. Our custom-built “Lando” vehicle, for example, offers mobile device recharge ports at every seat and Wi-Fi on the go for Millennials who are booking Overland Africa trips with G Adventures.”





► **One out of three Millennial travelers use a travel agent**

But like Leavitt, Lima sees an increasing number of Millennials turning off their devices and booking off-the-grid trips, such as sailing adventures, remote homestays and treks well off the beaten path. “Sometimes,” says Lima, “we all need a digital detox.”

**4. They prefer Airbnb and couch-surfing to traditional hotels or tours.**

Not true. Millennials, it seems, “are like everyone else these days, finding the best form of lodging depend-

**Millennials know budget doesn't have to mean basic. They want things and experiences that have a story attached to it**

ing on their needs,” Leavitt of Active Travels says. “If they're going with a big group, they'll ask about villas in Riviera Maya or all-inclusives. If they're headed to the Big Island on their own, we often seek out more residential Airbnbs or small inns off the radar. But if they're headed to Barcelona, Paris, or Amsterdam, they tend to want boutique design properties, preferably with a rooftop bar.”

Accommodations on Geckos trips, notes Barnes, are far from traditional. In addition to camping, they offer locally owned hotels and inns, guest houses and tea houses, as well as home stays.

Barnes adds that “Millennials know budget doesn't have to mean basic. They want things and experiences that have a story attached to it, which is why Airbnb has such appeal. It's the same for Geckos. Small group tours are a more accessible, authentic and personal alternative to independent travel.”

**5. Millennials prefer to book trips themselves online.**

Guess what? Travel agents and travel planners are all over Millennials, and the love is returned. This may be the most surprising fact of all. In a June 2016 report, Skift found that Millennials are most likely to use travel agents than any other U.S. demographic. The report found that 30% of Millennial travelers have used an agent within the last 12 months.

Lima says that “one out of every five Millennials booking travel with G Adventures is using a travel agent to help make their decision and find the best deals. The no-cost expertise and planning work of a travel agent is a strong motivator for Millennials, who are bombarded with a flood of apps, emails and paid ads on social media, and may find themselves overwhelmed by the choices.

Source: USA Today and Hospitality Biz India



# HIGH GEAR FOR SAFE FOOD

**FSSAI is enforcing safety standards at eating places at a war footing. The central food regulator has been very proactive with regard to issues like safety and standards, including labelling of packaged products and nutrient content, which has led to a sharp rise in the number of notices, orders and guidelines issued by it since 2015**

**A** SERIES of notifications and guidelines have been issued by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to safeguard consumer interest as part of the health ministry's plan to strengthen the regulatory regime.

The importance of maintaining the hygiene standards in restaurants cannot be stated enough. Hygiene in restaurants is not just essential to ensure the health and safety of your employees and customers, but also because it plays a major role in the perception of your restaurant. Customers want to dine at a clean restaurant that serves hygienic food. Hygiene is probably the second most important aspect of running a restaurant; the first aspect would be of maintaining food quality. Restaurant hygiene is also important for acquiring the FSSAI license needed to run a restaurant. Learn more about the

Food and Safety guidelines imposed by the FSSAI here.

Recently in news, we heard the shutting down of the 80% the stores of Fast food major McDonald's across Delhi-NCR. Amongst other reasons that have been pointed out by various news portals for the closing of Connaught Plaza Restaurants Pvt Ltd (CPRL) which runs the McDonald's franchise for North and East India, one of them was that it failed to secure regulatory health clearances to keep the business going. As a result of which the closing of 43 of 55 outlets of McDonald's took place in the region. The restaurants under CPRL failed to get the mandatory regulatory health licenses as it failed to maintain hygiene and store-level efficiency. So to avoid such an unfortunate incident the other restaurants should take this as a lesson and shall pay attention in maintaining hygiene and cleanliness at their restaurants.

This 5-step checklist will help you maintain the hygiene standards in your restaurants

## **1) Regular Inspection of Kitchen Areas, Dining Areas, and Restrooms**

It is a stated fact that every customer would want to trust a restaurant that follows the hygiene rules and has been successful in passing health and sanitation standards. You should always have a sufficient stock of cleaning supplies which will ensure that the restaurant is kept clean all the time and the hygiene standards in the restaurant are met. There should be regular inspection of the kitchen areas, eating and dining areas, restrooms by the managers so that they are successful in meeting health and hygiene requirements that have been set forth by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). The kitchen area must be properly cleaned



► **Perishable items need to be handled with utmost care**

to ensure safe food preparation and hygienic handling.

- All the surfaces that come in direct contact with food shall be cleaned after every task with clean towels that have not been used anywhere else.
- Equipment like Range, Oven, Deep-fryer, Freezer, Baking sheets, Tongs, and others shall be sterilized at least thrice a week.
- Frequently used kitchen items such as cutting boards, blenders, grills, and countertops should also be sterilized daily.
- Sanitize the surface areas, such as bar tops, table tops and chairs with which customer's come in direct contact with thoroughly at least twice a day.
- The floor near entrances and the exits of the restaurant shall be cleaned daily.
- Clean the toilet bowls, toilet seat and floor of the restrooms after every few hours.

**2) Guidelines for Staff for Maintaining Personal Hygiene**

It is very well said that cleanliness begins at home. When talking about maintaining hygiene standards in restaurants, one of the most important components is the training of the staff members about how to maintain personal hygiene at restaurants. Your employees can prove to be the most important factor for maintaining cleanliness and hygiene. For safe handling of the customers, the employees should be provided with clean clothing, proper gloves, hair nets and other safety and hygienic tools which are necessary for overall hygiene maintenance.

There should be regular training of staff members which shall include basic guidelines such as-

Good personal hygiene including proper and frequent hand-washing is one the best way to prevent food-borne illness. Always ensure that

the employees' hands are washed and thoroughly dried before starting work, between tasks, and before working with food products, equipment, utensils, and linens.

- \*Make a routine of changing uniform after every shift
- \*Sanitize your hands after every three hours while you are on duty.
- \*It is extremely important to wear proper head gear, hand gloves while handling food.
- \*Employees need to change gloves as they become soiled, torn and in between tasks
- \*Any cuts, wounds, or open sores on the hands and arms of restaurant's personnel must be completely covered with a waterproof bandage.
- \*Employees should be limited to wearing plain handed rings when it comes to jewellery. Necklaces, bracelets, earrings should be avoided.
- \*Employees should wear hair restraints such as hair nets, hats or

# Seven exciting destinations



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► **Regular inspection of kitchen areas and dining areas is a must**

scarves that can help in keeping hair fall under control.

### 3) Regular Sanitization of Kitchen Equipment

Maintaining hygiene standards in restaurants also plays an important role in the better functioning and longevity of your Kitchen Equipment. Regular maintenance will keep your expensive equipment in good functioning and working order. Follow a Strict and consistent maintenance schedule of your restaurants' equipment; you will be able to derive benefits related to both, reduction in energy costs and better quality food.

Only when your equipment is regularly cleaned, it can operate at its maximum efficiency. Make a consistent routine of sanitizing the equipment such as Oven, Stove, Grill, Baking Plate and others thrice a week. Educating your employees on the proper use of the equipment can help

in increasing the efficiency of your restaurants and also helps maintain the hygiene standards in restaurants. Your employees should be aware of the misuse of any equipment. The employees how to carefully use, clean and maintain your kitchen equipment.

All equipment and surfaces that have direct contact with food must be cleaned and sanitized thoroughly according to the prepared schedules to prevent the build-up of bacteria and helps maintain hygiene standards in restaurants.

Few of the guidelines are listed below to keep the equipment in good working condition:

- \*Switch between the cutting boards.
- \*Change sanitizing water at regular intervals.
- \*Regularly clean the trash bins.
- \*Regularly wash the preparation and lining areas.
- \*Make it a point to clean your

equipment from inside as well as outside.

- \*Cleaning Items such as wipes, brushes, mops, dishcloths, detergent, and sanitizer should all be stored carefully and away from food to prevent any kind of contamination.

### 4) Develop a Restaurant Hygiene Checklist

To maintain hygiene standards in restaurants, the manager of the restaurant should create a checklist of the specific cleaning duties and tasks that have to be performed by the staff members. The cleaning checklist of your restaurant will depend on the size of your restaurant.

For example, in a small restaurant, the cleaning checklist will be as simple as a list of duties printed on a single sheet of paper. But when it is a larger restaurant, there is a need of detailed list broken down by job cat-

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egories with a little of specifications. For instance, list out the separate duties for different sections like dish-washing area, cooking line, and food preparation area. Depending on the nature of your restaurant operations, it might be appropriate to include cleaning duties in a comprehensive list of tasks that must be performed during a shift.

A restaurant kitchen cleaning checklist mainly comprises of the tasks related to cleaning and sanitation that is done prior to the end of a shift or workday. It should be simply stated so that it can be easily followed by your employees. Checklists usually include check boxes or spaces for employees to confirm when tasks are completed. A restaurant cleaning checklist should not, however, be confused with a cleaning schedule. Restaurant cleaning schedules are more like detailed descriptions of cleaning duties that clearly specify what has to be cleaned, when and how it has to be done. Staff can refer to the cleaning schedule for any information which will help them in carrying out tasks on the cleaning checklist. However, at the end of everything, the key to keeping a kitchen cleaning checklist is consistency.

## 5) Ensure Proper Ventilation

It is imperative for any restaurant to have a proper ventilation system in place for the well being of your restaurant staff as well as customers, and plays an integral role to maintain the hygiene standards in restaurants. The maintenance of proper restaurant ventilation is essential for safe preparation and storage of food and also for the boosting of the health and morale of employees which will further enhance your customers' comfort. Maintaining proper restaurant ventilation is essential for the safe preparation and storage of food, the health, and morale of employees and the comfort of customers. The efficiency of restaurants' operations

can decrease in an unpleasant atmosphere filled with smoke, high heat, steam and excess moisture.

A restaurant kitchen has different ventilation requirements than that of the restaurant seating area. Either you can go with the traditional HVAC (Heating, ventilation and air conditioning) technology system or install a Demand Controlled Ventilation system. DCV system automatically senses the amount of heat, fumes and other elements in the kitchen and run only when it is needed that is when ventilation is required. The efficiency of a DCV system is the highest because it works only when it is needed, thus reducing operating costs.

The restaurant ventilation system should include features like Hoods, Exhaust Fans, Makeup air systems, Fire suppression.

Another reason why you need to maintain hygiene standards in restaurants is that restaurants with bad hygiene are very much likely to fail because no matter how much you plan to hide it, the news about poor hygiene can easily get out and earn you bad publicity and ultimately you might end up losing out on your customers.

Unhygienic food preparation can create an unhealthy environment and can upset your valuable customers. If your customers develop an impression about your restaurant that it isn't clean and hygienic, it is really difficult to change their perception. Proper hygiene in the restaurant would help you gain trust from customers. Dirty and disorganized things can bring the positive energy of your restaurant down. Ensure that the restrooms of your restaurants are in a well-maintained condition. They can prove to be a great indicator of how clean the rest of your restaurant is.

Therefore, keeping your restaurant dining and kitchen areas clean and maintaining the hygiene standards in restaurants are a big part of the success of the restaurant business.



## HACCP and Food Safety

1. Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) is an internationally recognized system for reducing the risk of safety hazards in food.
2. A HACCP System requires that potential hazards are identified and controlled at specific points in the process. This includes biological, chemical or physical hazards. Any company involved in the manufacturing, processing or handling of food products can use HACCP to minimize or eliminate food safety hazards in their product.
3. Awareness of food-borne illness is increasing and concern throughout the industry is driving the use of HACCP and HACCP based certification programs.



FUTURE

# VIRTUAL RESTAURANTS

A new concept of kitchen chains has become the new sunshine sector of the overcrowded F&B space, and have emerged as the major disruptors of an industry waiting for some much-needed innovation



► Such restaurants only exist online without any physical presence

**A**FTER the "Uberization" of food delivery in India, experts predict that more and more virtual restaurants will gradually evolve.

You just entered your house after a prolonged day at work, you are too tired to prepare supper and too exhausted to leave the house to fetch for food. You are hungry and wish to have a cosy dinner in the warmth of your house while watching your favourite TV show or making an assignment in your laptop. What would you do? Not to fret, because you have virtual restaurants as your saviour.

Virtual restaurants work on delivery-only concept; it only exists online and not physically. You have to place an order whenever you want and it will be delivered at your doorstep. Pan of Asia, Pao & Bao, Kadhai House, Box8, and Curry Me Up are among the few virtual restaurants that exist in India.

Inception of virtual restaurants concept transpired few years back, but it came into the lime light recently with most of the working professionals, who stay away from home and wish to have their meals in the comfort of their home or office preferring virtual restaurants as an alternate to dining out.

## An evolving trend

The concept of virtual restaurant is still at a nascent stage in India and is evolving slowly but gradually in the right direction. But virtual restaurants still have a very long way to go to get established and come into the foray of an organised sector.

Amit Raj, Co-founder, Box8 agrees that the baby steps taken so far are certainly in the right direction for virtual restaurants to become an organised industry. More standardisation and consistency over the years will fortify its position.

"Virtual restaurants have no physical presence and operate mostly from home kitchens or smaller garages, pro-



► A wide variety of food can be ordered from home by busy, tired diners

viding specialised cuisine to a smaller target audience. Most of them are unregistered and unlicensed, and unless they take the next step, I don't see them ever coming into the fray of the organised sector," says Pranav Rungta, Director, Curry Me Up Pvt. Ltd.

The recent decision by our Prime Minister, Narendra Modi to demonetise INR 500 and 1000 notes and yearning to transact digitally worked in favour of the virtual restaurants as most of the plebeians chose to order food home over dressing up and going out to dine as they found it to be an

added expenditure.

Deb Mukherjee, Director, Ceres Hospitality Pvt. Ltd., who runs Pan of Asia, Pao & Bao, Kadhai House says, "Our operations are highly technology driven in order to control costs while providing the customer with a top quality satisfying experience every time they order. Being virtual helps us to control our fixed costs and leverage on economies of scale thus creating a sustainable business model in the long term. Customers enjoy the no-nonsense approach of selecting what they want and when they want at a price

point which is comfortable for them."

### Challenges & opportunities

Choose any industry or sector and you will find few pros and cons in every business and virtual restaurants are no exception. It too has its own challenges and opportunities.

Virtual restaurants are not sit-down restaurants where one can go and experience the food and ambience, and this is one of the major challenges that virtual restaurants face. Mukherjee emphasises that since virtual restaurants are by definition non sit-



### ► Quick bites delivered at the doorstep

down restaurants and so it requires more marketing in the initial stages of launch. However once established it will be stable in terms of repeat customers as it is solely playing on the quality of food and delivery rather than ambience and location.

But he adds that they also enjoy a massive cost advantage in terms of 50% lower opex and 70% lower capex compared to a sit-down, which allows us to serve high end restaurant quality food at a great price point. Virtual restaurants target an addressable catchment area rather than being dependent on location specific footfalls and are much more scalable, due to flexibility of location and thus lower capital requirement.

It is arduous to built trust and credibility when it comes to virtual restaurants unlike sit-down restaurants, but not impossible. “It is humanely difficult to trust something that you can’t see or touch before buying and this is the biggest challenge. But there is no easy way around it, the only way one is going to establish trust & credibility is by consistently offering excellent

**It is humanely difficult to trust something that you can’t see or touch before buying and this is the biggest challenge. The only way one is going to establish trust is by consistently offering excellent product and service**

product and service and finally the word catches on,” explains Anshul Gupta, Co-founder, Box8.

Online ratings and reviews are another challenge which not just virtual restaurants face but all other sectors too. Every industry has to go through this scrutiny. Rungta says, customers think they can make or break the particular entities business by writing a good/bad review. For a virtual restaurant this virtual rating is the only thing people look at while ordering since there is no physical presence. If by chance there is a mistake by the restaurant, rectification is more difficult because the transaction is over. In a physical restaurant the guest can still be appeased by offering a discount or complimentary dessert. Many guests take advantage of this too and pass off lame excuses and threats of bad rating just to get freebies and discounts, which the virtual players have to bow down to.

However despite this there is great opportunity in this space because as indisposable income in the middle class is increasing in India, there is a drastic increase in business. Primarily now the mainstream restaurant industry in urban cities is becoming more of an outing rather than a necessity. The virtual restaurant space is slowly becoming requisite where a person comes home tired from work and orders in two – three times a week, adds Rungta.

### Funding & market size

Startups provide great opportunities for private equities and venture capitals as they are in the growth phase of their lifecycle and can multiply wealth very fast. The availability of risk capital for early stage startups has resulted in more and more qualified and experienced professions take up the entrepreneurial plunge, says Mukherjee.

On the contrary, Rungta feels that food-tech sector is not looking very lucrative to private equities and ven-

ture capitals. There was a huge boom in predominantly the non-food part of food tech which got huge funding and eventually went bust (non-food means – delivery, order aggregation which had nothing to do with the core basic which is manufacturing food).

“It is clear today more than ever that only the assets that have the capability to perform and deliver on a long term scale are worth the efforts, and that’s how the investors are also looking at it. The corrections and consolidations in the early stage has further fortified the refining scenario for them but the signs show they are still willing to back up the firm with a right balance of operational execution and unit economics,” thinks Raj.

Throwing light on the market size of virtual restaurants in India, Mukherjee says that the organised food services industry is stated to cross INR 2 trillion by 2020 according to various industry reports while the unorganised sector is estimated to be double of that. This points to a CAGR of 20% across the organised industry. The base of growth for virtual restaurants will be way higher than that given the relative ease of scaling up compared to standalone sit-down places.

## Food hygiene

Food safety and hygiene is one of the prime essentials for virtual restaurants to survive and sustain in the long run. Since customers cannot physically experience virtual restaurants like sit-down restaurants, food hygiene and safety becomes utmost important for its success and hence virtual restaurateurs must take critical measures to assure customers about the foods safety and cleanliness provided by them. maintain strict hygiene standards. The trick to ensuring hygiene and food safety lies in the training provided to all our staff starting from the kitchen to delivery personnel. Our packaging is secure and stable ensuring no spillage of

food during delivery thus removing the chance of contamination and arrives at the customer location hot and ready to dig into,” assures Mukherjee.

Following certain hygiene standards at the kitchen as well as buying fresh and clean products from the vendors is crucial. Also training the staff and promoting hygiene standards should be mandatory.

Rungta says, “We promote personal hygiene standards of our employees since in the end they will be making and packing the food so they are the potential source of contamination. We have a reliable

set of vendors who provide us with fresh supplies as this is the base of our food. Besides that storage and preservation of food is very important to us, as majority of food-related mishaps are because of stale food being served.”

There is no margin of error while running a virtual restaurant as we want the customers to have faith in us. At the outset, we have chosen a set of highly trusted partners (suppliers) after multiple stages of checks and from them we receive fresh stock of produce everyday which again is refined and checked. All our kitchens and stores are maintained at highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene. Chefs and support staff are trained well to work with food. Our packaging mechanism helps us deliver hot and fresh food right to your doorstep, informs Raj.

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## The future

With changing times and changing lifestyle of the consumer, buying behaviour too is changing. Virtual restaurants are gradually growing in India and are here to stay for a very long time. This does not mean that virtual restaurants will replace the sit-down and standalone restaurants. Both will co-exist.

Virtual Restaurants focuses only on the delivery part of the business which traditional sit-down restaurants don’t really specialise in. Virtual restaurants will slowly take over the delivery part of the business from traditional sit-down restaurants over time. People who want to eat out and enjoy the ambience of a sit-down restaurant will continue doing so, but people who want the same quality food at a much more affordable price point delivered to their home or office will pick virtual restaurants, says Mukherjee.

Rungta is of the opinion that virtual restaurants have a very limited reach primarily to the urban population who are tech savvy. It is not a billion dollar market. However with a growing middle class and the creation of new smart cities envisaged by the current government, we will see a large influx of people from rural to semi urban which could open up a huge opportunity for virtual restaurants.

Technology too plays an important role when it comes to virtual restaurants. With the government promoting digitisation, it is an added advantage for virtual restaurants as more and more people will opt to book food online.

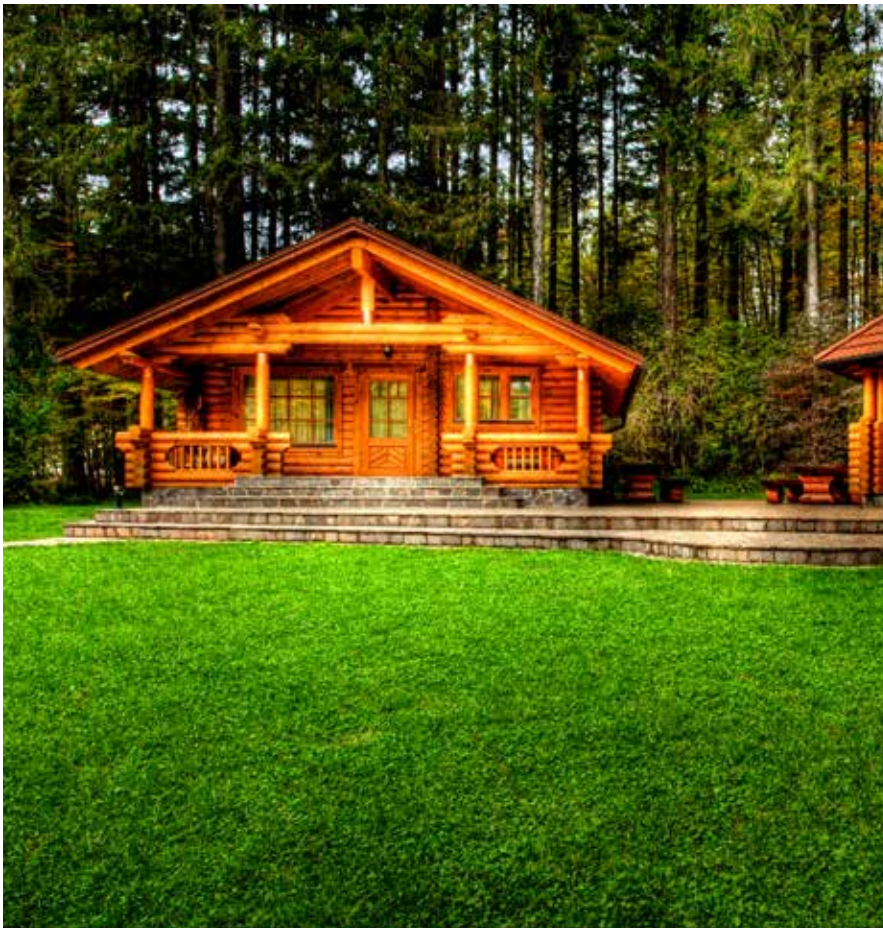
Technology is helping us manage multiple brands running out of a single kitchen much more easily and seamlessly. With the growth in digitisation of India, we are a major beneficiary, concludes Mukherjee.

Courtesy: Hospitality Biz India

ECOTEL

# HARBINGER OF GREEN

Taking inspiration from the first plant on earth — the fern — hotelier Param Kannampilly has been treading the sustainable path



► The Green Mantra inspires you to curb carbon dioxide emissions

**T**HERE was a time when India lacked good mid-market hotels. Today, the traveller is spoilt for choice, with so many brands crowding the three-star and four-star categories. With Ibis, Hyatt Place, Four Points by Sheraton, Keys, Holiday Inn Express and Lemon Tree spreading roots across the country, we certainly have a lot of stay options. But, for a hotelier, the dilemma arises — how do you differentiate your offering?

Very early on, Param Kannampilly, the soft-spoken, affable chairman and managing director of Concept Hospitality, found a niche with his Fern brand of hotels or ecotels as they are called. Everything in the Fern ecotel is built or created with a green mantra — from the core of the building which is run on sustainable energy platforms, and the chilling units to tiny details such as recyclable pens, jute folders or clothes hangers made of sawdust. India Inc may have made Corporate Social Responsibility a buzz word today, but at Concept, the slogan they promote is CER — Corporate Environment Responsibility.

Today, the pretty green frond logo



## ► Usher your clients into the lap of nature

of The Fern is travelling across India rapidly, with 33 hotels across the country and many more in the pipeline. According to Kannampilly, there's a lot of interest shown by hotel owners in tier-two and tier-three towns especially. By 2020, Fern will be adding another 18 ecotels with 1,500 green rooms, mostly in smaller towns.

### Serendipitous start

It was an accident of fate that brought the Burma-born, Indonesia-schooled Kannampilly (his father was in the diplomatic corps) into hospitality. After his Inter Sciences in Bombay, he wanted to become a dentist, and applied to Osmania University. He got a telegram saying he had been selected. "I kept waiting and waiting for further news, but there was none." Finally, he discovered that due to the Telangana

agitation, the dental faculty was in disarray and the fate of the course uncertain.

Since some friends were in catering college, he decided to join that in 1971, and stuck on to finish the four-year course. Then came a long and varied career in hospitality, spanning the Taj group, Spencer's, Leela, the Rahejas and a few independent hotel properties. In 1996, he decided to turn consultant and set up Concept Hospitality to manage hotels for other people. Restaurateur Dr Vithal Kamat took some stake in the firm, and Kannampilly joined the Kamats as technical advisor.

At that time, the Orchid Mumbai, a project by the Kamats, was in the development stage. "We were brainstorming and I said that if you are doing more than one hotel, we need to think of a concept that will last not

just a decade but through the next century," says Kannampilly. Various ideas were thrown up — could they look at a non-smoking hotel and so on, until they hit upon the environment-friendly hotel positioning.

The Orchid Mumbai, when it finally came up in Santa Cruz, became Asia's first certified ecotel. There were many firsts at the hotel, says Kannampilly, describing how an eco panel was created in all rooms to switch off lights that were not used, and an interactive TV spread the message of saving resources. "We brought in the first screw compressors, energy storage systems and so on," says Kannampilly. After that, he went about evangelising green buildings to his clients — among others, he was consulting for The Wall Street Hotel in Jaipur, Seasons Service Apartments in Pune, The Uppal in Delhi NCR.



► **Environment consciousness can help your brand stand out**

In 2009, he decided to buy back the equity stake given to Kamats and create his own brand Fern. “There were two or three reasons for the name,” he explains. “It was the first plant that existed on earth. Second, environment consciousness is a concern of everyone and the brand would stand out. Third, it was a two-syllable name with easy recall.”

Concept today has other brands in its portfolio — there’s Beacon, and

now with Nepalese billionaire Binod Chaudhary-led CG Corp investing in the company, there’s his Zinc in the mix as well. But it’s Fern that has been the clutter-breaking concept from Concept.

### **The Fern Style**

Global warming is the increase in the overall temperature of the Earth’s atmosphere. This phenomenon has largely been attributed to the rise in

green house gas emissions. India’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions rose by 58 per cent between 1994 and 2007 with the Energy sector contributing over half of the emissions-Ministry of Environment and Forests report.

Global temperatures are predicted to increase alarmingly and result in critical climatic changes, some of which we’ve already begun to witness. So it’s high time, we recognise the gravity of the situation at hand and



► **Harbinger of Green Hotels**

reduce our individual carbon footprints.

Meluha The Fern are sharing their pathway to a low-carbon nirvana with you- a few practical steps to cut carbon. Take these steps one by one and you could slash your bills while curbing carbon dioxide emissions: Where you save money, you'll be also saving the planet.

**Let there be light...**

Before you reach for the light switch, Open the curtains. Natural light is the best source of illumination. Its healthy and free too.

Our lighting choices can significantly save us several watts of energy. Choose Light emitting diodes (LED) or Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFL) over Incandescent lamps to substantially reduce your energy consumption.

**Natural lighting in the Lobby at Meluha-The Fern**

**Vampire energy guzzlers..**

Our homes are overflowing with electronic equipment, almost all of which will have a standby or sleep mode. These devices ranging from our cell-phone chargers, televisions, gaming

consoles, DVD players, set top boxes etc. are 'power vampires'. They guzzle energy even when they're turned off. Simply unplug or turn the main socket off to slay these vampires.

**Making life easier?**

Coffee maker, sandwich maker, mixer, grinder, juicer, hair dryer, hair straightener, hair curler, etc. .... All make our lives easier don't they? But let's ask ourselves do we actually need so many electronic devices?...Can we do without it?

**Chill out!**

Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed. Each minute a fridge door is open it takes around 3 energy hungry minutes for it to cool it down again. Also do not put hot food into a refrigerator since it leads to energy loss.

**Look at the sun**

Harness the power of the Sun by choosing to use solar-powered technology. Eg. Solar power banks, solar lighting, solar heaters,solar cooker, solar panels etc.

We'd be most glad to hear about your illuminating ideas of cutting carbon. So hit the button below to leave a comment.

**The world's best eco-friendly luxury hotels**

These days, going on a green break doesn't mean sacrificing the comforts which you've come to expect on a holiday of a lifetime.

Many hotels with five-star service are starting to place a greater amount of emphasis on sustainability in a commitment to reduce their carbon footprint and, ultimately, help the environment.

From foraging in the Swedish wilderness for leaves to brew your morning cup of tea, to relaxing in your own above-water villa in the Maldives, why not have a look at some of the incredible holidays you could take whilst still looking after the environment?

**1. The Whitepod Eco Resort, Switzerland.**

This resort, located in the Swiss Alps, offers the chance to sleep in luxurious pods in the middle of your own winter wonderland surroundings. The pods are low impact which means the utilise minimal water and electricity and only use renewable resources wherever they can. [whitepod.com](http://whitepod.com)

pod.jpg  
The Whitepod Eco Resort

**2. The URBN hotel, China**

The URBN hotel is China's first carbon neutral hotel and it has plans in store to reduce its carbon footprint even further in the future. The decor of the hotel is made from recycled or locally sourced materials and they also make use of energy efficient lighting and cooling systems. [urbnhotels.com](http://urbnhotels.com)

**3. The Hix Island House, Puerto Rico**

The Hix has become renowned for its environmentally friendly practices. The hotel uses solar panels to power both their electricity and hot water, they also use recycled water from the guests' showers and basins to feed the guavas, bananas and papayas growing nearby. [hixislandhouse.com](http://hixislandhouse.com)

[hixislandhouse.com](http://hixislandhouse.com)

**4. The Ramada Eco Beach Resort, Australia**

Undoubtedly one of the front runners in eco-tourism, the Ramada Eco Beach Resort does everything it can to encourage eco-friendly behaviour, from self-sustaining solar power to their very own on-site water recycling plant. The resort even offers the opportunity for guests to use energy monitoring systems in their eco-villas to monitor and adjust their individual consumption. [ecobeach.com.au](http://ecobeach.com.au)

[ecobeach.com.au](http://ecobeach.com.au)



## GLOBAL TREND

# THE EVOLVING WORKPLACE

Companies in the global hospitality industry are attracting and retaining talent by creating a progressive culture and evolved workspace

**T**HE workplace is experiencing a dramatic evolution as Millennials begin replacing Baby Boomers at an exponential rate. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2025 Millennials are estimated to represent three quarters of the workforce. As a result, there has been a disruption of traditional company culture that isn't exclusive to advancements in digital technology. In many companies, what began as a "water-cooler" culture is being replaced with a high-end cappuccino machine and meditation room. Workers now expect more comforts, more conveniences, and better opportunities for advancement than ever before. They also demand that their company of choice have a heart, give back to the community, and promote empathy and inclusion.

In exchange for an enhanced work environment, employees can sometimes expect to spend longer hours in the office and tied to a mobile device, albeit with a flexible schedule.

**Workers now expect more comforts, more conveniences and better opportunities for advancement than ever before. They also demand that their company of choice have a heart, it gives back to the community and promote empathy and is inclusive**

Largely employees once experienced an "in and out" office-based occupation, with formal dress in roughly a 9 to 5 environment. Now there is an expectation of a relaxed office culture featuring casual dress, good food, a social conscious, and fun.

Some changes we have observed in an office environment are as follows;

- Health and wellness programs, nutritional and chemical dependency counseling, yoga, massage, and acupuncture services
- Healthy living seminars, cooking classes, on-site haircuts, and stress reduction workshops
- Meditation rooms
- Flexible vacation and extended maternal/parental leave
- Subsidized dining facilities and in-house nap rooms
- Ergonomic workstations with standing desks and stability balls
- Paid gym and sports memberships
- Corporate community service days and donor gift matching programs



► Now there is an expectation of a relaxed office culture featuring casual dress, good food and fun

Tech and startup companies set the bar for the evolving expectations of today's workforce. This phenomenon has trickled down to other industries such as hospitality. We have identified three companies that have achieved an evolved work environment across the hospitality sector and as a result they are experiencing better retention and attracting top talent. This is noteworthy in today's labor market where tenures can be short and competition for employees is at an all-time high.

### **Hospitality Technology**

Squaremouth Inc. is a digital company that has achieved a unique balance

**In exchange for an enhanced work environment, employees can sometimes expect to spend longer hours in the office and tied to a mobile device, albeit with a flexible schedule**

of work and fun in their office. This emerging tech leader in the digital travel industry has a workforce of 75% millennials and a 97% approval rating from its employees. Squaremouth quickly identified that you don't always have to incentivize employees with money. It's the intangibles that build loyalty from millennials, a generation that average a one-year tenure with a company.

Some of the ways Squaremouth has created a favorable work environment are:

- Unlimited paid vacation each year
- Quarterly profit sharing
- Company-paid trips



► **Employees no longer want to stay cooped up in their cubicles; some tech companies have set the bar for the evolving expectations**

- Personal use of the company boat
- Weekly lunches and happy hours
- Sponsored continued education
- Casual dress
- Open office concept
- Beer on tap at the office

Squaremouth's Florida headquarters also features arcade games and a snooker table employees can use at their leisure. According to their website, Squaremouth employees enjoy a relaxed corporate atmosphere where one can sit shoeless at his/her desk. Colleagues are also seen as friends, the office is fun, and due to a promote from within culture, employees have little incentive to look elsewhere for career advancement.

### Hotels

Kimpton Hotels has always boasted a unique and engaging culture, and the hotel company continues to evolve its workplace to attract top talent. Named the 14th best place to work by Forbe's Fortune 100 Best Companies, Kimpton's employees thrive in a flexible and inclusive environment with an empathetic culture. Of Kimpton's 8,142 employees, 94% say their opinions are heard, they are celebrated as individuals, and that they are proud to work for the company.

According to Ginny Too, Kimpton's SVP of People and Culture, this is a conscious effort made by the company to set them apart as an employer of

choice. She says, "What makes Kimpton a great place to work is that we hire people with passion and heart. There's no book that outlines how we demonstrate empathy and connect with one another, so it's imperative that we attract people who share these qualities. Our leaders continue to reinforce this through role modeling and coaching. That's what helps foster a culture of heartfelt care with our guests and between employees."

Kimpton offers flexible schedules (when possible), allows employees to bring pets to work, and has an on-site fitness center, fully-paid sabbaticals, benefits for same-sex couples, and partial college tuition reimbursement.



► Ergonomic workstations with standing desks and stability balls are basic requirements

Other benefits include:

- Pet bereavement leave
- Children and elderly backup care
- Six weeks of paid maternal and paternal leave
- Free snacks and beverages during the day
- Free lunch daily
- The company's lack of corporate hierarchy and promote-from-within culture empowers employees and fosters loyalty.

Early on Kimpton recognized that a growing standard for corporate culture is an ethical environment that gives back to the community. Ms. Too stated, "Today's employees are interested in working for companies that mirror their core values. Kimpton's corporate social responsibility practices have been a fundamental pillar of our culture. Our focus areas in-

**A growing standard for corporate culture is an ethical environment that gives back to the community. Today's employees are interested in working for companies that mirror their core values**

clude individuality and inclusiveness, health and wellness, and the environment – all of which resonate and are driven by our passionate employees."

### **Restaurants**

According to an Associated Press-Gfk poll, Millennials are more likely to say that citizens have a "very important obligation" to volunteer. Millennials have been exposed to volunteering and fundraising in more areas of their life than their older generation counterparts. One of those areas is their place of work, where employee volunteer days and giving programs are becoming more common. "According to the 2014 Millennial Impact Report, one-third of millennials surveyed said their companies' volunteer policies affected their decision to apply for a job, 39% said that it influenced their decision



► **Health and wellness programs, counseling, yoga, massage, stress reduction workshops and meditation rooms are commonplace**

to interview, and 55% said that such policies played into their decision to accept an offer,” as stated by Forbes.

Texas Roadhouse has a company culture of people and community first. With almost 500 restaurants in 49 states and five countries, Texas Roadhouse employs 48,000 people, of whom 94% “feel good” about how the company contributes to their community.

In 2002, Texas Roadhouse created Andy’s Outreach Fund, a non-profit charitable trust to help employees during medical emergencies, death, fire, natural disasters, personal injuries or crises, and financial hardships. Since its inception, Andy’s Outreach has benefited more than 5,000 employees and has given employees over \$5.3 million during times of crisis. The nonprofit has a separate school

supply program to furnish everything an employee’s child may need for school as well.

Texas Roadhouse’s commitment to establishing a unique and inclusive company culture is evident both in their corporate office and individual restaurants. At its inception the Texas Roadhouse team made sure to implement a culture of family and fun into their organization.

“Our break room was this tiny kitchen in the corner. Every Friday, Kent [Taylor, founder of Texas Roadhouse], would wheel a cooler in full of beer. At three o’clock, we’d sit and have a few beers and talk about what was going on. We still do those social events where we all get together, even as big as we are. I think that’s the one thing we’ve really worked hard at — to make sure we’re keeping that culture alive,” says Senior Investor Relations Director, Tanya Robinson. To perpetuate this endeavor each restaurant has a “fun budget” so they can go bowling, throw pizza parties, and ensure that their environment is a balance of social and work.

In an article in Harvard Business Review, Tony Schwartz notes that a key concern for employers is “how to best attract, manage, and retain Millennials, who now represent the largest generation in the workforce, expect more flexibility in the way they work, and prefer to work for employers with a mission that goes beyond maximizing profit”.

Fueled by a deluge of Millennial employees, companies are adapting to changing expectations of dress, offered amenities, workspace, benefits, and corporate culture. We have observed that a stodgy formal office environment is a thing of the past. Younger employees are attracted to companies with a more compassionate, holistic, and even fun environment prompting some organizations to play catch up.

Courtesy: Erica Arnold and Alice E Campbell (HVS Global)

# VIRTUAL RED CARPET

Online search for information about hotels to the ultimate booking and online transaction in India is the order of the day. Online inventory distribution technology must be embraced by all to attract new age customers

**A** RECENT Google India-Boston Consulting Group report has projected the overall Indian travel market to reach \$48 billion by 2020 at an annual growth rate of 11-11.5 per cent. In May 2016, this number had been predicted at \$40 billion, as per an IBEF report. According to IBEF, the online travel market alone is expected to account for around 40-50 per cent of the total transactions by 2020.

Prior to this, a 2014 report by research firm Aranca estimated the online travel market in India at \$9.1 billion which included – air travel (\$5.1 billion), rail travel (\$3.1 billion) and hotels (0.8 billion). These numbers have now increased multifold.

More importantly, with the increase in smartphone penetration and digital payments usage, India's online hotel market will grow to \$4 Bn with 31 per cent penetration at a growth rate of 25 per cent.

By 2020, one in three hotel rooms will be booked online – a clear indicator of the growing importance of digital in travel research, planning, and booking.

In general, a typical journey of an individual traveller encompasses the working together of many industries. From getting tickets to booking hotels, consulting travel agents to hiring tour guides and transportation services – the inherent scope has always been immense. With the addition of the term 'online' here, the one factor that has been added is – convenience.

## Online Touchpoints

The Google India and BCG report show that, for a majority of Indian consumers, a vacation is a well-thought through the event. Planning for which begins several weeks in advance. On average, travel consumers spend 49 minutes spread over 46 days, visiting as many as 17 different

online touchpoints to plan, research, and make a booking.

These touchpoints majorly include online travel aggregators aka OTAs (64 per cent reach), search engines (33 per cent reach), and maps (26 per cent reach). Over 75 per cent gain inspiration to travel from family and friends and word-of-mouth form an important input when it comes to travel bookings. Also, reviews and ratings from other users are the single most important criteria to select a certain booking channel.

However, each online session lasts less than three minutes due to the ubiquity of mobile. As stated in the report, "Through their journey, Indian travellers tend to flip back and forth across different online destinations, checking availability and comparing prices across different providers and connectivity."

Finally, the research finds that consumers use a mix of online and offline sources of information during their booking journeys. However, only 12 per cent of the consumers prefer to use offline sources for research. 57 per cent of the consumers believe that online channels give them better deals, while 41 per cent find it more convenient to book online.

The growth in the Indian online travel space has been fuelled by many key drivers. These include the increase in household incomes, rise in ecommerce and smartphone penetration, and the Government's attempts to ease out on-arrival visa policies in other countries etc.

However, with increased competition, high cash burn rate, and reduced margins, the companies in this sector have now been divided into two segments. Traditional players which majorly started with an online ticketing service and then bloomed into different verticals.

MMT, goibibo, Yatra, iXigo, ClearTrip etc. are known as the change makers in the Indian online travel, moving



► **Nearly 57 percent of the consumers believe online channels give them better deals**

the sector to another level of maturity. The MMT-Ibibo group deal worth \$720 million towards the end of 2016, was listed as a key factor to increase the predicted overall market size of the online travel market in India. With approval from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) in March 2017, the combined entity will now be valued around \$2.2 billion, snatching more than 45 per cent of the overall market share.

### Players Galore

The second category is a new breed of players focussing on one unique niche such as hotel booking, weekend trips, long trip planners, last minute hotel bookings, adventure trips planners, etc. Also, along with them is the thriving transportation industry which majorly includes cab services like Ola and Uber and map services like Google Maps, MapmyIndia, etc.

The second category includes startups like OYO Rooms, Treebo, Airbnb, Travel Triangle, Expedia, Trivago, TripShelf, DeyorCamps, and more. Airbnb has recently expedited its expansion in the Indian subcontinent with the launch of its new platform 'Trips.' TravelTriangle raised \$10 million Series B funding to serve more than 100-holiday destinations across India and worldwide. OYO Rooms, one of the first movers in the aggregated budget hotel booking space, is now going global, placing its roots in Nepal after Malaysia. With the recent \$250 million backing at a from SoftBank at a valuation of \$850 million, it now looks to move aggressively ahead. OYO is now moving ahead aggressively at a valuation of \$850 million.

Technology has led to the democratisation of travel through better information and price discovery – and shall lead to 11-11.5 per cent growth in

years ahead. The question is “how to address the 17 different touch-points of three minutes each over 49 days! The imperative thing for players is to use technology and advanced analytics capability to understand individual micro journeys and offer personalised and curated travel solutions.”

According to all projections for 2020 of the Google India-BCG report, the online travel industry has a multi-billion dollar scope. But success, as always, is a bumpy ride. In this ride, some startups such as MMT-Goibibo, Yatra, OYO and more have already reached their initial destinations and are planning for the next leg. Others, such as Travel Triangle, OYO, etc are still playing catch up. A player needs just three minutes to understand the micro journeys and various touch points to become a partner in the average Indian traveler's journey.



► **The rising use of smart phones and apps are quite evident in hotel bookings, globally as well as in India. It is incumbent upon the service providers to catch this new breed of tech savvy customers**

Hotel distribution is increasingly becoming a data driven business in Asia Pacific as well as globally. The senior management in hotels have a business need for real-time data that can help them take quick strategic decisions. Revenue driving decisions such as distribution-mix, room rates and promotional offers can no longer be made in isolation. Distribution intelligence application that allows integration of data and provides analytics will grow in demand.

### Smartphone Savvy

The rising use of smart phones, iphones and apps are quite evident in hotel bookings, globally as well as in India. It is incumbent upon the service providers, i.e., distribution technology providers, to catch this new

breed of technology savvy customers and create platforms to make the on-line experience seamless for them. There are times when 50 per cent of the hotel booking happens through mobiles, across markets, said Amit Agarwal, Senior Marketing Manager – India and South East Asia. Globally, 20 per cent to 25 per cent bookings are happening through mobiles now, out of which 60 per cent to 70 per cent are last minute bookings. Some sophisticated platforms have developed a cutting edge ‘wearable’ technology, which has become a hit globally. People having iphone watches get direct update on deals and promotions on their watches.

Some Indian outfits –smaller chains and owner- run hotels which ‘lack in resources’ to invest in tech-

nology to seamlessly distribute their inventory—have embraced cloud-based solutions that encourage them to sell directly in their own brand website and through other online channels and at the same time ensure that customers who come online have a seamless experience while booking products online. They get help in acquiring, tracking, engaging, and distributing products to consumers and have a seamless experience in the process.

Potential travellers are no longer booking the first hotel they come across. They research extensively, compare rates online, review feedback from other guests at the hotel and booking hotel rooms through the platform that offers them the best rate. The last minute room booking on mobile is also becoming increasingly popular. Hotels thus need to add the channel into their room distribution portfolio. With a last minute room booking app, hotels can sell until the last room and thus grow occupancy and revenue, significantly.

There has been rapid growth in direct booking channels as hoteliers appreciate the most profitable direct bookings and thus have started to invest in online marketing. This trend can be seen in both segments - leisure and business.

### Data-Driven Culture

Although still few hoteliers are manually managing their online reservation process, but those Indian hotels which have adopted real-time distribution technology have witnessed accelerated growth thereby improving visibility and surging the average room occupancy. Some business hotel chains in India improved bookings through their website by 10 per cent resulting in a five per cent growth in direct booking revenues. It is very important for hoteliers to establish a data-driven culture at their organisation that will empower them to take quick



## MULTIPLE CHOICES AT THEIR FINGERTIPS



### CONSUMER PRIORITY

They prefer to book accommodation first since it's an elaborate process

#### Accommodation

18 variables

considered while booking a hotel



#### Transportation

77 percent

customers booked a hotel before transport



#### ► The Google India-BCG report projects a sharp growth of business of Online Travel Agents

and informed revenue decisions. Some experts believe, their clients have experienced an eight to 30 per cent growth in online booking revenues with their real-time intelligent distribution platform.

The Indian hotel industry has always been a competitive one. However, the tech products aimed at creating differentiation were developed and aimed at the larger brand hotels, leaving the adoption of such technology quite out of the reach of smaller independent hotels. Today there are a lot of software out there to aid smaller properties and finally we are witnessing hoteliers adopting technology to not only market them efficiently, but to improve every aspect of business from booking confirmations to room holdings, room queries, payment

follow-ups, online channel partner management to booking engine management, to deliver superior guest experiences.

Indian hoteliers are extending more importance to technology adoption in their revenue management than anything else. Some hotel partners have witnessed an average of 40 per cent or more incremental business after the new technology was adopted. Tying up with a professional revenue management technology has also provided a service known as 'Performance Marketing' which has helped hoteliers in improving their online visibility and also optimising their rates, packages and available inventory..

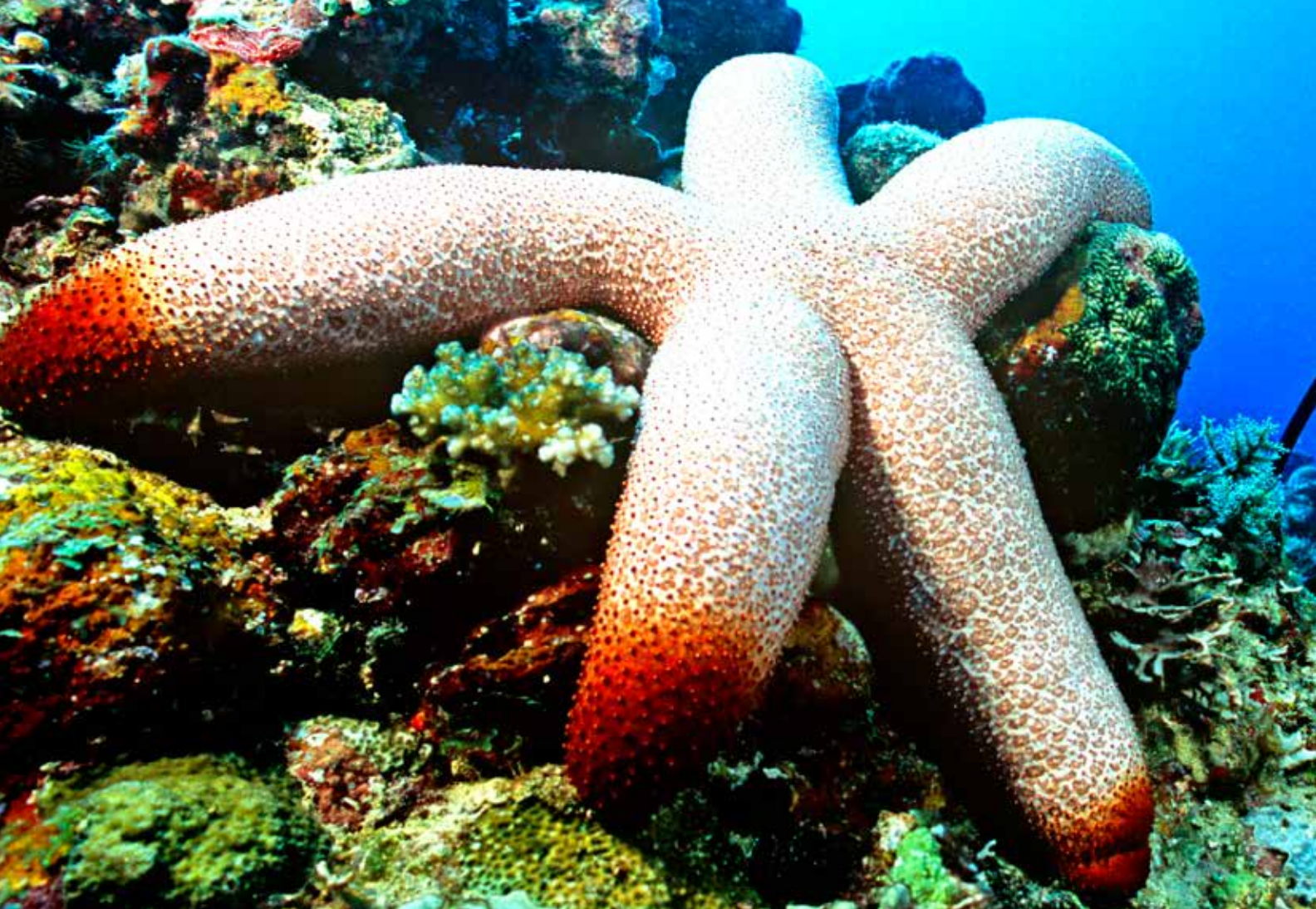
The growing popularity of Online Travel Agents (OTAs) has given hotels across segments an opportunity

to improve their exposure and online revenue. According to a FHRAI survey, use of revenue management solutions has been the second most popular technology trend for the hotel industry. In Tier-I and Tier II cities, between 30-60 per cent hotels with online presence have been using revenue management/channel management system. The luxury and chain hotels are the early adapters of technology. Mid-scale hotels are also using online distribution and channel management solutions to optimise online revenue. However, smaller hotels are still behind when it comes to adapting technology automation due to cost and lack of awareness.

The five-star category has always been leveraging hospitality technology without hesitation as for them guest satisfaction is of paramount importance. The budget hotel segment is also leveraging technology to automate processes, free staff from mundane tasks and grow revenue.

The mid-market segment may have been slow, but has been increasingly adopting technology especially to connect and engage with guest such as online reputation management, revenue management, business intelligence, web booking engine, last-minute room booking app and more. Technology helps hotels strategise more carefully on how to approach their target audience, monitor the engagement in a planned manner, respond quickly to their guests' demands, and up-sell and cross-sell services to increase their revenue. .

The biggest concern is the lack of right education available to hoteliers to understand hotel distribution. Distribution in India is dominated by OTAs, but now it's time to get the direct business back. The opportunity is to help hoteliers select the right solutions that work for them and not where they have to make systems work for them.



► Adventure tourism in is the fastest growing segment of Andaman tourism industry

STATE SURVEY: ANDAMAN

# ENCHANTING ANDAMANS

Beyond the Bay of Bengal are these wildly exotic islands, complete with gorgeous lagoons and a lava-belching volcano. It's a heaven for adventure tourists



adventure tourism in Andaman Islands in order to increase the inflow of tourists.

### Rapid growth

Tourism is one of the most rapidly growing sectors in the world, and adventure tourism is one of its fastest growing categories. Increasingly, countries in all stages of economic development are prioritizing adventure tourism for market growth, because they recognize ecological, cultural and economic value. The Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) defines adventure tourism as a trip that includes at least two of the following three elements such as physical activity, natural environment and cultural immersion. Adventure tourism is a thrill-based activity where an adventurer is ready to face high and low level of challenges.

There are two main categories of adventure activities, hard adventure and soft adventure. The hard adventure is a travel exercise, which involves higher level of risk elements and physical challenges. Hard adventure includes climbing (mountain/rock/ice), trekking, caving, paragliding and so on. The soft adventure is a type of travel exercise which refers the comfortable adventure activities having sometimes no risks. This is very safe and hence maximum adventurers indulge in this type of adventure tourism. Soft adventure includes camping, fishing, scuba diving, snorkeling, kayaking, cycling, skiing, rafting, bird watching or simply horseback riding.

As a kind of tourism, adventure tourism in India is endless because the country has a rich diversity in terms of climate and topography. It is estimated that on average, 20 lakh people participate in adventure tourism in India. The various kinds of adventure tourism in India are rock climbing, skiing, camel safari, paragliding, mountaineering, rafting in white water, trekking, scuba diving

**T**HE mysterious Andaman Islands, located 960km off the east coast of India, are made up of cluster of more than 300 islands. The islands, which share history and traditions with each other, are inhabited by ancient tribes that today remain some of the most traditional in the world. Port Blair, the main town, offers civilised restaurants along with gorgeous rainforests and unspoilt beaches.

The Islands offer plenty of interesting island-hopping, rainforest discovery tours, swimming and watersports - head to the bone-white beaches and the unspoilt coral reefs for some good snorkelling, scuba diving and sea walking. These pristine islands also offer unforgettable adventure activities

such as beach trekking, island camping, parasailing, water skiing and so on. The tourist inflow has been growing but not at the desired rate. The growth rate of tourists should have been higher considering the adventure activities offered in Andaman.

Adventure tourism is at the initial stage of development in Andaman and is fastest growing segment of Andaman tourism industry. Development of adventure tourism could increase the tourist arrivals and the business opportunities in the Islands. The major problem related to adventure tourism is the discord between the safety standards and the way they are followed and implemented. This survey seeks to study the potentials of adventure tourism in Andaman and further give suggestions to develop



► **Sport fishing is one of the most popular water sports in these islands**

and snorkeling. Tourists prefer to go for trekking to places like Ladakh, Sikkim and Himalaya. The states like Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir are popular for skiing. Andaman and Nicobar Islands are chosen by the tourists for adventure activities such as scuba diving and snorkeling. In addition, Manali, Gulmarg, Auli, Darjeeling, Lakshadweep and Goa are the best places for adventure tourism in India.

The Andaman and Nicobar islands are bestowed with the reputation of housing some of the most delectable and gorgeous islands in this entire planet. Thus it constitutes one of the major temptations for the anxious holiday-makers. Basically, these water sports and related activities are most enjoyed by tourists who prefer to take risks. But there are other water sports as well which are suit-

ed for the ones who are not so much adventurous. Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which is surrounded by rich coral reef eco system, offers unique life time diving experience. The Rajiv Gandhi Water Sports Complex at Port Blair, offers Safe water sports activities and also Adventure water sports activities. The various forms of adventure activities explored in Andaman are –

### **Scuba diving**

Scuba diving is one of the best water sports in Andaman. The coastal water surrounding these islands is the abode of one of the richest coral reef ecosystem in the world. The specialty is that, here the coral reefs and underwater formation have not been exposed to any sort of damage as a result of which water-sport enthusiasts from all over across the globe assem-

ble here to view the enchanting marine fauna. There are several potential dive sites in Andaman. Such as, Cinque Island, North Point, Corruption Rock, Rutland Island, Havelock Island, Mac Point, Barracuda Point, Turtle Bay, Lighthouse, Pilot Reef, Minerva Ledge, North Button Island Wandoor, Fish Rock, Seduction Point and Bala Reef.

There are plenty of registered scuba dive operators, such as Andaman Bubbles Pvt. Ltd and Barefoot Scuba.

### **Snorkeling**

In the water sport of snorkeling we get to glide across the surface of the water while having a diving mask on. We can witness many gorgeous under-water creatures with the aid of snorkeling. Snorkeling is slowly but surely gaining immense popularity as there is a provision to practice it



► **Water scooters are best enjoyed during good weather**

at numerous venues in the Andaman and Nicobar islands. One can enjoy the underwater marine life and view the rarest of corals by snorkeling at North Bay, Corbyn's Cove, Chidiyatapu, Havelock, Jolly Buoy, Redskin Island and Ross and Smith Island.

### **Sea walk**

Undersea walking is another superbly fun adventure sports in Andaman. Absolutely no experience required, no complicated equipment to handle and we get to walk on the smooth and clean sand of the sea floor with a helmet which offers a close up view of the underwater world without any hassle. No wonder it's one of the most popular water sports in these Islands.

### **Water Sports**

The Rajiv Gandhi Water Sports Complex at Port Blair offers all possible

adventure and safe water sports activities. Adventure water sports include water skiing, water scooter, speed boat rides, wind-surfing and so on. The safe water sports component has paddle boats, rowing boats, water cycles, banana boat rides and many more. Water sport facilities are also available at Corbyn's cove beach and Radha Nagar beach at Havelock.

### **Trekking**

The islands of Andaman and Nicobar are blessed with the generous presence of many stupendous knolls which are perfect for trekking in Andaman and Nicobar islands. Tourists can go trekking through the evergreen forest from Bambooflat to Mount Harriet, Mount Harriet to Madhuban in South Andaman, Kalipur in Diglipur to Saddle Peak in North Andaman and in Little Andaman to experience

the life within the lovely, dark and deep forests.

### **Mangrove creek safari**

The lush green mangroves abundantly seen on either side of meandering creeks in the North and Middle Andamans offer excellent scope for creek safari. One can experience this unique eco-friendly activity at Yerrata creek, Dhaninalla Mangrove creek, Sabari Village – Rangat, Middle Andaman. The mangrove bench walk introduced recently here is a fascinating experience for nature lovers.

### **Forest and beach camping**

Camps are just the right choice for the nature-lovers who wish to enjoy the sun, sea and the pristine beauty of nature by spending quiet holidays right on the beach. Adventure-lovers can pack their tents and camp on some of the best beaches in the world or in the forests. The Directorate of Tourism rents Swiss Dome and tent accommodation at Radhanagar beach in Havelock Island, which is crowned as "Asia's best beach" and "7th best beach in the world" by Time Magazine.

### **Sport fishing**

Try sport fishing, one of the most popular water sports in Andaman. Go on a fishing trip in one of the swanky yachts. Mostly these trips begin in the afternoon, post lunch. There are organizations that offer all kinds of fishing equipments and boats. For fishing enthusiasts, the sea of the coasts of Havelock Island, Neil Island, Long Island and Ritchie's archipelago offer some of the best catches.

### **Bird watching**

The Parrot Island near Baratang is famous for endemic birds especially Parrot of various kinds. Some thirty species of endemic birds are recorded. It is ideal to visit Parrot Island in the evening from Baratang Island to watch innumerable birds flocking in.



► The coastal water surrounding these islands is the abode of one of the richest coral reef ecosystem in the world

## Jet skiing

Out of all the adventure activities in Andaman, jet skiing definitely stands out! However, the sport is best enjoyed during good weather only. During heavy downpour or riding during a storm could be dangerous.

## Parasailing

Parasailing is another one of the incredible water sports activities in Andaman that non swimmers can enjoy. Parasailing is a sport that is a wonderful mix of water and air borne adventure. We're tied behind a motor boat while harnessed in a parachute. So, we fly like a kite behind the boat as it speeds off into the sea. Superbly thrilling it is!

## Glass bottom boating

Tiny boats with glass bottoms for us to have a glimpse of the water life as it sails through the sea, that's glass bottom boating for us. We can take glass bottom boat rides from Water Sports Complex to North Bay Coral Island or

Port Blair to Jolly Buoy Island.

In order to further develop adventure tourism in Andaman, the following suggestions could be fruitful:

- Adventure operators should follow the best practices to reduce risk and ensure safety across a variety of adventure activities such as scuba diving, snorkeling, sea walk, jet skiing, parasailing and so on.
- Government should introduce adventure institute in Andaman for offering several adventure sports courses with modern training equipments as we have adventure institutes in Goa, Manali, Uttaranchal and Darjeeling and enrich the Islands with young adventure tourism entrepreneurs.
- The communication passed on from the operator to the adventurers should be effective in order to make them clearly understand the guidelines associated with the activity.
- The adventure operators should have enough stock of adventure ma-

chines and equipments with them such as boats, scuba, snorkels, fins and so on so that maximum adventurers can explore the activity at a time without any delay.

- \*In order to give boost to adventure tourism government has to formulate appropriate policies.

Adventure tourism is a recreational activity and Andaman is one of the best destinations for the adventurers and has finest and tremendous potentials of adventure tourism. The growth in the adventure tourism market has significant implications for destinations and travel businesses alike. Many travelers are no longer satisfied with sitting on a beach or shopping. They seek adventure experiences that highlight the natural and cultural assets that make a place distinct from any other. It is very important to give special consideration towards the promotion and development of adventure tourism in Andaman.



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